FOLK DEVILS IN OUR MIDST:
CHALLENGING THE MODERNIST MUSEUM PARADIGM

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by

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Abstract

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This thesis offers a polemical and problematising critique of the modernist paradigm as utilised by British museums, through an analysis of museums’ representation, lack of representation, and misrepresentation of subcultural identities, histories, and material culture. It explores the notion of museums as disciplinary apparatus and agents of governance within a hegemonic society during the so-called postmodern epoch, and questions the possibility of the emergence of what Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has called the ‘post-museum’, whilst the modernist paradigm remains dominant.

The positive work that a number of museums are undertaking to challenge the paradigm and become more inclusive, democratic and reflexive, is recognised within this thesis. In Britain in general however, this force for change has been limited. In this context traditions are too entrenched; thus cutting edge institutions are rarely able to make far reaching fundamental changes. It is argued that until the dominance of the modernist paradigm over museums is broken, changes that are made will remain superficial. The modernist paradigm did a worthy job but now needs to be one model amongst many.

Focusing on museums’ (mis)representation of subcultures highlights the inadequacies of the modernist museum paradigm. Subcultures are analogous to postmodernism: they represent flux and fragmentation; they cross various marginalised indices: gender, race, sexuality, youth, contemporary and popular cultural; their cultures are generated in opposition to disciplinary apparatus; they are the sites of substantial adaptable knowledge bases which are outside the dominant static knowledge base. Subcultures therefore manifest the threat of the postmodernist paradigm in way that is tangible and active.

Museums are under increasing pressure to adapt and to become relevant to the present society. It is argued that if they remain incongruous to the present so-called postmodern epoch they are in danger of becoming obsolete. This critique is offered in the hope that museums will evolve and survive.
To my parents and partner, Mark.
‘We are the flowers in the dustbin.’

*God Save The Queen*, The Sex Pistols 1977.
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INTRODUCTION

In *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style* David Muggleton acknowledges Weber's belief that all sociology is 'value relevant';

>'that the selection of a research topic, the decision to investigate particular aspects over others, and the logic and method of enquiry employed are all inevitably grounded in the subjective values of the researcher.' (2000,1).

Muggleton starts his own account with an introduction to the personal interests which inspired his research. Kevin Moore also acknowledges that any 'book is inevitably a deeply personal work' (1997;6). So it is true of this thesis.

The long term commitment that a research degree requires has been sustained not only by a deep belief in the value of museums, but also by my desire to see museums record and reflect the multifacited nature of British culture; something which at present they fall short of doing. This thesis was particularly inspired by my desire to see the histories and identities that I was personally involved with better represented in museums, for it seemed to me that at present they are under-represented or even ignored.

Research undertaken whilst on an MA in Museum Studies, experiences accumulated working within the museums profession itself, and many visits to exhibitions and museums led me to conclude that even when popular culture is represented within a museum context, invariably it is the 'mainstream' that is addressed. The prospect of, in my old age, being the recipient of reminiscance sessions where the only type of museum objects on offer are Kylie Minogue C.D.s, Nike trainers, and Nintendo Gameboys horrifies me. Where is the recognition of my life and that of my friends within museums? Where is the world of 'youth subcultures'; of gigs and weekenders, music and dancing, home made clothes and hair dye, 'rat' bikes and customised scooters? The fact that such identities and histories are marginalised within museums I initially found wholly unacceptable. I was certain that attention needed to be drawn to this marginalisation and then re-addressed: from a conviction that museums could and should represent subcultures.

However, as the true complexity of the subject emerged through my research I began to question these initial convictions; to question whether museums are capable of 'adequately' representing subcultural identities and histories at all. I began to fear the potential negative effects representation could have on subcultures: as museums are
invariably part of the establishment and have the power of legitimisation, what could representation within the museum do to lived subcultures whose major appeal is their subversive status?

As my research into the question of subcultural representation within the context of museums deepened I discovered issues that challenged the very institution of the museum itself: Whilst initially it may have seemed that practicalities, such as inadequate resources, were the cause of the marginalisation of subcultures, it became apparent that these were merely symptoms, were merely how marginalisation manifests rather than why. A closer analysis of these symptoms led to the realisation that the fundamental cause lay elsewhere. Analysing the problematics that I encountered in undertaking the primary research and analysis of how subcultures had been marginalised, revealed that both the marginalisation and lack of resources which contributed to this were symptomatic of the continued dominance of the modernist museum paradigm. These symptoms highlight the inadequacies of the modernist paradigm that has been followed by British public museums for so long.

My thesis questions the often automatic assumption that representation within the context of the museum, will be beneficial (see Moore 1997), and ultimately then, questions the role, purpose and value of museums to British society. Thus I offer a critique of the modernist museum paradigm from a new problematising perspective: i.e. through an analysis of museums' representation, lack of representation, and misrepresentation of British subcultural identities, histories and material culture. Although, as we shall see, a growing body of theoretical work has already revealed identities excluded from museums - work often undertaken in relation to gender, class or race (post-colonial discourse has been particularly revealing for example) - my thesis makes a significant contribution in a new area: The subcultural identities that I address here are identities which cross all the aforementioned indexes, but yet have rarely been considered from a museological perspective.

The traditions from which contemporary museums have evolved, and the ideologies that they have been based upon, offer little space for the recognition and representation of material culture that is 'popular cultural' in nature and/or contemporary, which material culture relating to subcultures invariably is. Identities which have often been defined
within the public consciousness as ‘deviant’, fit uneasily into the museum’s space of reverence and improvement. Such marginalisation of subcultural identities, histories, and material culture is at odds with museums’ claiming to be inclusive. However, by recognising and examining those representations, when they have occurred, we can highlight how museums continue to normativise everything they deal with; how museums can still be seen as part of the disciplinary apparatus that operates through society.

The museum in uncertain times.

This thesis then, contributes to the growing body of work which has begun to engage in theoretically informed critiques of museums. It is part of a body of work which has highlighted the crossroads museums currently find themselves at, for as Hein has suggested, ‘a conceptual revolution is taking place, one that calls into question the fundamental premises on which museums were grounded.’ (2000;viii)

Both within the museums profession itself and within museology, it is evident that museums are presently undergoing a crisis concerning their role and function within contemporary society. This crisis relates not only to practical difficulties such as shortages of funding or storage space, but also questions the very essence of ‘the museum’, calling for a re-evaluation of the institution itself. This crisis however, can be located within a wider context: postmodernist and post-structuralist inspired research has begun to examine the very fabric of society, and challenging dogmas that have been taken for granted for many decades. Faith in the concepts that the modernist epistemology was grounded in - truth, rationality, universalism, progress - has been shaken. As Sharon Macdonald comments;

‘many of the defining fictions of our everyday world have been identified as under threat: the legitimacy of the ‘grand narratives’ of science and reason are in decline; there is a fragmentation of taste and style; representation and classification have become unprecedentedly problematic; and what were once called ‘truths’ are increasingly being dubbed ‘fictions’.(1990;176)

Such questioning is reflected within museums: Modernist museum values and practices are loosing their stability as the grand narratives which established structures of power, knowledge and value, are being challenged. Where museums typically saw themselves as ‘universal, encyclopaedic, and educational’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000a;18), they have been exposed as being based on narratives of exclusion. Contemporary museums are being
'compelled to address questions of identity, objectivity, and privilege that were traditionally obscured' (Hein 2000;6). Work has exposed the power relations at play and the myth behind assertions that museum spaces are neutral and objective:

'Museums are ... no longer seen as sites that passively preserve and exhibit received cultural capital. They are active shapers and, indeed, creators of value.' (Hein 2000;xii)

The nature of museums, their fundamental purpose and functions and the fundamental concept of the museum is being discussed and revised not only from within but also outside of the profession. Tensions between scholarship or access, objects or experience, education or entertainment, have been revealed. Even museums’ essential function of accumulating and preserving material things, are beginning to be negotiated.

Changes in the Museums Association’s definition of ‘museum’ reflect the changing demands placed on the institution. There has been a move towards recognising ‘visitor’ needs and expectations; front of house staff have become ‘enablers’ rather than ‘warders’ for example, and a genuine desire to be responsive and accountable to the public museums serve has been expressed. A growing sense for the need of increased professionalism has fuelled these changes, but they have also been demanded externally as museums continue to occupy a precarious position. Under increasing pressure to become more accountable and financially viable, museums still remain unstatutory and are sometimes regarded as optional extras by local councils.1

However, although museums can be located within a climate of change, they also remain institutions which stand for permanence and stability. Thus change occurs slowly. As Phillips comments;

‘museums are remarkably resistant to change. The apparatus of display, the cases and plinths, the hanging systems and practices, the lack of cash to change it all when it comes to installation, endow tradition with a relentless material momentum.’(1997;201)

Conventions are hard to breakdown. As Davies comments in relation to social history;

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1 The current insecure position of the museums in this researchers local area, illustrates the precarious nature of museum provision: the Leicester City Museum Service has been forced to close museums under its control and reduce opening hours for the rest, and at present the future of a number of museums run by Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Records Service is unsure. The current unsupportive local government climate was made clear in a statement to the press made by the Head councillor which ended; '[the public has] to realise that the County Council does not have a open-ended budget, there is no legal requirement for the County Council to run... any museum...' (Barber 23/1/2002).
‘Social historians in museums probably do not escape enough from the topic-orientated approach to studying the past. In both research and exhibition they tend to follow well worn stereotyped paths…it would be refreshing if they were able to ‘break the mould’…rather more often’. (Fleming, Paine, and Rhodes 1993:9)

Although perhaps challenges are being drawn within museological discourse, as postmodernist and post-structuralist theories are engaged with, within museums themselves a recognition of the need for change has been a lot slower. So although the concerns of museums may ‘lie at the centre of the issues surrounding contemporary cultural change’ (Macdonald and Silverstone 1990:177), we can see that actually museums have not occupied a particularly strategic position within such debates. In fact, we can question how far Hein’s ‘conceptual revolution’ has actually progressed, particularly as it will be argued here, within the British context.

This thesis then, offers a critique of the museum at a theoretical level, but is firmly grounded in the real experiences of contemporary museums. Though it may appear that theoretical discussion has taken precedent over any detailed examination of the practical pressures currently being exercised upon museums, I believe that these practical pressures are founded upon problematics put in place by the continued dominance of an inappropriate paradigm and thus must first be addressed by theoretical discourse.

**Themes and approaches.**

Before we move on to introduce each of the chapters, I will first explain the approach taken within this thesis and discuss choices that have been made regarding what has been addressed here and what has not.

The thesis is grounded in a fundamental belief that the paradigm for modern public museums was consolidated in the nineteenth century and that this was founded on a modernist epistemology. However although this modernist paradigm of the public museum was structured in relation to a period quite different to our own, it is maintained here that it has continued to be the dominant paradigm for British museums ever since. Thus it is argued that although today’s museums may appear to have changed greatly from the first public museums, the characteristics embodied in the modernist paradigm still dominate the underlying structures that contemporary museums work to.
Whilst it is not necessary to address the characteristics of the modernist paradigm here, the use made of the term ‘modernist’ should be clarified: modernist is used both within a periodisation sense and as a state of consciousness. Susan Pearce has identified a ‘complex bundle of characteristic modes of thought’ which can be labelled ‘modernist’, that began to emerge in what she sees as its ‘preliminary early phase’ roughly between 1500-1600, developing further within the ‘full early phase’ between c.1600-1700, and culminating in the ‘classic phase’ between 1700-1950 (1995). This study focuses its attention specifically within the classic phase that Pearce identifies, but limits the time frame even further.

In particular, the structures of knowledge that Michel Foucault has identified in relation to three major epistemes have been utilised to inform the structural frame of this thesis. The genealogy of the concept of the ‘museum’ has been broken down to embrace Hooper-Greenhill’s (1992) idea of ‘effective history’, whereby differing historical museum paradigms, shaped by different forms of rationality, can be identified. For although a genealogy of the concept of the museum (within which traces of modernist characteristics may be identified) can be traced back to before the *Wunderkammern* and *Kunstkammern* of Germany, or the English ‘cabinet of curiosities’ of the seventeenth century, it is the particular modernist paradigm of the museum formulated within Foucault’s ‘Modern’ episteme that is of concern to this thesis.

It has also been accepted that we are now within a postmodern epoch where certain ‘postmodernist’ sensibilities and characteristics can be identified. Whether postmodernism is conceived of as a radical break from modernism, or rather as modernism in its ‘nascent state’ (Lyotard 1989), does not concern us here. What is fundamental to this thesis however, are the challenges that postmodernist theories present the museum as an institution grounded in modernist ideology: the problematics raised for an essentially modernist institution operating within a postmodernist world. The ideas of a selection of key contributors to postmodernist theory, Jean Baudrillard, Fredric Jameson, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Michel Maffesoli posit challenges to the fundamental structures of the modernist paradigm of the museum. They also have further relevance to this study; they have informed to a varying degree subcultural theory.

As we are examining the marginalisation and representation of identities that have invariably been labelled deviant or resistant, the thesis is also much concerned with the
power relations at play within the institution of the museum. The analytical tools of Foucault have informed the work, and in particular his characterisation of 'power/knowledge' relations, has been utilised. His interrogations of the practises and ways of knowing of apparently neutral institutions, has offered a model for the examination of the modernist museum paradigm: his idea of 'discourse' for example, helps to reveal the constructed nature of museum practice, highlighting the ways museums have described and ordered the world they represent from a modernist bias. In particular, Foucault's examination of the 'disciplinary apparatus' of power, will inform the thesis as it is argued, as others have done (Bennett 1997; Hooper-Greenhill 1992), that the museum was an integral part of the whole project of modernism; a vehicle for the new forms of governance and ways of knowing. However, whilst Foucault's conceptualisation of power has been the dominant paradigm used in this thesis, Antonio Gramsci has also been drawn upon, as his theory of hegemony offers another aspect to understanding the nature and operation of power, that can compliment Foucault's theorisation.

This thesis also draws inspiration from and builds upon, the work of Tony Bennett and Eileen Hooper-Greenhill and the significant contributions they have made to formalise the concept of the 'modernist museum'. However, whereas Bennett stops short of a full examination of the modernist museum in relation to contemporary museums (1997), and Hooper-Greenhill addresses this paradigm within a broader historical (1992) and international context (2000), this thesis addresses the prevailance of the paradigm in reference to contemporary museums within a British context, and in relation to British produced socio-cultural phenomena.

Although it can be recognised that the modernist paradigm of the museum emerged within a wider context than Britain, and indeed grew from a particular 'European tradition' and particular European way of relating to material culture, that can be traced back to prehistoric times (Pearce 1995), the attention of this thesis has been focused on British museums for numerous reasons. Foremost, Britain in the nineteenth century was crucial to realising the modernist paradigm of the public museum. British museums have their own national characteristics and history of development: they reflect the social, political and economic contexts they are located in. It may also be argued that Britain is unique in the diversity and proliferation of museums it has; for within most other countries a diverse range of museums based upon collections of natural history, science and industry,
community or social history, does not exist at both national and local levels. The majority of museums based outside Britain focus on the disciplines of archaeology and art, and indeed most countries, unlike Britain, use the terms 'museums' and 'galleries' synonymously.²

Within this thesis a pronounced distinction has been made between museums and galleries, and galleries have generally not been addressed within the research.³ Whilst representations occurring within the context of art galleries are important, the decision was made to narrow the field of research to manageable proportions and focus attention towards the consideration of artefacts/material culture, not works of art or photography.

The distinction has also been made between museums and art galleries or art museums, because art and history in museums works from 'radically different principles and perspectives' (Duncan 1995,5). It can be argued that a significant difference exists because art galleries are familiar with the avant-garde and experimental, deviant or subversive identities or issues are more likely to be embraced within this context than they are within that of the museum. Controversial subject matter may present less of a challenge to the art gallery, for here it is invariably the voice of the artist being presented, whereas within the context of museums it is the anonymous voice of the institution whose authority is judged.⁴

It should also be noted that whilst the importance of independent museums is recognised, the focus of attention towards a critique of the modernist paradigm of the public museum has led the research to concentrate on local authority museums and the nationals. Though independents may indeed follow traditions established by modern public museums, they can differ from them in that they invariably have been formed out of private or company collections⁵ and agendas behind their establishment can differ: they may have been instigated from personal motivations for example, out of an individuals or groups passions for a particular subject; thus their public role and responsibilities can become secondary.

² I would like to thank my fellow research students who have provided insightful introductions to a variety of countries of their origin.
³ This has been relaxed slightly where an initiative has come to the attention of the researcher that whilst held in a gallery context, is significantly concerned with material culture and of overall significance to warrant attention here: The Art of the Harley at the Barbican Art Gallery is an example.
⁴ The contestability of the claim that the art gallery provides a space more conducive to controversial or challenging subjects, is recognised, as is the fact that art galleries are not above criticism and even legal action when they host challenging exhibitions.
Sometimes they can be small scale operations, with limited opening times and a voluntary staff, and are not always registered under the Re:source Registration scheme. So although it is important to recognise them and acknowledge their work, they are not the main focus of attention within this thesis.

It is also important to recognise here that this thesis concentrates on museum collecting and exhibiting practices. Although it is important to understand the interpretative agency of visitors, the possible readings museum visitors may have of representations of subcultural identities and histories, the main focus of this thesis is on the representational practices themselves, not their reception.

This thesis then, is grounded in the belief that a dominant museum paradigm can be identified, and subsequently critiqued. This is not to deny the complexities and diversity of museums, for an essential museum does not exist: It is important to recognise that the museums profession is made up from a diverse range of collections organised and interpreted in accordance with the rules of different disciplines. However, it is argued here that shared characteristics define the modern public museum and dominate the internal differences that exist between disciplines. Although contemporary museums may seem diverse, they are all based on a paradigm that was established within a particular epistemological context which, based on modernist meta-narratives and values, has enabled or closed down ways of knowing and has founded certain rules and structures, which until recently have been accepted without question.

Chapter One introduces the work of the key theorists, and introduces some issues that a postmodernist epistemology raises. As the thesis can be located between the disciplines of cultural studies and museology Chapters Two and Three further trace the different theoretical perspectives from which this thesis draws: Chapter Two introduces and examines the emergence, consolidation and subsequent fragmentation of subcultural studies as a discipline and explores the dialogue and contested definitions of 'subculture' that have raged. Chapter Three introduces current museological work and examines the contemporary British museum scene. It also traces the origins of the modern public museum through an exploration and analysis of the concept of the modernist museum.

5 Whilst it should be acknowledged that many of today's public museums were indeed established from private collections, they were often donated to 'the public' via a museum. Many independent museums however, the collections remain in private ownership.
paradigm and its key characteristics. Chapter Four presents the primary research that supports this thesis, introducing the evidence that establishes the parameters of subcultural marginalisation and realises the cause of those parameters. Chapter Five examines the structures of power, knowledge and value that have been established by the modernist museum paradigm and addresses how these structures operating within and through museums, may serve to create a climate in museums where subcultural identities and histories have no place. Chapter Six examines issues of authenticity and the challenges that postmodernist theories can have for a paradigm based on notions of 'truth', the 'real thing' and essentialism. Chapter Seven continues to address issues of essentialism and examines the meta-narratives and classification systems that characterise the modernist paradigm. Chapter Eight then concludes by exploring the challenges that subcultural identities and histories which have been labelled 'deviant', present to an institution which stands as an arbiter of taste and the custodian of public morality and values.

‘Subculture’: a challenging term.

Whilst a full exploration of ‘subculture’ and the problematics associated with this term will be addressed later, it is important here to briefly introduce the difficulties associated with it and to clarify what it refers to when used within this thesis.⁶

Definitions of ‘subcultures’ have shifted since the term was coined in the 1940s and a consensus as to what the term refers to, is difficult to locate. It can be agreed that ‘subcultures can be broadly defined as social groups organized around shared interests and practices’ (Gelder and Thornton 1997), however this is rather a woolly definition that could refer to all manner of groups. Although definitions maybe contested, a certain continuity and shared understanding is identifiable however, between the social formations and activities that are considered and are labelled as ‘subcultural’.

_The Subcultures Reader_ suggests that the term ‘subcultures’ has,

‘come to designate social groups which are perceived to deviate from the normative ideals of adult communities...subcultures have tended to be envisaged as disenfranchised, disaffected and unofficial.’ (Gelder and Thornton 1997;2)

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⁶ It is important to establish this, as ‘subculture’ is a term familiar to those working within the context of the cultural studies discipline, however research has proved that it is unfamiliar to many museum professionals.
Thus characteristics of deviance or resistance are implied by the prefix ‘sub’: that ‘subcultures’ refers to groups that are subordinate, subaltern or subterranean has been a prevailing assumption. ‘Subcultures’ have also been predominantly associated and envisaged in terms of youth cultural formations and have generally been understood in terms of youth expression. ‘Subcultures’ have also been conceived of as informal and organic associations where ‘membership’ is a matter of collective agreement and negotiated codes rather than any agreement in formal terms.

In particular, theorists at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, formulated a paradigm of subculture that was to dominate subcultural studies for a number of decades. However, subcultural theory has undergone major challenges within the nineteen-nineties as postmodernist and post-structuralist theories have questioned the modernist inspired orthodoxy established by the CCCS. There has been a move away from the paradigm which understood subcultural identities in essentialist terms, as something static and boundaried, towards a one which recognises identity to be negotiated and in constant flux. A questioning of the assumed oppositional status of subcultures has also occurred, as the legitimacy of the unique defining feature, the sub prefix of subculture, is seen to be not without problems. There is also growing recognition that what have been defined as youth subcultures may not just involve young people.

Thus although Andy Bennett has suggested that ‘subculture’ has arguably become ‘little more than a convenient ‘catch-all’ term for any aspect of social life in which young people, style and music intersect’ (1999,599), and disagreements rage as to whether ‘counter-culture, youth culture (or revolt), sub-culture, or contra-culture are the most appropriate labels’ (Nelson 1989;4), the term ‘subculture’ has been used within this thesis. It is a term however that must be used with caution and reflexivity: What is addressed is a highly complex and ever shifting phenomenon, and ‘subcultures’ are defined as much by what they are not as by what they are.

To clarify then, the term 'subcultures' is taken in this study to refer to groups that are organised around shared interests or practices, that have constructed some type of collective identity, and that are defined and define themselves primarily through visual and aural representation, i.e. through their clothes, the music they choose to listen to, the lifestyles they choose to adopt and so forth. The emphasis of research is on subcultures
who have at some point in their existence, been labelled 'deviant'; for who the choice of appearance, sexuality or lifestyle, has served to position them as opponents to dominant values within our society. Of particular relevance are: spectacular youth subcultures, clubcultures, lesbian and gay identities which consciously acknowledge their sexuality, and identities that are defined through 'deviant' activities such as tattoo, piercing and sexual fetishism.

This thesis is only concerned with post-second World War subcultures. Although subcultures may be identifiable long before this period; post-war subcultures have been theorised in a distinctive way. A fundamental difference between pre and post war subcultures is that the former have not been exposed to mass media and consumerism in the same way as the latter (Stratton 1985). Post war subcultures, as we have seen, have also been inextricably linked with the concepts of 'adolescent' and 'teenager' where pre war counterparts have not.

This thesis does not take ‘subcultures’ to refer to groups that have formed around hobbies such as trainspotting, or pigeon fancying or fan-cultures such as 'Trekies'. Although it is recognised that within a broad conceptualisation of the term, such groups could indeed be considered subcultural formations, they are not identities however that have been formulated as oppositional or resistant to ‘the mainstream’. Nor have these identities been labelled as deviant by society, which the subjects of this thesis invariably are.

The label of deviancy that is attributed to subcultures is thus of particular interest to this study. Deviancy is a socially constructed concept and of relevance here as it plays a part in stigmatising subcultures. Though subcultures may become innocuous, they have invariably at some point in their histories, been the subjects of moral panics and have been labelled as folk devils that threaten the very fabric of society. Headlines such as “Day of Terror by Scooter Groups”, the Daily Telegraph describing Mods and Rockers (Cohen 1980;30) or ‘These people are the wreckers of civilisation’, the Daily Mail referring to Punk, indicate the concern that subcultural identities and activities have engendered. The recognition of this deviant status is important for it is argued within this thesis that such

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7It must be noted however, that ‘the mainstream’ is in fact a fictitious concept often constructed and perpetuated by subculturalists themselves (see Chapter 6).
labels contribute to subcultural marginalisation by museums because museums are wary of acknowledging subcultural identities that have deviant associations.

The importance of the institution of the museum and the significance of subcultural identities and histories.

Before we move on to the main body of the thesis, it is worth concluding this introduction with a brief examination of why the subject under examination here is important. Not only to acknowledge the significance of museums and subcultural identities and histories to society, but also to briefly highlight the implications that the dominance of an inappropriate paradigm can have.

Museums are important as they act as a "leading element in societies' collective memory" (Anderson 1997;xiii). They play a part in the creation and propagation of historical narratives: material culture is saved as evidence of people, places, events and used to inform the public in the historical narratives that museums have chosen to represent. Museums also play a part in the maintenance and perpetuation of ideological structures (Pearce 1995). They do not operate then, simply as sites that passively preserve and exhibit cultural history, but rather are active shapers and creators of value and ways of knowing. As institutions they venerate objects and regard them as genuine carriers of value and meaning. However, although museums may believe that the values and meaning they make from material culture are objective and neutral, as Macdonald argues, in reality 'Any museum or exhibition is, in effect, a statement of position. It is a theory: a suggested way of seeing the world.' (1996;14)

Museums are places of privilege, they are legitimating authorities, they have the power to name: 'Museum collections have the power of representation' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000a;12). Questions such as 'Who controls history, who has the moral right to control it, and who benefits?' (Ames 1994;103) are thus important and should not be ignored. As museums reflect the prevailing epistemological context, the study of what and who they marginalise, and how they represent identities and histories, can shed light on the power relations at play within wider society. That certain identities and histories have been marginalised from museums is significant: it speaks volumes about the values of society,
serving to highlight what society places value in, and what it attempts to control. Focusing on the marginalisation and representation of subcultural groups therefore, serves to highlight much wider issues concerning society and the role of museums within it.

However, that this study takes subcultures as the focus of its attention, need not be legitimised by any reference to the wider issues they can draw attention to. Whereas theorists at Birmingham in the 1970s had to fight to get subcultures recognised as a legitimate subject for academic study, today the importance of subcultures is recognised so that justification is not necessary.

The influence and relationship of subcultures with dominant cultural forms is extensive, and subcultures have and continue to play an important part in the social and cultural make-up of Britain; as Hebdige comments,

‘[the] emergence of youth subcultures has been one of the most controversial aspects of life in post-war Britain...At different times the press and public have condemned these groups as folk devils, dismissed them as clowns and applauded them as contemporary heroes.’ (1988a;backcover)

Hebdige indeed argues that on the ‘loaded surfaces’ of subcultural styles, we can read for example, ‘a phantom history of race relations since the war’ (1988a,45). Similarly McRobbie has argued that subcultural groups such as 'crusties' and squatters have had 'an extraordinarily strong impression on the urban landscape' contributing directly to our experience of social reality (1994;160). The proliferation of academic attention devoted to subcultures also serves as testament to the significance this phenomenon holds for contemporary society and culture. The influence of subcultures permeates all facets of contemporary popular culture and has had wide reaching repercussions in society in general: if we consider even briefly, the influence that clubcultures have had for example, the extent of significance may be hinted at.

An issue of Time Out described Acid House as;

‘the biggest musical revolution since Punk, the biggest drugs high since LSD. A decade later, it still affects what we watch, what we listen to, how we write, how we think.” (June 11-18 1997;12-18)

The visual, musical and social manifestations of dance subcultures have influenced all aspects of the media, whether that be the tabloid moral panics over ecstasy related deaths, or House and Jungle providing the soundtracks to blockbuster films such as Trainspotting
and *The Saint.* Even Inspector Morse has been to a rave! The visual and musical iconography associated with Acid House has influenced the commercial and advertising worlds: many soft drinks companies have given their products "vaguely ravey" packaging in an effort to appeal to the youth market. Club flyers are now considered 'Art' (1996; 1995) and Irvine Welsh's *Ecstasy* or Nicholas Blincoe's *Acid Casuals* have become 'classic' books, and all manner of literature exploring the histories of dance music genres (see for example Bussmann 1998; Kempster 1996) or the subcultures relationship with drugs (for example Collin 1997), have been published. The jargon of rave has entered everyday vocabulary, with the media constantly using lifted phrases such as 'sorted'. The decline of football violence has even been attributed to the rise in popularity of House and Rave, and free parties and raves have been heralded as uniting youth subcultures as never before. Clubcultures have had such a cultural impact that the Government even introduced anti-rave measures, the most notorious of which is the Criminal Justice Act of 1994.

Subcultures then, do have wide reaching significance to contemporary society and culture. Indeed, youth subcultures have captured the imagination not only of the media and commercial industries, but of the public at large. The 'extraordinary popularity' of exhibitions such as *Streetstyle* at the Victoria & Albert Museum, has 'revealed the strenght of public interest in this subject matter' (Moore 1997;81). So why has more not been undertaken to address this area within museums?

This thesis then, makes a contribution to the growing body of work that attempts to theorise museums within a social and cultural studies context. Like other work, it aims to 'show how social and cultural theorizing can illuminate practice by asking awkward questions, suggesting connections and throwing the spotlight onto omissions and their significance.' (Macdonald and Fyfe 1996;3) This thesis illustrates that a seemingly innocuous subject can highlight all manner of issues for museums.

Its purpose is to reveal the hidden agendas, the traditions by which museums operate. 'For while *what* is shown in museums is important, the question of *how* museum artefacts get displayed and represented - and thus of what they are made to mean - is as least as significant.' Although attempts are being made to change and challenge the model museums work to, it is a slow process hampered by firmly established ideas about what the institution of the museum is and should be.
Hein has argued that museums are 'existentially placed at the forefront of a reconstruction of fundamental philosophical concepts whose influence has reverberated throughout the world' (2000). However, it is arguably a revolution in which museums have hardly played an active engaged part. Hooper-Greenhill has suggested that a 'post-museum' is emerging, but it is argued here that whilst this may be true in other countries, at present within the British context the modernist museum paradigm still dominates. That whilst it may be argued that changes are being made and museums are becoming more inclusive and responsive, fundamental changes to attitudes and ways of operating are often still limited to the more progressive museums.

The modernist museum paradigm is deeply entrenched within British museums. Its dominace has arguably been sustained to some extent because unlike other countries, such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, Britain does not have a population of first nation peoples who, having rights beginning to be recognised at a political, economic and social level, are also demanding recognition at a cultural level. Political imperatives to recognise first nations people's rights, have forced museums to change their ways of operating and their inherent racist and colonialist assumptions. As Hooper-Greenhill has argued, the 'post-museum' may indeed be emerging in these countries where the external force of change is strong. In Britain however, the strangle hold of the modernist paradigm seems too powerful, and without a united front of marginalised communities forcing through change, radical modifications to the ways museums work remains limited to those museums based on ethnographic and colonial collections.

This thesis does acknowledge the good work that many museums are undertaking, however it aims to problematise the museum rather than take it for granted. Focusing on an examination of the current paradigm's limitations does not deny the positive struggles that the profession is engaged in. Nor does it deny that many do recognise the need for alternative, more appropriate and reflective modes of practice. Though there may be signs that a new type institution is on the way, as yet a major paradigmatic shift has not occurred and the modernist paradigm of the museum still remains the underlying structural force, influencing the perceived role of museums and museum practice. Through a case study of the representation, lack of representation and misrepresentation of subcultures, this may be revealed.
CHAPTER ONE

Establishing some foundations: key critical theorists and the turn towards postmodernity.

Introduction.

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundations from which this thesis draws. The choice of theorists may on first glance appear somewhat 'pick and mix' in its breadth, but the utilisation of a number of theoretical positions can be substantiated. Though Best and Kellner's Nietzschean-inspired comment that 'a multiplicity of perspectives provides a richer approach to phenomena than a single-optic perspective' (1991;123) could be taken as justification enough, further elucidation on the choices made is appropriate.

An important raison d'etre for the selection of the following is that their works have begun to have an impact on subcultural and/or museological discourses: Gramsci for example, was utilised in the consolidation of subcultural theory at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), whilst recent revisions in the CCCS subcultural paradigm have been inspired by a Foucaultian perspective. However, it is important to explain that this has not been the only selection criteria. The theorists have not been chosen solely for the existing contribution their theories may have made to these disciplines, but also for the theoretical support they can offer this thesis.

As the introduction established, the objective of this thesis is to problematise the modernist paradigm of 'museum' by responding to the cultural logic of postmodernity located in the following: a collapse of universalist meta-narratives with their privilege to tell 'truth', the recognition of a plurality of voices from the margins, of difference and cultural diversity, the claims of heterogeneity over homogeneity (Storey 1993;159), and the questioning of the validity of 'totalising' or 'essentialist' tendencies of previous theoretical systems. The theoretical sources chosen here are of relevance because they have responded to, and have played a part within, this epistemological shift.

The theorists have been chosen for the challenges they present to modernist values and ways of knowing, and the support they lend to the dialectics on which this thesis is
founded: the ideas of Gramsci and Foucault have been drawn upon in relation to issues of control and the operation of power and knowledge within society, the work of Baudrillard and Jameson sheds light on the commodification of everyday life, the collapse of ‘the real’ and the dominance of simulacra, and a flight into the past; Lyotard and Maffesoli elucidate the breakdown of grand narratives and ‘mass’ culture, champion difference and offer a re-theorisation of identity and group formations. Although specific aspects of the various theorists’ work have been focused upon within particular sections in this chapter, it should be acknowledged that their ideas will also be of relevance to other sections: both Foucault and Lyotard offer critiques of modern knowledge for example, while as Best and Kellner advise, an ‘adequate theory of power...would forget neither Baudrillard nor Foucault’ (1991;123).

Parallels and disagreements between their engagement with postmodernity may be identified for the term postmodern itself is characterised by ambiguity: Baudrillard, Jameson and Lyotard for example, conceive of postmodernity in a periodisation sense, however Baudrillard understands it as breaking fundamentally with modernity, whereas Jameson acknowledges continuous characteristics from the previous order, whilst Lyotard sees postmodernity, as in fact, modernity in its nascent state. Only Jameson theorises within a neo-Marxist framework, for unlike Lyotard, Jameson does not believe that metanarratives have disappeared. Defending Marxist hermeneutics he conceives of postmodernism as the dominant logic of late capitalism (Best and Kellner 1991;185); like Baudrillard, Jameson characterises postmodernism as a culture of images and simulacra, and like Baudrillard and Lyotard, he emphasises the fragmented nature of postmodern culture (Best and Kellner 1991;184). Whatever the position and characterisation of postmodernism they offer, they have all contributed significantly to postmodern discourse and have formulated critical theories which interweave through this thesis.

It should be acknowledged that an attempt to provide any sort of comprehensive account of the work of the theorists addressed here has not been made. Rather, relevant elements have been extrapolated for use within this thesis, and are introduced within this chapter. Nor has it been appropriate to address in any great depth criticisms levied at their theoretical

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8 Gramsci is a slight anomaly here as he was writing much earlier than the rest of the theorists chosen, before the notion of postmodernity was to take hold. His relevance is justifiable however, for not only as his work has been utilised extensively by subcultural theory and to a lesser extent, in museological theory, but also because one can argue that his critique of Marxism, which he saw as over-determined and reductionist in nature, was an intuition of the coming challenges to metanarratives that postmodernity posed.
discourses. Whilst it is important to recognise that challenges have been directed at them, it is not necessarily a matter of substantiating what they say here but rather exploring the implications of the theorisation's they proffer. Whether they be ‘avant-gardist’ celebrating new developments of diversity or ‘cultural conservatives’ decreeing the superficiality of new developments (Best and Kellner 1991), whether one believes in the extremes of Baudrillard’s hyper-real world for example, or whether one conceives that postmodernity is a cultural and political reality at all, is not what is important here. Rather, if the postmodern paradigm is said to be characterised by:

‘a multiplicity of forms, a plurality of taste, pastiches, it speaks of the unfoundationality of belief systems, of the incapacity of rationality to grasp the whole, of the contingency of scientific data on the position of the observer, of the positionality and indeterminacy of knowledge, and of the power inscribed in the arbitrariness of authority.’ (Holub 1992; 171-172)

What are the implications of this? How have such epistemological shifts influenced subcultural theory, and what challenges does such a shift present to the modernist paradigm of the museum?

**Structures of power and knowledge.**

Within this section the ideas of two theorists, Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault, shall be addressed. Although an ‘awkward and uneasy tension’ exists between the two (Bennett 1997,11) -they were working at different periods in time, within very different contexts, and from different traditions- they have both been utilised within this thesis because they have dominated much of the work that has explored and exposed the structures and mechanisms of power that operate in society, and the relationships of knowledge to these.

Comparisons can be made between their work; both agree that power is not imposed from above but rather is dependant on consent from below to operate. Both see power as being ‘produced’ and ‘reproduced’ in everyday life and that it is ubiquitous. However, many more differences between them are apparent. As Harris points out, Foucault was once read as an ally of Marxism, particularly the Gramscian kind (1992;39), however this reading can be said to best fit Foucault’s work on discipline and punishment for he was to soon move away from this ‘Marxist phase’. It has been argued that Foucault offers more space for ‘oppositional’ political criticism than Gramsci’s class based concepts do (Docherty
1993;27), and whilst Gramsci identifies power in terms of uneven relations, for Foucault power is unqualifiable and unquantifiable (Holub 1992;29). Gramscian conceptions of hegemonic power also identify consent as a fundamental principle, whereas Foucauldian conceptions premise programmed behaviour as key (Bennett 1997;101).

As Bennett has shown however (1997), it is possible to draw from both, for although their relative differences must be recognised, both do offer a means by which the structures of power that operate within and through museums can be identified and explored.9 The use of both may also be justified because of the influence their theoretical positions have had on subcultural theory (which will become apparent in the next chapter). Both then, offer useful ways of analysing the position and role of the institution of the museum in contemporary society and the manner in which subcultural formations have been approached within it.

Antonio Gramsci:
Gramsci was an Italian Communist who in 1926, was imprisoned by Mussolini’s Fascist government for his political activism. In prison, Gramsci undertook ‘a project which, in intensity and intellectual breath, is quite astonishing’ (Bennett et al. 1992;191), that was to become known in English as the *Prison Notebooks* (1971). Whilst his work was generally unknown to his contemporaries, his writings and in particular the *Prison Notebooks*, became widely revered in academic circles, having a significant effect on the discipline of cultural studies and, as we shall see, on subcultural theory: within the study of popular culture there was a ‘turn to Gramsci’ (Bennett 1986), and as Harris states, by the 1990s one can say that it [Gramscianism] has become the governing orthodoxy, one of the most fashionable and powerful intellectual traditions in contemporary social science’ (1992; frontispiece). Thus, it is to the *Prison Notebooks* selection of writings, and in particular to his concept of ‘hegemony’, that attention shall focus on here as Gramsci provides a paradigm for the study structures of power that operate within everyday modern capitalist societies.

Gramsci’s work has been regarded as an attempt to confront the real political and social upheavals of the period in which he was living. Many of his ideas ‘have evolved as responses to the problems and complexities of his own time and place’ (Holub 1992;22). In

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9 Like Bennett however, this thesis does draw upon Foucault foremost.
particular, Gramsci was concerned to critically explore why the revolution against capitalism had not happened as Marx had predicted, given the economic crisis experienced by various western countries (Holub 1992;5). Gramsci’s work whilst located within the Marxist tradition, was however to make significant departures from orthodox Marxism. Rejecting the over determined claims orthodox Marxism made of the economic base of society, he challenged the paradigm of base/superstructure, reducing the importance of the base and widening the superstructure to consider the role of the intellectual and cultural influences in the question of power, something which was to give him ‘a distinctive place in Marxist philosophy.’ (Joll 1977;8) To quote;

‘Gramsci saw, in a way that few other Marxists have done, that the rule of one class over another does not depend on economic or physical power alone but rather on persuading the ruled to accept the system of beliefs of the ruling class and to share their social, cultural and moral values.’ (Joll 1977;8)

Thus Gramsci saw that structures of power did not operate solely on an economic level, but through relationships with culture and politics. He believed that culture was never neutral nor separated from politics, that culture was not just a mere reflection of the economic base of power; power operated on cultural, moral, and political levels. Gramsci rejected the orthodox Marxist notion that class domination is attained through force, and in his concept of ‘hegemony’ he acknowledged the more subtle ways that power can be maintained; through a synthesis of force and consent.

The concept of hegemony has become synonymous with Gramsci, however it is difficult to locate a single definition within his writings; inconsistencies and ambiguities in The Prison Notebooks can be identified, not in the least due to Gramsci’s efforts to evade the prison censors and the effects that translation have had on the works. Ransome suggests that one should be cautious of the ‘taken for granted’ manner in which the term has been used, and that the ambiguities and composite nature of hegemony must be addressed (1992). Whilst not wishing to fall into the reductionist trap, what is presented here attempts to arrive at a coherent definition of hegemony that will be useful within this thesis.

Gramsci, having attributed the concept of hegemony directly to Lenin, extended it well beyond it’s original usage (Ransome 1992;134). He recognised that control was exercised in two forms; coercive and consensual. He believed that coercive forms of power cannot be maintained unless the dominant class also exercises 'intellectual and moral leadership' (Gramsci 1971;57): challenging repressive conceptualisations of structures of power he
believed that power could only be maintained if certain concessions are made to the class who are dominated. Dominant groups must seek to obtain the consent of subordinate groups of the existing social order, to justify and maintain their dominance and status quo of the dominant social order; to ‘win the active consent of those over whom it rules’ (Gramsci 1971;244). However, this concern for the interests of those social groups over which it wishes to exercise hegemony, must be genuine (Bennett et al. 1992;226): An account must

‘be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed - in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind.’ (Gramsci 1971;161)

Such comprises will never be far reaching enough to threaten the leading groups position of power though:

‘there should be no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity.’ (Gramsci 1971;161)

Thus hegemony can be understood as:

‘the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.’ (Gramsci 1971;12)

In an effective and extensive form of hegemony there will be a relative equilibrium and harmony as the state emerges as the unifier and arbitrator of diverse interests and conflicts (Bennett et al. 1992;199). Though ‘crisis of authority’ may occur, the state apparatus should only resort to coercive measures, ‘legally’ enforcing discipline ‘in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent have failed’ (Gramsci 1971;12-13). Indeed, ‘one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion’ (Gramsci 1971;263). 10

Struggles over hegemony must be understood therefore as organic, a ‘war of position’ not a ‘war of manoeuvre’, as the battle for dominance can never be permanently won.

If Gramsci is ‘primarily concerned with the ways in which a whole complex series of cultural, political and ideological practices work to ‘cement’ a society into a relative-

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10 Note that Gramsci is not consistent in his conception of ‘the State’: see introduction to State and Civil Society (Gramsci 1971;207-208).
though never complete-unity' (Bennett et al. 1992:192), we must explore hegemony as a concept of ideology a little further. Gramsci challenges the orthodox Marxist conception of ideology as simply a system of ideas based on specific beliefs that reflect class interests. Rejecting the notion that a 'pure' bourgeois or working class ideology exists, he dismisses the dominant ideology thesis that supposes that bourgeois culture and ideology attempts to take the place of working class culture and ideology. Rather Gramsci argues, the former accommodates the latter. By means of ideology, a dominant group secures and maintains its position by articulating the interests of other, subordinate classes to its own. Ideology is more than just a system of ideas, it is a battlefield of struggle (Gramsci 1971:377).

Ideology determines 'united economic and political objectives but also intellectual and moral unity' (Gramsci 1971:180-185).

Though it has already been noted that Gramsci's use of the terms 'civil society' and 'State' does vary throughout The Prison Notebooks, the conclusion can be drawn as Ransome does (1992:139,143), that whilst neither have an absolute monopoly on these forms of control, Gramsci generally suggests that the 'public' political society/the State ('juridical' government, army, police, penal system) is the primary source of 'direct domination' or coercive force, while 'private' civil society (the Church, trade unions, education system, media), is the primary source of consensual hegemony (see1971:12). Hegemony thus, is not some abstract entity but is created and maintained by conscious human agents:

'Ideas and opinions are not spontaneously “born” in each individual brain: they have a centre of formation, of irradiation, of dissemination, of persuasion- a group of men, or a single individual even, which has developed them and presented them in the political form of current reality' (Gramsci 1971:192).

Gramsci is acknowledging that hegemony is maintained 'intellectually' by 'functionaries' that can be found within the various strata of society. Gramsci stresses the importance of 'functionaries'; the intellectuals are the agents of ideological apparatus, they are the 'dominant group’s “deputies” exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government' (Gramsci 1971:12-13). Intellectuals perform 'an essential mediating function in the struggle of class forces' (Gramsci 1971:3), part of a system of relations that is inscribed by power and domination, they play a political role as producers and disseminators of knowledge (Holub 1992:24). Indeed Gramsci describes different categories of intellectuals of which the 'traditional intellectuals' and 'organic intellectuals'

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11 See Ransome for a discussion of the different versions of Gramsci's key concepts, and for criticism of his partition of coercive and consensual control (1992:139-144).
are of particular interest here. The former are the ‘professional intellectuals, literary, scientific and so on’, artists, philosophers, poets, who conceive of themselves as autonomous and represent a historical continuity. The latter are distinguished less by their profession ‘than by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong.’ (Gramsci 1971:3).

It is worth noting that as Gramsci does not necessarily conceive of hegemonic struggle in repressive terms, everyone is potentially an intellectual and therefore could be agents of alternative hegemonic claims; the ‘active-man-in-the mass’ (1971:33-334) has an important part in organising challenge to dominant bourgeois hegemony. As ideology, popular beliefs and ‘common sense’ play a part in maintaining bourgeois hegemony, so to could they be part of an alternative hegemony which could challenge the former. Success thus depends not only on forming allies and projecting a coherent and attractive ideology but ‘the starting point must always be that common sense which is the spontaneous philosophy of the multitude and which has to be made ideologically coherent’ (Gramsci 1971:421).

Before we move on to briefly consider the concept of hegemony in its application to museums, we should beware of applying a monolithic interpretation to the idea of dominant group. Advising caution, Lears for example states that “to avoid getting shot down, proponents of hegemony should be aware of attributing a single mentality to large institutions.”(1985:587) He warns of the tendency to confuse hegemony with social control as misreading of Gramsci. Gramsci does not conceive of the state simply in terms of repressive functions and one should be wary of using hegemony in conspiratorial interpretations, for Gramsci in fact states that in ‘reality, the State must be conceived of as an ‘educator’: The Law is the repressive and negative aspect of the entire positive, civilising activity undertaken by the State.’ (Gramsci 1971:247) Criminal actions may be punished in ‘original ways, bringing in ‘public opinion’ as a form of sanction’ (Gramsci 1971:247).

12 Note that Gramsci’s conception of the intellectual is much more complex than it has been possible to explore here; he goes so far as to state ‘All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals’ (Gramsci 1971:9). See (Holub 1992) for a detailed analysis of what is identified as four major models of the ‘intellectual’ within Gramsci’s theories.
Gramsci’s ideas have had a profound influence, in particular within the discipline of cultural studies where ‘the turn to Gramsci’ helped break down polarities between structuralism and culturalism, and challenged essentialist assumptions that held distinct class culture and ideologies to exist. (Bennett 1986;xvi) Some criticisms have been levied at Gramsci and the continued use of Gramscian perspective; there has been a turn away from methodological tools of ideology, class, State, false consciousness and so forth. His theory of hegemony however, is still a useful tool for work which attempts to explore modern social and cultural formations.

Although his theories have rarely been utilised within a museological context, his ideas are of interest to this discipline. As ideology is spread in material terms and through institutional structures, museums can be interpreted as part of the ‘hegemonic apparatus’ that also includes ‘schools, churches, the entire media…’ (Bennett et al. 1992;227). It can be argued that museums operate as ‘functionaries’, museum professionals as ‘traditional intellectuals’, that produce and disseminate knowledge and serve as mediators within the struggle for hegemony of dominant groups. As Gramsci holds that the ‘ideas, values, and experiences of dominant groups are validated in public discourse’ and those of subordinate groups are not (Lears 1985;574), we shall see how the modernist museum functioned as a political space where some stories, histories, cultures were validated through inclusion whilst others went ignored. As part of civil society, the museum was and still is an institution through which hegemony is exercised.

Michel Foucault:
A philosopher, historian and critical theorist, Michel Foucault has been described as a ‘complex and eclectic thinker who draws from multiple sources and problematics while aligning himself with no single one’ (Best and Kellner 1991;35). A prolific writer, his career has covered ‘an astonishing range of topics’ (Hoy 1986;2); however it is for his theorisation’s of power that he has become regarded as most influential. Unlike Gramsci, Foucault was to approach the operational structures of power from a very different perspective. Foucault for instance, was to break with Marxist theory much more decisively.

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13 The French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser (1971), also explored further Gramsci’s conceptions of power within the State and the ‘private’ apparatus of hegemony or ‘civil society’. Althusser devised a more theoretically rigid framework; State Apparatuses functioned principally by physical force, and the Ideological State Apparatuses functioned through ideology.
than Gramsci ever did: indeed he was to reject altogether the Marxist framework which places economics, ideology and repression as fundamental to a conception of power. For Foucault, the problematics of power were not based around class struggle; relations of power extend beyond the limits of the State, to the network of 'the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth' (Foucault 1980:122). Unlike Gramsci, Foucault also regarded power as anonymous, as being dispersed throughout society without a specific source or single agency.

Providing a brief account of Foucault's work is a challenging task as it spans three decades and has undergone shifts in direction and methodology. Central to much of his work has been an exploration of the mechanisms through which power operates within 'the concrete domain of real history' (Tagg 1992:287). He has charted the ways in which power functions within institutions, discourses and practices, through historical analysis of the emergence of specific institutions such as the clinic and prison for example. In what can be described as a 'structuralist' phase however, his attention shifted towards an enquiry into the internal structures of scientific discourse, in particular the 'human sciences' (Dews 1984), and a consideration of the potential qualities of the methodology of discontinuity (Foucault 1997; 2000). In the last works before his death in 1984, Foucault's attention again shifted towards studies of ethics and technologies of the self. The overall project that can be located throughout Foucault's work however, and that is of interest to this thesis, has been to write a critique of the modern era which;

'problematises modern forms of knowledge, rationality, social institutions, and subjectivity that seem given and natural but in fact are contingent sociohistorical constructs of power and domination.'(Best and Kellner 1991:35)

A methodological shift can also be identified in his writing, as Foucault employed two key analytical paradigms: his early works are characterised by an approach he has termed 'archaeology' (Foucault 1973; 1997; 2000), however his later works are characterised by a 'genealogy' paradigm (Foucault 1991). His 'archaeological' approach to histories, aimed to discover the rules behind 'discursive practices' and the conditions in which knowledges came to be established as 'truths'; to trace and uncover an 'archive', the rules by which 'discursive formations' come to be assembled and characterise a domain of knowledge. Although Foucault provides an archaeology of madness or unreason in *Madness and

\[\text{Foucault's perception of his own objectives as regarding 'power' are at times ambiguous; he at times emphasises that he is interested in how subjects are constructed (Foucault 1982:208) or considering how power is 'experienced', rather than analysing or elaborating any theories about power.}\]
Civilisation (1967) and of medical perception in The Birth of the Clinic (1973), it was through his exploration of the human sciences in The Order of Things (1997) that he identified and provided his most detailed analysis of the underlying rules, assumptions and ordering procedures of what he identified as three major epistemes.

Foucault maintains that epistemologies are not constant, but that structures of knowledge have undergone major shifts where the associated rupture has lead to a complete rewriting of the previously accepted epistemology. The Renaissance, classical and modern epistemes he identifies are thus each characterised by particular knowledge structures; the modern episteme he argues for example, was founded on humanist assumptions that centred upon ‘Man’ and informed the new sciences such as psychology and sociology. The Order of Things then, identified the changes that occur with the shift from one episteme to another, however within The Archaeology of Knowledge (2000), Foucault’s last work which can be identified as an ‘archaeology’, he focused more directly on the adoption of discontinuity as a positive working concept. In rejecting totalising narratives, he suggests that;

‘A total description draws all phenomena around a single centre - a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape; a general history, on the contrary, would deploy the space of a dispersion.’ (Foucault 2000;10)

The Archaeology of Knowledge thus goes further to explore, through the ideas of ‘discursive practices’ and ‘discursive formation’, the ways in which truth or accepted realities are established. Foucault considers the conceptual frameworks which allow some modes of thought and deny others, pursuing the rules that govern discourses he draws attention to the unwritten rules which define what it is possible to say on a subject. For Foucault, the discursive practises and formations that give definition to an episteme, are characterised by contradictory discourses: unity of a discourse on, for example madness, is made possible by the interplay of rules and transformations of the object. Discourses are thus conceived as inseparable from power; power operates through discourse and discourses are always located within power. Discourse provides the means by which institutions exercise power through processes of definition and exclusion.

When, through the influence of Nietzsche (Best and Kellner 1991;45), Foucault widened the scope of his analysis and turned to genealogy, he begun to examine more directly the relationship of knowledge and power. As an analytical tool, genealogy like archaeology rejected grand evolutionary laws and sought to identify systems of knowledge through
which power operates. Drawing on and revising ideas formulated within his archaeological works, Foucault continued to investigate the material contexts in which objects of study are identified, constituted and implicated within the maintenance of particular discursive formations, which he links directly to the technologies of power that are diffused through multiple sites.

Concerned with how power operates, how it is exercised and what are its effects, Foucault rejects a definition of power as repressive or associated with straightforward domination; Foucault understands it to work through decentred networks. Questioning whether the mechanisms of power really belong primarily to the category of repression, he states that:

‘the notion of repression is quite inadequate for capturing what is precisely the productive aspect of power. In defining the effects of power as repression, one adopts a purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no, power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition.’ (Foucault 1980;119)

Power ‘needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.’ (Foucault 1980;119) Foucault thus attempts to make these ‘series of multiple and indefinite power relations’ apparent through his writings, taking critical theory into new territories that are ‘neither violence nor ideology, coercion nor consent’ (Tagg 1992;288).

Part of the project that Foucault has undertaken however, has been to trace the emergence of new technologies of control that regulated the conduct of individuals and populations. Though characterised by specific rationalities, these technologies were part of a wider transition in the forms of knowledge and modes of social organisation, that lead to an intensification of surveillance and effective forms of control. Foucault saw the disciplinary and normalising powers of the modern era as beginning in the classical. He argues that from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards there was ‘a veritable technological take-off in the productivity of power’:

‘a new ‘economy’ of power, that is to say procedures which allowed the effects of power to circulate in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted and ‘individualised’ throughout the entire social body.’ (Foucault 1980;119)

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15 It should be noted that issue has been taken with Foucault’s conceptualisation of power and he has been criticised for conceiving a notion of power that is too neutral: he is unwilling to recognise real injustices of power that operate within society such as racism, homophobia, patriarchy and so forth. The implications for marginalised collective identities to organise in opposition or resistance to dominant power is also limited in his work.

16 Indeed Foucault highlighted that ‘power in Western capitalism was denounced by the Marxists as class domination; but the mechanics of power in themselves were never analysed.’ (Foucault 1980;116)
Exploring the means by which forms of knowledge and social organisation came to dominate over subjects, he started at the 'grass roots level' of struggles, at the 'fine mesh' levels of the web of power. A number of his works, whether archaeological or genealogical in approach, therefore track the new technologies of power, tracing for example the histories of the constituted subject within psychiatry (*Madness and Civilization*), medicine (*The Birth of the Clinic*) and later, the penal system (*Discipline and Punish*); areas that theoretical frameworks based on economic significance had ignored (Foucault 1980;116).

Of particular interest to this thesis is *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1991) where Foucault explores the emergence of what he called, a 'disciplinary society'. Here he explores in detail the shift in the technologies of power that occurred around the time of the Enlightenment. Previously he argues, 'sovereign power' was exercised directly, with force and with an emphasis on the corporal; the state reaffirmed its control through a display of absolute power over the body, in the form of public executions for example, which acted as warning or deterrent. New techniques of 'disciplinary power' however, which were 'much more efficient and much less wasteful' (Foucault 1980;119), attempted to incorporate the criminal back into society rather than exclude them: a 'whole army of technicians took over from the executioner...warders, doctors, chaplains, psychiatrists, psychologists, educationalists' (1991;11). Punishment shifted from the spectacle of physical pain and exclusion of the body to one of curing, correcting, reclaiming and rehabilitating the subject.

Centred on a functionalist conception of power, Foucault claimed this new 'economy of power' to be 'one of the great inventions of the bourgeois society' (Foucault 1980;105). Central to Foucault's idea of disciplinary society, was the notion of 'surveillance'. State power became invisible and could now penetrate every area of society without apparently coming from anywhere. A system was put into position which comprising of 'surveillance, normalisation and control' and later 'punishment, correction, education', put polymorphous disciplinary mechanisms into operation. (Foucault 1980;121) Using Jeremy Bentham's architectural 'panopticon' as a paradigm of disciplinary technology, Foucault explored how post-Enlightenment society was a 'carceral society', in which we are all inmates of the system, subject to subtle and invisible processes of discipline: like the prisoner in the panopticon cell, citizens can never be sure of whether they are being observed and thus they are forced to regulate themselves at all times (Foucault 1991).
The disciplinary apparatus of the new technologies of power were prisons, workhouses, asylums, hospitals, schools and so forth; and the new technicians of disciplinary power were ‘the ancestors of such modern day state professionals as social workers, educators, probation officers, psychiatrists, occupational therapists, work instructors and the like’ (Pratt 1986;5). The aim was to forge a ‘docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved’ (Foucault 1991;198) and normalising principles of intervention were employed to do this. Foucault was thus interested in how power constituted subjects as well as regulated them, and he identified three means, ‘dividing practices’, ‘scientific classification’ and ‘subjectification’, by which the objectification of the subject occurred (Rabinow 1991;8-11).

Foucault identified through ‘dividing practices’ how ‘the subject is objectified by a process of division either within himself or from others’. The poor, insane or deviant were excluded from the rest of society in a spatial sense, but also isolated, classified and stigmatised by science and therefore controlled and contained in a more pervasive manner. Through social objectification and categorisation, a system of normalisation was constructed; anomalies could be isolated and systematic normalisation of these anomalies could occur through corrective or therapeutic procedures. Social deviations became defined as dangerous; however they needed to be invented before they could be controlled and thus a ‘vast documentary apparatus’ became essential to the technologies of normalisation (Rabinow 1991;22).

At the beginning of nineteenth century a ‘bifurcation’ occurred, separating the ‘normal’ from ‘the not normal’ (Pratt 1986;3) and deviancy became regulated not through suppression but through classification, by being made intelligible and therefore controllable. In The History of Sexuality (1981) for example, Foucault explores the discursive production of sexuality. Rather than through means of repression, the sexuality of the populace was controlled through increased discourse; issues of sexuality became increasingly a focus of interest and classification. In this manner sexual deviance could be readily recognised as ‘the normal’ was defined, thus enabling the identification and regulation of anomalies; the ‘homosexual’ was now an identifiable ‘species’ for example, and thus subject to control.
We see then how Foucault identifies an inextricable relationship between knowledge and power:

'power produces knowledge...power and knowledge directly imply one another...there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.' (1991;27)

Issues of knowledge and truth are thus, fundamental to Foucault’s conception of power: through discourse the pursuit of truth has been institutionalised, professionalised and rewarded. Modern theories have tended to see knowledge and truth as ‘neutral, objective, universal, or vehicles of progress and emancipation’, Foucault however, analyses them as ‘integral components of power and domination.’ (Best and Kellner 1991;38). ‘Truth’ is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects which power induces and which extend it: A ‘regime’ of truth.’ (Foucault 1980;133) Envisaging a triangle of ‘power, right, truth’ in which we ‘are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth’, Foucault identifies a battle ‘around truth’; ‘a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays’ (1980;132). An objective of Foucault therefore, has been to detach the power of truth ‘from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.’(Foucault 1980;133);

‘ ‘It seems to me’...‘that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them.’’ (Foucault quoted in Rabinow 1991;6)

We can see then, that Foucault rejects the Enlightenment tradition of progress and reason and is ‘highly suspicious of claims to universal truths’ (Rabinow 1991;4). Throughout his work he attempts through historicising, to undertake a critical theorisation of the tactics and strategies of power/knowledge and the construction of the subject, which does not recourse to universals. Foucault points to ‘the inhibiting effect of global, totalitarian theories’, for whilst he acknowledges that global theories such as Marxism and psychoanalysis have been ‘useful tools’, they are too reductionist and now act as a ‘hindrance’ to research (Foucault 1980;80-81). He argues that within recent history there has been a turn to local criticism and an ‘insurrection of subjugated knowledges’ (Foucault 1980;81), of disqualified or popular knowledges. He thus rejects the reductionist implications of totalising theories and discourses, suggesting these need to be ‘superseded by a plurality of forms of knowledge and microanalysis’ (Best and Kellner 1991;39).
As Foucault himself acknowledges, ‘archaeology does not have a unifying but a diversifying effect’ (2000;160): adopting discontinuities as a positive working concept, allows a multiplicity of discourses to be uncovered (Best and Keller, 1991;43). Using archaeology not just to ‘attain a plurality of histories juxtaposed and independent of one another’, but to also ‘determine what form of relation may be legitimately described between…different series’ of things (Foucault 2000;10). Thus against the ‘tyranny of globalizing discourses’, Foucault attempts to highlight the ‘disqualified’ discourses and the ‘illegitimate knowledges’ (Foucault 1980;83-4): he ‘tries to write the histories of unknown, forgotten, excluded, and marginal discourses.’ (Best and Kellner 1991;48). In this, his work may be regarded as a celebration of the politics of difference; heterogeneity, multiplicity and marginality.17

Ideas of Foucault are thus informative for a critique of the modernist paradigm of the museum, on a number of levels. Indeed Foucault has informed the two significant museological texts on which this thesis builds. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill utilises Foucault in her analysis of the history of museums and the ways they have shaped knowledge (1992). Drawing from Foucault’s use of discontinuity and rupture, and using his concept of the episteme, she employs ‘effective history’ to examine the ‘history of the museum’ and reveal the historical specificity behind notions of truth and reason that museums have perpetuated within the knowledges they offer up for consumption.

Tony Bennett also draws on Foucault (1997), however he takes issue with him, questioning the totality of Foucault’s conception of the ‘swarming of disciplinary mechanisms’. Bennett suggests that an examination of the birth of the modern museum, reveals that the move away from a society dominated by the spectacle to one of the carceral was not as pervasive as Foucault suggests. Bennett argues that the spectacle did not cease to exist with the shift toward a disciplinary society, and through the idea of the ‘exhibitionary complex’, he explores the importance of the spectacle in the emergence of the modern public museum: undergoing a profound transformation in its social function, the museum grew out of a move from private to the public consumption of culture. Rendering culture, and society, visible and therefore knowable, museums acted as instruments of regulation within disciplinary society.

17 Thus, although Foucault’s work may be characterised as postmodernist in its approach, it was a term that Foucault himself did not use.
Foucault thus provides inspirational paradigms to help one engage in the political task of examining how institutions, discourses and practices are not natural, neutral or independent, but are tied in with the complex operations of power within society. He provides analytical tools through which the modern public museum may be critiqued, and offers insight into the relationship between power and knowledge that structure discourses on which the institution of the museum has been founded.

In conclusion, we have seen how both Gramsci and Foucault deal with the theorisation of structures of power and knowledge. There are similarities as well as differences within their work that can be drawn from. For Gramsci and Foucault, 'institutions' have different roles to play in the game of power and domination; however both reject a repressive thesis, suggesting that control is mediated through subtle, invisible processes of discipline. As has been suggested, their theories have implications and application as regards the institution of the museum, and this will be explored in more depth throughout this thesis.

Commodification and the end of the real.

The previous section explored two key theorists who began to question 'a number of widespread epistemological and sociological assumptions which govern conventional analysis' (Pratt 1986;2-3). Though both theorised the operational structures of power and knowledge, neither was to directly engage with postmodern discourse. It is now appropriate to move on to address theorists, who in a less direct manner continue to consider issues of power and knowledge, but have been fundamental in setting the agenda for debate on postmodernity and the existence of a postmodern 'sensibility' or 'condition'. This section focuses attention on Jean Baudrillard and Frederic Jameson: their characterisations of postmodernity - the dislocation and end of the real, of the essentiality of notions of authenticity and representation, of the prevalence of pastiche and nostalgia for the past - raise issues which challenge the very foundations of the modernist museum paradigm.

Jean Baudrillard:
Described as 'one of the most stimulating and provocative contemporary thinkers' (Kellner 1994;1), Jean Baudrillard has been a prolific writer and one who has gained a multitude of
supporters as well as critics. A self-proclaimed 'intellectual terrorist' and an acclaimed 'prophet of postmodernity in avant-garde theoretical circles throughout the world' (Kellner 1994:1), he has achieved the status of guru; crowned the 'high priest of the new epoch' (Best and Kellner 1991:111). Indeed, Kellner describes the themes Baudrillard has concerned himself with, as 'some of the most serious, frightening, and important issues that we are now confronting' (Kellner 1994:18).

Within Baudrillard's work, various 'critical disjunctures' can be identified (Best and Kellner 1991; Gottdiener 1994;25). His early works concern themselves with the commodification of everyday life and the political economy of the sign, whilst his middle works, moving on from this initial project, explore society as simulation and the end of the real. By the late 1980s Baudrillard's project underwent a further turn in direction, towards metaphysics and a nihilistic cynicism which decreed the 'end of history': here Best and Kellner suggest he had reached a theoretical 'cul-de-sac' where his positions became 'sloppy generalizations, extreme abstraction, semiological idealism and oft repeated banalities' (1991:135,139).

Although Baudrillard is not the only one who explores the importance of the sign to contemporary society (see the work of Roland Barthes for example) or the proliferation of image as commodity in a 'society of the spectacle' (see the work of Guy Debord), he has been chosen here because of the extent to which he has theorised postmodernity as a culture of simulation and simulacrum. Because this idea is particularly pertinent and challenging to a critique of the modernist museum paradigm, this introduction focuses attention on his early works, *The System of Objects* (1997), *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (1998) and *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972), and his 'middle works' *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1988a) and *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994) where the concept of simulacrum was developed.

It is also important to note that whilst one may accept accusations which reproach Baudrillard for exaggerating the extent to which simulation and hyper-reality dominate contemporary society (Best and Kellner 1991:143) and, may acknowledge Kellner's warning that Baudrillard should be read critically, his works do offer significant characterisations of contemporary society: whether one chooses to read his work more as 'science fiction' than social theory, (work which 'anticipates the future by exaggerating
present tendencies and thus provides early warning about what might happen if present
trends continue' (Kellner 1994;13)), the challenges he presents to orthodox social theories
do have profound implications both for subcultural and museological theory and thus are
useful for this thesis.  

Let us consider Baudrillard’s early works first, which contain ‘proto-postmodern’ themes
(Best and Kellner 1991;118). His first work (1997) has been described as an ‘exemplary
exercise in materialist semiotics’ (Gotttdiener 1994;30) as Baudrillard, unlike with his later
writings, backs up his assertions with concrete examples. Within this work, the ever-
accelerating proliferation of everyday objects -products, appliances, gadgets - was explored
as Baudrillard attempted to describe a new organising system of objects operating within
contemporary society. The cultural change towards the pervasive commodification of daily
life, was supported he maintained, by a new social order of ‘modernity’, facilitated by the
move away from a traditional way of life to one in which fashion and modernist aesthetics
and values become driving forces. It is no longer appropriate to simply recognise
technological structures of organisation, for the new system he argued, must take account
of the cultural and the lived psychological and sociological reality of objects and systems
of meanings.

The first real references to Baudrillard’s significant concepts simulacrum and hyper-reality
however, can be located in his second work, The Consumer Society (1998). An inquiry into
the social logic of consumption, this work examines the process and meaning of
consumption in contemporary culture. Conceiving that a commodification of culture has
occurred where ‘anything can become a consumer object’, Baudrillard draws on the
concept of simulation, exploring how society is increasingly becoming dominated by
simulations. He suggests that we have moved into a period which is characterised by
‘caricatural resurrection, the parodic evocation of what already no longer exists’
(Baudrillard 1998;99).

Events, people, objects, relationships, under the sign of consumption, disappear to be
replaced anachronistically by a caricaturised simulation. Culture is recycled and the

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18 It should also be noted that this author agrees with Kellner’s assertion that Baudrillard does attempt to
develop a theory of postmodernity and the postmodern condition, rather than as Mike Ganes has suggested
that Baudrillard’s position is in fact not postmodern (Kellner 1994): Ganes asserts that Baudrillard holds
postmodernism in ‘contempt’ and that he has been ‘caught in the hype of postmodernism’ (1991;158-150).
original, the real, disappears. Commodities are no longer defined by their practical function (use value), but rather by what they signify (how they relate to other commodities and signs within the system of consumption), and ‘Kitsch’ and the ‘gadget’ have become ‘major categories of the modern object’ (1998;109).

Within the next work *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972), Baudrillard explores in greater depth, systems of signs using semiology: the role of signs in social life, meanings attributed to them – expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power (Kellner 1994;4). Critiquing the Marxist notion of political economy, Baudrillard argues that use value, which Marx placed hope upon for it’s revolutionary potential, was actually an alibi for exchange value. He identified a third political economy, that of the sign, that characterised commodities and dominated contemporary forms of capitalism. He thus moves attention away from politics of production to consumption and its power and role in social organisation that produces hierarchy of prestige and status: people attain status through the products they consume. This was the last work of this type that can be read as offering a neo-Marxist critique of capitalism (Kellner 1994;5), before Baudrillard rejected this analytical framework altogether.

Within these early works Baudrillard addressed the modern era which for him was characterised by the political economy of the sign. The next works moved on in a new direction to consider postmodernity proper, the era characterised by what has been described as the holy trinity of simulations, implosion and hyper-reality (Best and Kellner 1991;118). Baudrillard asserts that a historical shift has occurred and *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (1988a) marks his move towards a principle of fundamental rupture between modern and postmodern societies that is as significant a break as the one between modern and pre-modern societies. He declares the end of political economy where production was the organising principle of society, and the emergence of one based rather on the production of information. In this new epoch, Marxist classic economy of value is obsolete (Baudrillard 1988a;125) and the commodity law of value gives way to a third order of simulation, 'the structural law of value' (Baudrillard 1988a;135). Technologies of mass production, 'computerisation, information processing, media, cybernetic control systems' have all brought in a new social order structured by models, codes and signs (Best and Kellner 1991;118).
The logic of simulation is now the organising principle of postmodernist societies: 'It is now a principle of simulation, and not reality, that regulates social life.' (Baudrillard 1988a;120) No longer a culture of the sign, we have become one of the 'simulacrum'-an identical copy without an original. Distinctions between 'copy' and 'original' have been destroyed as signs refer to other signs and everything is now interchangeable. In this world where 'the real is dead' (1988a;126), and the simulation becomes more real than reality, reality founders in the hyper-real and implodes: 'today, reality itself is hyper-realistic...Now the whole of everyday political, social, historical, economic reality is incorporated into the simulative dimension of hyper-realism' (Baudrillard 1988a;146).

This project came to its zenith with Simulacra and simulation (Baudrillard 1994), which problematised the principle of reality, and explored further the collapse into the hyper-real. Here Baudrillard lays out four orders which representation has historically passed through: the first 'is the reflection of a profound reality', the second 'masks and denatures a profound reality', the third 'masks the absence of a profound reality', and the fourth order (or third order of simulacrum) 'has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum' (Baudrillard 1994;6).

Baudrillard maintains then, that we are now in the third order of simulacrum. In a 'desert of the real', where the copy or duplicate no longer exists and signs of the real are substituted for the real, and so simulations become 'realer-than-real'(1994;2). The simulation thus threatens distinctions between the 'true' and the 'false', the 'real' and the 'imaginary' (1994;3), between the produced and the authentic. Indeed the principles of truth and reality become submerged, and myths of origins, authenticity and truth are resurrected in a 'Panic stricken production of the real and of the referential' (Baudrillard 1994;7); principles of reality and truth are saved through the concealment of the fact that the real and truth no longer exist. Nostalgia now 'assumes its full meaning' for as the real no longer exists, 'a plethora of myths of origin and signs of reality- a plethora of truth, of objectivity, and authenticity' are propagated (Baudrillard 1994;6).

Baudrillard's categories of simulation, implosion, and hyper-reality combine to create a new postmodern condition. For Baudrillard however, this society is one where 'subjects lose contact with the real and themselves fragment and dissolve, and the referent, depth, essence all disappear as does all possibility of opposition, the masses seeking spectacle not
meaning implode into a ‘silent majority’ signifying ‘the end of the social’ (Kellner, 1994;9-10). In a society characterised by the ‘ecstasy of communication’ (Baudrillard 1993) everything reduced to information. The binaries of subject/object and public/private no longer exist as all ‘secrets, spaces and scenes [are] abolished in a single dimension of information.’ (1993;131) In the world of overexposure and transparency where disturbing feature is not the loss of the real but ‘the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things, the feeling of no defence, no retreat’ (1993;133) there exists an ‘obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible, of the more-visible-than-the-visible’. Consequently Baudrillard argues, in attempt to escape the excess of information, disappearance becomes a strategy; a ‘response to this devise for capture, for networking, and for forced identification’(1988b).

Finally, it is appropriate to mention briefly Baudrillard’s Forget Foucault (1977). Within it Baudrillard took Foucault to task for his failure to embrace the postmodern era of the hyper-real and simulation, and asserted that Foucault’s work was obsolete as the classic referents of social theory had disappeared. Power itself, Baudrillard argues, had become a simulacrum (Best and Kellner 1991;122-123). Best and Kellner however suggest limitations to both theorists conceptions of the structures of power: Foucault omits any discussion of the key contemporary mechanisms through which power operates, i.e. the media, consumption, fashion, leisure, semiotics, however the alternative Baudrillard espouses, ‘goes too far and fails to appreciate the heterogeneous character of contemporary forms of power, which include media, signs, and codes, but also spectacle, discipline, surveillance, sexism, racism, torture and other modes of social control.’ (1991;123) Rather, they suggest that an ‘adequate theory of power...would forget neither Baudrillard nor Foucault and would theorise, in a contextualist manner, the multiple forms of power in contemporary society.’(Best and Kellner 1991;123)

To apply Baudrillard’s ideas, especially those of simulacrum and hyper-reality, to museums has serious implications. Any challenge to the principles of reality and truth, threatens to expose as sham the very foundations that the modernist museum paradigm has been built upon. Perceived advances in museum practice also become questionable if Baudrillard’s concepts are engaged with: as museums move towards the use of digital technologies and virtual reality, although they may believe they are communicating ‘history’ in even more accurate ways, according to the logic of the third order of
simulacrum, what they actually present are simulations of history, empty forms of representation, a hyperressemblance of 'real' history. Such implications of Baudrillard’s work will thus be explored in more depth throughout the thesis.

Frederic Jameson:
The American cultural critic Frederic Jameson became noted in particular for his attempts to develop a new form of radical politics informed both by Marxism and postmodernism: unlike Baudrillard who was to reject the significance of political economy and Marxist frameworks, Jameson asserts the supremacy of Marxist theory and attempts to ‘absorb the best insights of poststructuralist and postmodern theory into an updated Marxian theory of the present age’ (Best and Kellner 1991;182).

Numerous connections can be made however, between the work of Baudrillard and that of Jameson. Both perceive postmodernity within a periodising framework and both have theorised the nature of contemporary consumer society as being characterised by commodification which has extended to ‘all realms of social and personal life, penetrating all spheres of knowledge, information and the unconscious itself’ (Best and Kellner 1991;185). Both also argue that postmodernism is characterised by a breakdown of distinctions between high and low culture. Jameson also believed that we are now ‘within’ the culture of postmodernism, and dismissed any thinly-veiled moralising positions taken on it: we ourselves exist in the period ‘to the point where its facile repudiation is as impossible as any equally facile celebration of it is complacent and corrupt’ (1984a).

It is Jameson’s characterisations of postmodernism as a culture of flatness or depthlessness, of nostalgia and pastiche, where time is experienced in a ‘schizophrenic’ manner, that is of particular interest here. However, let us first explore a little further, Jameson’s conception of postmodernism as an epoch.

Jameson conceived of postmodernism as a ‘periodizing concept’ (1993;113), however unlike Baudrillard who identified the change from the modern to the postmodern era as a rupture, Jameson acknowledged the continuities he believed were inherent within it. Whether one takes an ‘antimodern/propostmodern’ or ‘promodern/antipostmodern’ position, he argues against the idea of a decisive break and takes issue with those that would believe we are in a wholly new type of society, variously designated as ‘post-
industrial society’, ‘media society’, ‘information society’, ‘electronic society’ or ‘high tech’ (1984;55). Influenced by Ernest Mandel’s book *Late Capitalism* and his tripartite characterisation of capitalism’s development (‘market capitalism’, ‘monopoly stage’ or the stage of imperialism, and ‘late or multinational capitalism), Jameson plots his own cultural periodisation; ‘realism, modernism and postmodernism’ (1984;78). Postmodernism he argues then, is best understood as the cultural logic which has become dominant in the period of late or multinational capitalism.

Jameson makes it clear therefore that it is essential to understand postmodernism as more than a style, it is rather the dominant cultural formation of the present (1984;56). He recognises that it is difficult to define postmodernism as a coherent thing, and taking issue with those that would locate homogeneity and the obliteration of difference in historical periodisation, offers a periodising hypothesis as a means of recognising the ‘presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features.’ (Jameson 1984;56) Postmodernism may thus be understood as the dominant cultural mode in western capitalist societies, but previous positions have not been obliterated: the vestiges of modernism are still recognisable just as forms of postmodernism were identifiable in modernism. What he does suggest however, is that postmodernism has emerged as a reaction to established forms of high modernism: formerly subversive and shocking, modernism became the establishment against which postmodernism now seeks to displace (Jameson 1993;111).

For Jameson then, the new systemic cultural norm of postmodernism that is dominant is integrally linked with a period in capitalism that constitutes ‘the purest form of capital yet to have emerged, a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas’ (1984;78). Jameson argued that postmodernism embraces the commodification of the

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19 Jameson is a little ambiguous on the extent to which postmodernism as a periodising concept describes a new social order: the term in places, is used to describe ‘new formal features in culture’ that correlate with the emergence of a ‘new type of social life and a new economic order’ (1993;165), or as elsewhere, he has insisted that ‘over and over again...postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order...but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself.’ (1991;xii)

20 It should be noted that Jameson uses the term ‘postmodernisms’: given that postmodernism may be defined as a reaction to high modernism, he argues that it follows that there will be as many postmodernisms as there were modernisms (Jameson 1993;112).

21 Jameson is thus aware of the opposition to periodising hypothesis and the potential incongruity of conceiving postmodernism in periodising terms ‘at a moment in which the very conception of historical periodization has come to seem most problematical indeed.' (1984;55). He sees however that ‘If we do not achieve some general sense of a cultural dominant, then we fall back into a view of present history as sheer
social in a manner modernism never did, reinforcing and intensifying the logic of late capitalism. He suggests therefore, that a feature of postmodernism is the 'erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture' (Jameson 1993;112). Being,

‘fascinated precisely by this whole ‘degraded’ landscape of schlock and kitsch, of TV series and Readers’ Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance (Jameson 1984;55)

artists no longer simply ‘quote’ from mass or popular culture, but incorporate it into the very substance of their work. Thus postmodernism revels in the commercial culture of capitalism, incorporating the essence of ‘mass’ culture ‘to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw.’ (Jameson 1993;165)

An evident feature of the postmodern, which offers a significant difference from modernism, ‘is the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense’ (1991;60). Jameson suggests there is a ‘waning of affect’ in the postmodern, both in terms of contemporary theory and ‘a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum’. The modernist thematics of ‘alienation, anomie, solitude and social fragmentation and isolation’ and the aesthetic of expression have vanished, and depth models have been repudiated and replaced by a multiple of surfaces (Jameson 1984;61-2).

In particular, he argues that postmodernism has discarded the value that the modernist aesthetic placed on individualism and the ‘invention of a personal, private style’ (Jameson 1992;167); ‘individualism and personal identity is a thing of the past…the old individual or individualist subject is “dead”’ (Jameson 1992,168). Through his notion of the ‘death of the subject’, he argues that the modernist aesthetic tradition ‘“weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living”’ as it is no longer possible to invent new styles as all ‘the unique ones have been thought of already’ (Jameson 1992;168) and thus ‘all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the...

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heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of a host of distinct forces whose effectivity is undecidable.’ (Jameson 1984;57)
imaginary museum.’ (Jameson 1992;169). Again this is indicative of the waning of affect as liberated from a centred subject, feelings or emotions thus become free-floating and impersonal (Jameson 1984;64), but also of the ‘failure of the new’ and the ‘imprisonment in the past’ (Jameson 1993;116).

This leads us to locate what Jameson highlights as key defining features of postmodernism; pastiche, ‘nostalgia mode’ and ‘schizophrenia’. He regards pastiche as one ‘of the most significant features or practices in postmodernism today’ (1993;113). Though pastiche and parody both involve imitation and the mimicry of other styles, Jameson states that the former has eclipsed the latter, indeed he suggests that parody is now impossible. He believes that pastiche has become a universal practice engendered by ‘the death of the subject’, resulting in a loss of depth as pastiche is merely ‘blank parody’, a ‘parody that has lost its sense of humour’. Having lost modernism’s ‘critical space’, postmodernism becomes increasingly imprisoned in the past, and ‘historicism’ (‘the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past’) effaces history (Jameson 1984;65).

Jameson suggests that the ‘Nostalgia mode’ is characteristic of postmodernism, where society makes a ‘desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past’ (1984;66). Making reference to ‘nostalgia film’, Jameson argues that attempts are not made to recapture or represent a ‘real’ past, but instead ‘false realism’ of the past is offered up. Nostalgia films do not aim to present ‘some old-fashioned ‘representation’ of historical content’ but rather approach the ‘past’ through stylistic connotation, conveying ‘pastness’ by the glossy qualities of the image, and the ‘1930s-ness’ or 1950s-ness by the attributes of fashion’ (Jameson 1984;67). What is presented are our ideas and cultural stereotypes about the past; as such, nostalgia films are representations of representations.

Jameson argues that ‘we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience.’ (1984;68) He suggests then, that in a waning of historicity where the historical referent has disappeared, ‘we are condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach.’ (1984;71) Suffering from ‘historical amnesia’, postmodern culture has lost it’s sense of history. Jameson thus identifies another feature of the postmodern; what he terms

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22 Jameson’s reference to an ‘imaginary museum’ in this context is interesting; it reveals a stereotypical understanding of ‘the museum’ as something to which the past is confined, which is characterised by stasis and death, rather than something that actively engages and influences the contemporary.
'schizophrenia'. Drawing from Lacan, schizophrenia is understood as the breakdown of the relationship between signifiers, where the schizophrenic loses any sense of temporal continuity but rather lives in a perpetual present. (Jameson 1993; 119) Relating this to postmodernism, Jameson suggests that the crisis of historicity is characteristic of the postmodern due to a breakdown in temporal organisation: time is experienced as fragmented into a series of perpetual presents rather than as a continuum, and any sense of history has disappeared;

'our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve.'(Jameson 1993; 125)

Jameson's various themes that we have addressed here then, may not be new (in that they can be found characterised in high-modernism), however it may be argued that they have now become challenging issues for museums because within the period of late-capitalism, they have become the dominant cultural logic. Some of the themes already identified in Baudrillard's work, can also be located in Jameson's; like Baudrillard, he believes that consumerism has spread to all aspects of society, and he also identifies a breakdown in the divisions between high and mass or popular culture. Again like Baudrillard, Jameson also believes that a key feature of postmodernism is the transformation of reality into images; the characterisation of modern society as dominated by simulacrum.²³

In particular Jameson, locates pastiche, nostalgia and schizophrenia as characteristics of the postmodern, where a sense of history has disappeared and time is now experienced as a series of presents. Such claims that society is losing its capacity to retain its own past, has obvious implications for museums: what role have they played within this 'historical amnesia'?

Collapse of metanarratives and the ascension of heterogeneity.

The final theme to be addressed in this examination of the fundamental characteristics of postmodernist thought that inform this thesis, is the rejection of Enlightenment principles

²³ Brooker suggests that while Jameson would accept Baudrillard's view of society as 'free of reference to 'reality', he would 'retain a distinction between surface and depth' (Jameson 1992; 163). Jameson therefore, is not as extreme in his characterisation of postmodernity; though it may be the dominant cultural logic, features which have now become secondary that are not based on this logic, still remain.
and ideals that the shift from modernity to postmodernity engendered. This agenda can be identified in the work of some of the cultural theorists that have already been addressed. Foucault for example, rejected Enlightenment traditions and totalising discourses such as Marxism, preferring to respect differences and acknowledge multiple interpretations. Foucault challenged ‘vast unities like ‘periods’ or ‘centuries’’ and through his histographies he recognised the phenomena of discontinuity (threshold, rupture, break, mutation, transformation); he searched for the interruptions behind ‘the great continuities of thought’, where displacements and transformations of concepts can be located and the history of a concept is understood as ‘not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement’ (Foucault 2000:4).

Baudrillard also rejects Enlightenment principles when he suggests that it is not reason that is equivocal, but that the very principle of ‘reality’ itself that is in doubt, and in conceiving of the pervasiveness of the media and information in this world of simulacra, he ultimately is questioning the notions of universal truth and freedom. Jameson also is also questioning the power and authority of reason and the belief in social progress when he defines postmodernity as characterised by pastiche, nostalgia and perpetual present.

In this section however, attention is focused on to Jean-François Lyotard who has addressed in depth the breakdown of Enlightenment meta-narratives, and Michel Maffesoli who has attempted to engage in formulating theory that recognises the fundamental heterogeneous nature of contemporary social formations.

**Jean-François Lyotard:**

Jean-François Lyotard is ‘celebrated as the postmodern theorist par excellence’ and his *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1989), commissioned by the Canadian government, has been hailed as the text that introduced the term 'postmodern' into the broad public domain (Best and Kellner 1991:146). Lyotard in particular, supported the belief that a break with modernist theory and methods has occurred, and taking issue with fundamental aspects of modernist theory and discourse throughout his work, he formulated alternative postmodern positions.
Whilst he was to engage with questions such as the politics of desire and justice, it is his attack on Enlightenment universality and in particular, his rejection of ‘meta-narratives’ or ‘grand narratives’, that is of interest here. Challenging totalising and universalising theories and methods, he offered up new postmodern positions that championed difference and plurality in all theoretical realms and discourses. As previous theorists in this chapter have done, Lyotard also rejected the modernist claims of reason and truth, and like Foucault, he offered up a critique of modern knowledge.

Themes of particular interest to this thesis, can be identified as emerging in a number of Lyotard’s works: in *Driftworks* (1984) he attacks ‘modern reason and unifying philosophical schemes, while valorizing intensity, fragments, plurality, singularity and drifting’ (Best and Kellner 1991; 153). Best and Kellner describe how he polemicises against the demands for unity and coherence in theoretical discourse and argues that in the battle over reason, the winner has been and will always be reason; “Reason and power are one and the same thing. You may disguise the one with dialectics…but you will still have the other in all its crudeness: jails, taboos, public weal, selection, genocide”’ (Best and Kellner 1991; 153).

*Economie libidinale* (1993) also offers a ‘violent critique of theory, reason, and the discourses of modernity’ (Best and Kellner 1991; 153) and in a number of prefigures to his postmodern turn proper, Lyotard breaks with ‘modern concerns for truth and certainty’ and attacks Enlightenment universality and ‘belief in absolute criteria for judgement’ (Best and Kellner 1991; 160-1). The basis on which his postmodern politics ‘of multiplicities, pluralities, and marginalities’ become clearer in the article ‘On the Strength of the Weak’ (1976) where he challenges the politics of truth and suggests the real direction lies in a politics of discourse, of struggle, where master discourses are occupied, destabilised and undermined (Best and Kellner 1991; 162).

Though Lyotard uses the term ‘postmodern’ for the first time in *Just Gaming* (1985), it is within *The Postmodern Condition* (1989) that he turns towards a postmodern discourse and offers alternative positions to modernity, of which he intensely critical. The work does not offer an examination of the condition of modernity however, for as Best and Keller

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24 Though Lyotard has been criticised for not breaking with Marxist metanarratives within his arguments and for ‘remaining within the boundaries of the modern ‘metanarratives’ he would deconstruct’ (Rose 1991; 59).
suggest, it is more accurate to read it as 'a study of conditions of postmodern knowledge, rather than of the postmodern condition tout court, for the text does not provide an analysis of postmodernity, but rather compares modern and postmodern knowledge' (1991;164). Indeed he identifies a current crisis in knowledge, and attempting to theorise new conditions, he offers up a new postmodern epistemology: for Lyotard, 'postmodern' is the term he uses to describe 'the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies.' (1989; xxiii) In particular he argues that knowledge is being transformed in post-industrial society, for within computerised societies knowledge cannot survive unchanged.

Within The Postmodern Condition, Lyotard identifies two principle metanarratives, characterised in modernity, which subordinate all other 'local' narratives to them; the 'narrative of emancipation' associated with the Enlightenment which believes in the gradual freedom of humanity from slavery and class oppression, and a philosophical narrative which maintains that through gradual evolution through history, a pure self-conscious Spirit will be achieved (1989,31-37). Indeed, he argues that modern knowledge in order to legitimate its foundational claims, turned to metanarratives; 'making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth' (1989;xxiii). The State for example, calls upon narratives of freedom and emancipation to justify its control of education, and modern science has legitimatized itself through the utilisation of narratives of progress, truth and freedom. Through such universalising and homogenising practice modern knowledge, Lyotard argues, serves to perpetuate exclusion. Knowledge he suggests however, is created by dissent, by the questioning of existing paradigms, rather than assenting to universal truths.

Lyotard argues that within 'highly developed' postmodern societies, the condition of knowledge has altered as there has been a 'crisis in narratives' (Lyotard 1989;481); the game rules for science, literature and the arts have altered, and modern notions of justification, system, proof and the unity of science, no longer hold. He argues that a collapse of metanarratives as legitimising and unifying force has occurred, marking the end of the modern era. Classic discipline divisions have broken down and grand narratives have lost credibility. Indeed, he states that the postmodern condition that now is dominant,
is characterised by an 'incredulity toward metanarratives'. The metanarrative apparatus of legitimisation has become obsolescent (Lyotard 1989;482) and 'little narratives' proliferate.

Postmodern knowledge thus rejects the privileged discourse of metanarrative; it rejects philosophies of history and forms of totalising thought such as Marxism or liberalism. Space is thus given to the marginalised, subaltern discourses. Postmodern knowledge is therefore characterised as being:

'against metanarratives and foundationalism; it eschews grand schemes of legitimisation; and it is heterogeneity, plurality, constant innovation, and pragmatic construction of local rules and prescriptives agreed upon by participants' (Best and Kellner 1991;165).

Within the *Postmodern Condition* where Lyotard suggests that knowledge has been altered, effected amongst things, by technological transformations, he argues that knowledge has lost its use value: it is 'common knowledge that the miniaturization and commercialization of machines is already changing the way in which learning is acquired, classified, made available, and exploited' (1989;4). Knowledge has become a commodity and he suggests that this 'commercialisation of knowledge' will have far reaching implications. Suggesting that 'knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question' (1989;9) and that power will be utilised through information technology to restructure global hegemonic relations: he 'points to the global extent of the hegemonic structure and the function information technology fulfils in that inexorable extension.' (Holub 1992;27) 'Knowledge in the form of an informational commodity indispensable to productive power is already, and will continue to be, a major-perhaps the major- stake in the world-wide competition for power.' (Lyotard 1989;5)

Lyotard was also to continue with the theme of the break from modernist knowledge, in works subsequent to the *Postmodern Condition*. In *The Differend* (1988) for example, he rejects the notion that 'universality is the human condition', suggesting that the 'modern 'we' of human solidarity, community, and universality is inexorably fissured and shattered'. He argues rather that 'fragmentation in groups and competing interests is the postmodern condition and agonistics is thus an inevitable aspect of contemporary life.' (Best and Kellner 1991;170).
It is worth commenting a little further on Lyotard's attitude to postmodernity and postmodernism however. As revealed in the appendix *What is Postmodernism?* (1989), whilst postmodernity offers for Lyotard an acceptable politics of difference and a demand for micropolitics, he is less than favourable about the postmodern condition. Like Jameson, Lyotard characterised postmodernism in terms of loss; it is understood as a 'period of slackening', an 'anything goes' culture, where aesthetic criteria and 'taste' have been eclipsed by the market place; by money (1989;76). For Lyotard, eclecticism signals the 'degree zero' to which contemporary general culture has reached;

'one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games' (1989;76).

Mourning the end of experimentation and the absence of aesthetic criteria, he actually locates saviour in modernity: he conceives that the postmodern signifies not the end of modernism as such, but 'in the nascent state' as a 'work can only become modern if it is first postmodern' (1989;79), thus postmodernism is defined as a 'cynical moment' before the return of a new modernism (1989;xvi).

It is also worth noting a criticism that has been levied at Lyotard; although he claims to reject totalising theories, in suggesting that a postmodern epistemology has supplanted the previously dominant modernist one, he is presupposing that a dramatic break has occurred: 'does not the very concept 'postmodern' seem to presuppose both a master narrative and some notion of totality, and thus periodizing and totalizing thought' (Best and Kellner 1991;171). Best and Keller argue that Lyotard 'does violence to the diversity of narratives in our culture' by lumping all large narratives together. Rather they suggest that one should distinguish between master narratives that subsume everything into one totalising theory (for example some versions of Marxism), and grand narratives that attempt to tell a 'Big Story' (for example the rise in capitalism or patriarchy) (1991;172).

Though one may accept such challenges to Lyotard's conceptualisations, his general thesis, which argues that modernist metanarratives are under attack, is of interest and use to this thesis. It will be suggested that the modernist museum paradigm was founded on metanarratives, and that discourses of legitimation can be identified within it. Lyotard's theorisation can thus help to make explicit grand narratives or 'Big Story' of history that museums often tell; it can help to identify how differences may have been suppressed
through totalising narratives and unifying schemes. His theorisation of technological innovation and the changes this has had on the position and accessibility of knowledge, also have implications for the modernist museum paradigm that firmly located power to knowledge in the institution, not the visiting public.

Michel Maffesoli:
Michel Maffesoli is lesser known than the preceding theorists, however his work contributes to postmodernist theory and is of interest to this thesis. Described as ‘a theorist of the break-up of mass culture’ (1996;x), Maffesoli’s key contribution to the body of work concerned with the nature of contemporary social formations, was *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (Maffesoli 1996). Within this work, he proposed that conceptions of social life needed to be reformulated to recognise the new forms of social collectivity that are taking root. Through *The Time of the Tribes* Maffesoli argues that a breakdown of ‘mass’ society has occurred and he proffers what he suggests is a more accurate conceptualisation: that ‘sociality’ exists in the form of fragmented *tribal* groupings. In particular it is Maffesoli’s recognition of the heterogeneity of society through this concept of ‘tribus’ that is significant here, for as we shall see in the next chapter, his offering up of a new approach and his attempt to ‘spark open, unwavering, honest debate’ (1996;7), has been taken up by a new wave of subcultural theorists.²⁵

Before we move to explore Maffesoli’s ‘tribal paradigm’ however, it is appropriate to provide a brief introduction to the grounds within which his enquiry is located. He argues that a shift from the ‘social’ to ‘sociality’ is in progress; there is a current tendency for a ‘rationalized “social” to be replaced by empathetic “sociality”’ expressed by a series of ambiances, feelings and emotions (1996;11). The ‘social encompasses mechanical solidarity, instrumentality, projects, rationality and goal orientation’ while sociality ‘involves organic solidarity, the symbolic dimension (communication), the “non-logical” (Pareto), and a concern for the present.’ (1989;1) (see Figure 1).

²⁵ Although the term ‘neo-tribe’ has been used in the English translation of the text, Rob Shields argues in the foreword to *The Time of the Tribes*, that Maffesoli’s tribes are ‘best understood as “postmodern tribes”, or even pseudo-tribes’ (Maffesoli 1996;x). Elsewhere however, Kevin Hetherington has argued that neo-tribes is most appropriate (1998), and ‘neo-tribe’ is the preferred term within this thesis.
Utilising Max Weber’s category of ‘emotional community’, and recognising the significance of ‘collective sensibility’, Maffesoli suggests that community ideals and rituals are more pervasive motivating forces than social reason (1996;18). Indeed he argues that the dominance of traditions located in notions of rationality and the logic of the individual, have precluded an acknowledgement of changes that are occurring:

‘We have dwelled so often on the dehumanization and the disenchantment with the modern world and the solitude it induces that we are no longer capable of seeing the networks of solidarity that exist within’ (Maffesoli 1996;72).

Maffesoli identifies the paradoxical nature of contemporary social organisation, for whilst a growing massification and uniformity stemming from globalisation and homogenisation of customs can be identified, we can simultaneously witness a growing emphasis on individuality and the local (Maffesoli 1996;41). Within the mass of the megalopolises of our urban environment, Maffesoli recognises heterogenisation: dehumanisation of urban life can give birth to ‘specific groupings for the exchange of passion and feelings’ (1996;42). He believes that society is currently undergoing a process of ‘disindividuation’ and he argues for an acknowledgement of the distinction between the ‘individual’ and the ‘person’ (persona); the ‘unified’ former has a function within society whilst the latter, integrally related to others, plays a role within society. It is through the metaphor of the ‘tribe’ (tribus) he suggests, that one is enabled to account for this disindividuation process and respond to the heterogeneous person capable of a multiplicity of roles (Maffesoli 1996;66).

Maffesoli suggests that the logic of the tribe, ‘tribus’ is becoming the dominant form of social organisation within contemporary society. Within The Time of the Tribes however,
he uses ‘tribe’ not in the traditional anthropological sense. His tribes are not characterised by fixity and longevity, but rather he argues that the stable social cohesion of dominant mass culture has been tribalised, fragmented into ‘little masses’ (1996:x), ‘just as the masses are in a state of perpetual swarm, the tribes that crystallize from these masses are unstable, since the persons of which these tribes are constituted are free to move from one to the other’ (1996:6). Thus, ‘in contrast to the stability induced by classical tribalism, neotribalism is characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal’ (1996:76). Tribe is ‘without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind, and is preferably to be expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and “form”’ (1996:98).

These tribes, distinguished by shared lifestyles and tastes, all have varied lifespans dependant on the degree of investment of their protagonists. Typical examples of tribes include more than just ‘fashion victims, or youth-subcultures’ (1996; xi), but those based around ‘sports, friendships, sex, religion’ (1996;140), ‘environmental movements, user-groups of state services and consumer lobbies’ (1996;xi) and all manner of interest-based collectives. Maffesoli’s concept of the tribe thus recognises the multiplicity of contemporary life; a person may participate in a multitude of groups and indeed, move through many in the course of a day. Identity and group affinity thus understood as a matter of choice not essentially determined by class (or gender, race, sexuality). Tribes become sources of identity which, like masks, provide temporary identifications (1996;xii).

He argues that group cohesion is cemented in many ways. Groups for example, make use of tactics of secrecy and rituals to confirm and reinforce group solidarity. Rituals of belonging are perceptible for example, throughout daily life, within neighbourhood shops, night-spots or office blocks and factories (Maffesoli 1996;140). He understands that secrecy functions to unite people but also works in resistant terms; masks can make one a ‘conspirator against the established powers’ (1996:91). He argues that groups have begun to use tactics of ‘avoidance lifestyles’ (1996;92), putting forward a hypothesis of ‘underground centrality’: avoidance lifestyles offer protection, a resistance, from outside forces.

Acknowledging the role of secrecy, of performance in contemporary society: the ‘kaleidoscope of our streets must not allow us to forget that there may be a subtle dialectic
between display and concealment' (1996;90). He suggests there has been a recourse to 'masks': 'The mask may be an elaborate or colourful hairstyle, an original tattoo, the recycling of retro fashions or even the conformity of the 'preppy' style' (1996;91), but they are useful as 'the most overt display may be the best guarantor of remaining undiscovered' (1996;90). Indeed he suggests that 'the multitude and the aggressiveness of urban images...is the clearest sign of the secret and dense life of contemporary micro-groups' (1996;90).

The sociality Maffesoli describes is far from the unity that western rationalism sought however. The logic of tribalism marks the end of homogeneous models: of historical subjects like Marxist proletariat. Even where entity types, 'unified nations, historical subjects, linear progress', are created on the basis of homogeneous models, he argues that the unity will inevitably be a temporary reality for a swing back to particularism and localism will always occur (1996;105). Thus, the 'autonomy (individualism) of the bourgeois model is being surpassed by the heterogeneity of tribalism.' (1996;127).

Maffesoli emphasises the 'liberatory' quality of tribes26, acknowledging the vitality for persons to construct networks of micro-groups and recognising the organic nature of sociality. Indeed, through the concept of puissance, Maffesoli challenges those that lament the 'end of the social' and argues that end to certain social order gives rise to one in which the vitalism of tribes that are in constant fermentation can emerge (1996;33). Thus he argues that 'a shifting terrain requires quick movements; there is therefore no shame in 'surfing' over the waves of sociality. It is in fact a judicious and highly efficacious way to proceed.' (1996;5)

We will see how Maffesoli has been utilised with regard to subcultural theory, however, it is appropriate to mention here that issue has been taken with Maffesoli in regards to his belief that neo-tribes are a very recent social phenomenon. Bennett questions Maffesoli's identifying 'neo-tribalism beyond the late 1960s and early 1970s, a period when conspicuous consumption became synonymous with everyday life in the West' and his characterisation of the counter-culture as stable and a coherent cultural entity (1999;606). Bennett suggests that the process of tribalism that Maffesoli identified is actually 'tied

26 In the forward to The Time of the Tribes, Rob Shields argues that the concept of tribus needs to also recognise negative forms such as those detectable in ethnic nationalism (Maffesoli 1996;xii).
inherently to the origins of mass consumerism during the immediate post-Second World War period and has been gathering momentum ever since (1999;607).

Hetherington also argues that a 'main weakness' in Maffesoli's approach is,

'that he ignores power relations, constraints and uncertainties placed on identity choices when he indicates that such factors as class, gender and ethnicity are no longer relevant in establishing styles of life.' (1998;53)

Hetherington argues that although one may concur with Maffesoli that class, gender and ethnicity have become less binding as the basis for identity, a complete dissociation between such structural factors and identity has not occurred. For Hetherington, 'neo-tribes' as a form of identification has not replaced class, gender and ethnicity, rather they co-exist. Thus 'we do not have complete freedom of choice in terms of the tribes we can choose to join, but we do have some choice independent of issues such as class and gender.'(Hetherington 1998;53)

In offering a sociology of everyday life where a 'tribal paradigm' is the central structure for the organisation of sociality, Maffesoli's ideas have many implications for subcultural theory. He challenges for example, assumed sociological concepts, so that what was once conceived as 'marginal' may no longer be described as such: 'the multiplication of tribes that are located not on the margins, but which are like so many points in a nebula that no longer has a clearly discernible centre' (1996;144). His conception of tribus also provides subcultural theory with a model that recognises the fluid, shifting and heterogeneous nature of contemporary subcultural formations. Such conceptions of the social however, throw up challenges to the modernist museum which, through tactics of identification, classification and representation, have tended to characterise the social as static, rigidly structured and homogeneous.27

**Conclusion.**

This chapter establishes the methodological foundations to this thesis by introducing the six theorists whose ideas have presented a challenge to modernist ideas and values. Whilst

27 Indeed, Maffesoli comments that 'the future of the discipline [sociology] depends essentially on our ability to convey the frenzied activity under consideration' (1996;72), may also be taken as relevant within the context of museums.
Foucault in particular, informs the overarching methodology taken up in this thesis, the others offer support in relation to specific areas and arguments. A comprehensive account of each theorist's work has not been given, rather attention has been selective and focused on themes which in making significant contributions to postmodern discourse, are of particular significance to subcultural and museological theory.

It has been important to elaborate in relative detail on the specific themes that are of importance, for whilst the discipline of subcultural studies has embraced postmodern critical theory museological discourse has only just begun to engage with the implications of such work. Through the chapter we have begun to formulate an idea of the characteristics of postmodernity and the challenges levied at modernity. In particular, the work addressed here characterises postmodernity in terms of a period or condition where power operates throughout the social in subtle ways, where simulacrum displace the real and notions of authenticity are no longer stable, where critical distance from history has disappeared and metanarratives and essentialist identities no longer exist. These all present fundamental challenges to the continual dominance of the modernist paradigm of the museum.

All the theorists in different ways thus do begin to challenge the essentialism, foundationalism and universalism of modernist theory, theorising the attack that the postmodern has launched on the Enlightenment principles and values inherent in modernism. It is recognised however, that whilst common themes may be identified between some of the theorists, they do hold different subject positions on the postmodern. Indeed one needs to recognise that there exists a plurality of postmodern positions. Some theorisation's of the postmodern are more extreme than others, Baudrillard's for example, however it is again useful to emphasise that whether one concurs with their characterisations, it is the implications that these theories have for the institution of the museum that is of significance here. If postmodernity is indeed now the dominant social and cultural formation then the ramifications for institutions still grounded in a modernist paradigm becomes of interest.

That this thesis identifies an institution grounded and operating to modernist values and assumptions, yet concludes in recognising the current epoch as dominated by postmodernist characteristics, may appear apparently paradoxical. However, this is not as
much a contradiction as it may first seem. Jameson suggests for example, that 'radical breaks between periods do not generally involve complete changes of content', but what were minor or secondary features in the former period, become central to the now dominant period (1993;177). This idea thus takes on board Gramsci’s notion of hegemony which allows ‘for the possibility of several cultural systems existing at the same time within an historical conjuncture’ (Gottdiener 1995;165).

Postmodernism may thus be understood as the dominant cultural mode in western capitalist societies, but previous positions have not been obliterated: the vestiges of modernism are still recognisable just as forms of postmodernism were identifiable in modernism. Thus, the characteristics of a previous order do not simply disappear as another epistemology becomes dominant. Similarly, whilst postmodernism might be the dominant cultural logic, it will not permeate all facets of culture and society simultaneously and with equal measure.

Indeed, certain postmodernist characteristics may be located within museums: a postmodern impulse can be located behind the moves museums have made to recognise the heterogeneity of society through inclusive agendas, and to embrace popular culture and shake off their elitist image. Museums can also serve to signify the dominance of the postmodern condition: although he rarely uses the term ‘postmodernism’, Robert Hewison’s identification of the ‘heritage industry’ (that he argues emerged in Britain in the 1980s (1987)), is loaded with postmodern rhetoric. He takes the growth in museums as pointing to the ‘imaginative death’ of Britain, and illustrative of ‘a county obsessed with its past, and unable to face its future’, a county wallowing in nostalgia that distorts the past and stifles the culture of the present (Hewison 1987;9). This is closely reminiscent of Jameson’s characterisations of the postmodern.

As it is argued within this thesis however, the changes currently occurring within museums, that might be said to be inspired by postmodern or post-structuralist theory, tend to be identifiable in only those museums at the cutting-edge. Indeed, though postmodernist theories and the like, may have engendered a will to change, those changes will invariably remain limited as contemporary museums are still fundamentally grounded in a modernist paradigm. Whilst museums may be beginning to break down the high/low culture divide and embrace popular culture for example, entrenched notions about what the institution of
the museum is, and should be, still serve to cause resistance to such changes. Modernist operating values and structures also serve to limit the extent to which popular culture is truly engaged with (see Chapter 5 for further explanation). Thus, although postmodernist characteristics may be located within contemporary museums and the popularity of museums may reveal the postmodern impulse of society, ultimately the structures, values and assumptions that dominate museums, are still those established by the modernist museum paradigm.
CHAPTER TWO

Dialogue on a contested terrain: the emergence, consolidation and subsequent fragmentation of subcultural studies.

Introduction.

It was noted in the main introduction that ‘subculture’ is a difficult and contested term. This chapter seeks to explore the conception of the term and to chart the continuations and paradigmatic shifts of understanding within subcultural theory; to examine the works that have defined, re-defined and have contested the subcultural terrain. In particular, it is important to identify the dominant subcultural paradigm that emerged through the work at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), and locate this work within a theoretical context: the CCCS paradigm was both a product of, and reaction against, a growing body of work which had directed attention towards popular culture, and it was formative in the establishment of the discipline of cultural studies.

This subcultural paradigm, itself based on modernist ideology, is of significant interest to our examination of the modernist museum; it is a model which can be identified in museum representations of subcultures. However like the modernist museum, the ‘CCCS paradigm’ has come under attack by postmodernist, post-structuralist and feminist informed discourse. The alternative paradigms of ‘clubcultures’ and ‘post-subculturalist’ have been conceived; the characteristics of which, present a potential fundamental challenge to the modernist museum. This chapter then, charts the rise and fall of the CCCS paradigm within subcultural theory.

Given that this thesis is grounded in the discipline of museology, it is also significant to consider the importance that conceptualisations and representations of subcultural formations place on material culture, in both academic and popular terms. What part does material culture play in the formation and continuation of subcultural identities and what importance is material culture attributed by subcultural theory?

28 The intention has been to provide an overview rather than a detailed, extensive introduction, however within the space available, an attempt has been made to be as comprehensive as possible. For further insight into the origins of subcultural studies see (Brake 1980; Gelder and Thornton 1997).
This chapter then, is divided into four sections. Taking a chronological approach, the first section traces the academic origins behind the concept of ‘subculture’, provides a brief examination of the key texts which laid the foundations for the recognition of popular culture and the study of subcultures within academia. The second then moves on to consider the consolidation of subcultural studies at CCCS, introducing the key theorists of this period. The third addresses the fundamental challenges that were directed at the CCCS paradigm and the fourth session reviews the fragmentation and hybridisation of subcultural studies that has occurred within the last two decades. The chapter concludes with an overview of the position and importance that material culture has been attributed within accounts and representations of subcultural formations.

The emergence of theories of mass culture, popular culture, and the discipline of Cultural Studies.

‘[The] search for origins is tempting but illusory. In intellectual matters absolute beginnings are exceedingly rare.’ (Hall 1980,16)

Whilst the above quote may act as a warning, in order to begin to understand the nature of a subject one must attempt to trace the epistemological contexts in which that study is based. Let us consider the various theoretical traditions within which the discipline of cultural studies and the study of subcultures are grounded.

Pre-twentieth century foundations:
The recognition of the existence of marginal and subordinate groups was to emerge long before the term ‘subculture’ was actually coined. Ken Gelder suggests that the public were ‘alerted’ to the culture and language of groups such as beggars and vagabonds, as early as the fifteenth century. Descriptive accounts such as ‘beggar-books’, and specialist

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29 It is important to recognise that although scholarly publications grounded within solid theoretical and empirical research are important, subcultures have also been represented within a much wider cultural framework: within the news and media, within films and the theatre, within pulp novels and comics, and so forth. It is beyond the boundaries of this thesis however, to go beyond the concept of ‘subculture’ and to explore the cultural means through which subcultures have articulated their identities, and through which society has articulated representations of them. Such an exploration, comparing and contrasting the representation of subcultures within a variety of cultural forms with that of museums, may offer an alternative critique of the modernist museum paradigm however.

30 It is noted that cultural studies cannot be understood as a coherent discipline in the traditional sense, ‘Cultural studies is not one thing’... ‘it has never been one thing’ (Hall 1980;11), indeed many have grappled with the term (Storey 1996). Neither does it have a stable disciplinary base or distinct methodology, indeed it may only be essentially characterised by its interdisciplinary or ‘anti-disciplinary’ nature.
dictionaries of 'low-life' argot of the seventeenth century and later, served to both explain and warn the reader of the deceptive practises of those described. Gelder suggests that we 'can think of these compilations as early kinds of sociology' (1997; 263).

It is within the ethnographic work of Henry Mayhew however, that the seeds of sociological enquiry and the concept of 'subculture', have been located (Hebdige 1988; Thompson and Yeo 1973; Tolson 1990). Emerging from the context of Victorian concern for the potential threat posed by the 'lumpenproletariat', Mayhew’s extensive study, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), offered a philanthropic account of the distinct ‘ways of life’ of the ‘street folk’ or ‘wandering tribes’ of London. Of particular interest, is his pioneering account of a ‘working-class youth subculture’, the costermonger (see Hebdige 1988). Describing the distinct attire and developed argot of young coster boys, Mayhew provides a ‘full blown cultural study, treating them at length as a group with distinct social habits.’ (Thompson and Yeo 1973;97-98).

Mayhew however, moved ‘towards the concept of sub-culture which he could not, in the end, successfully formulate’ (Thompson and Yeo 1973), and it was not until the mid-twentieth century, that any formal definition of ‘subculture’ began to emerge: the critical theory of the ‘Frankfurt School’ and sociological research of the Chicago School, established the agenda for theoretical enquiry into subcultures.

**The Frankfurt School:**
The ‘Frankfurt School’ of critical theory was based on the work of a group of German intellectuals associated with the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. Through seminal works such as Theodor Adorno’s *The Culture Industry* (1941), Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer 1986 (orig. 1944)), and Herbert Marcuses’s *One Dimensional Man* (1964), the terms of debate and analysis for the subsequent study of popular culture were established.

The School’s conceptualisation of modern capitalism and popular culture, had its foundations in Marxist theories of commodity exchange and value, however Marx’s notion that capitalist society was crisis ridden and unstable, was rejected. Critics such as Adorno

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31 The Frankfurt School, whilst drawing from Marxist theory, also offered a break from orthodox Marxism: attempting to account why the working-class revolution had not happened, their critique of society moved on from economic terms and acknowledged the importance of culture and ideology.
argued that through the ‘culture industry’, i.e. the pervasive forms of modern mass media and popular culture, a status quo within capitalism was maintained. The unprecedented period of stability and continuity that advanced capitalist societies were seen to be experiencing, was explained in terms of the highly manipulative role that the culture industry played; by meeting the ‘false needs’ created by capitalism, it worked on the behalf of the dominant class to contain and subvert opposition or critical consciousness (Strinati 1995).

Thus the Frankfurt School conceived the ‘powerless’ masses as ‘cultural dopes’ content to receive a culture whose products were homogeneous and predictable, ‘a culture marked by “standardization, stereotype, conservatism, mendacity, manipulated consumer goods”’ (Adorno quoted in Storey 1993;101). The cultural industry was defined as a ‘destructive force’, whose cultural commodities such as popular music or Hollywood, were ‘tainted’ by commodity fetishism: ‘they ‘fall completely into the world of commodities, are produced for the market, and are aimed at the market’ (Marx quoted in Strinati 1995;58). Similarly, commercialisation was seen as a threat to ‘authentic’ culture as, in making such culture too accessible, it was deprived of its critical function (Storey 1993).

This pessimistic view of the mass culture has lead to the School’s theorists being positioned in relation to mass culture critics. However, Walter Benjamin, who was involved for a period with the School, regarded popular culture more positively. In the essay ‘The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction’, originally published 1936, he stressed the democratic potential of contemporary methods of reproduction. He highlighted the significance in the process of consumption, a potential site for political struggle.

Culturalism:
Culturalism was a term coined by Richard Johnson (later a director of CCCS), to refer to the theoretical coherence of the work of Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson. Although located within Leavisism and mechanistic and economic forms of

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32 In opposition also to other earlier cultural theorists, the School maintained that the culture the masses consume was a means through which ‘conformity’ not ‘anarchy’ was perpetuated; that the working classes had been pacified by the culture industry. This challenged the earlier assumptions of Matthew Arnold (Culture and Anarchy, 1932) and Frank Leavis (Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture, 1930), who regarded mass culture as a threat to the establishment (Strinati 1995).

33 Indeed Dwight Macdonald, a key figure in the debate and condemnation of mass culture, was influenced by the Frankfurt School, as well as Leavisism (Storey, 1998;5).
Marxism, their work represented a ‘decisive break’ from these traditions, becoming ‘seminal and formative’ texts for the new discipline of Cultural Studies (Hall 1981). Identifying with the early ‘New Left’, they ‘set the terms of the post-war ‘cultural debate’’, defining the objectives and agenda of the field of study (Hall 1980; 17).

Attempting to make sense of the profound cultural shifts and upheavals that had occurred within post-war British society, their work stressed the significance of ‘lived culture’ and human agency. This agenda is obvious in Raymond William’s *The Long Revolution* (1961). Williams argued that in order to gain an insight into a society at large, one must consider ‘culture’. Conceiving ‘three general categories in the definition of culture’, it was his ‘social’ definition that became particularly seminal to Cultural Studies as it emerged within CCCS. ‘Culture’ in this sense, was conceived as a description of a particular way of life, expressive of certain meanings and values. He suggested that useful cultural analysis should study the ‘pattern of culture’ in order to clarify the explicit or implicit meanings and values of a particular culture. In order to understand a culture, the ‘important common element’ or what Williams called the ‘the structure of feeling’, must be first identified and understood. However, distinguishing between ‘lived culture’, ‘recorded culture’ and ‘the culture of the selective tradition’, he acknowledged that an amount of detail is inevitably lost through the selective and interpretative processes of cultural analysis in the latter two levels (Williams 1981).

The basis for a democratic definition of popular culture emerged with Williams in his validation of the ‘lived experience’ of ‘ordinary’ men and women. This challenge to the elitist assumptions which traditionally located ‘culture’ within select artistic and literary works, can also be located in the work of Thompson and Hoggart. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1968), provided an ‘heroic labour of recovery of popular political cultures hitherto largely lost to serious historical work’ (Hall 1980; 19). Within this classic example of ‘history from below’, Thompson identified the historical specificity of culture and the existence of a plurality of ‘cultures’ rather than a singular ‘Culture’. Again the agency of the working-classes is stressed, and society is conceived in terms of struggle, tension and conflict; between cultures and their links with class cultures (Hall 1980).

Similarly Hoggart, in his *Uses of Literacy* (1957), also identified cultural agency within the
working-class. However in documenting the changes taking place within urban British working class culture, he identified a ‘cultural Fall’ from ‘good’ past to ‘bad’ present (Storey 1998). Hoggart believed the agency to be under threat from the 'shiny barbarism' of mass culture and Americanisation; that 'authentic' working class culture was being debased by trivial and mindless American culture, characterised by its manipulative and exploitative nature (Strinati 1995).

Though not necessarily regarded as a founding text of culturalism, Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts* (1964), is also an important contemporary of the texts cited above (Storey 1993). Again, the work moved on from the traditional high/low culture binary, and Hall and Whannel call for a critical method for establishing quality and value within popular culture; a means to ‘facilitate popular discrimination within the range of popular culture itself’ (Storey 1993;61). Using popular music for example, they suggest that a more discerning audience would prefer jazz to pop, it being ‘an infinitely richer kind of music’: ‘The worst thing which we would say of pop music is not that it is vulgar, or morally wicked, but, more simply, that much of it is not very good.’ (Hall and Whannel 1998;67) However, in advocating the development of a critical sensibility, they were content to perpetuate the accepted criticisms of mass culture as ‘formulaic, unchallenging, escapist, aesthetically worthless, emotionally unrewarding, etc.’ (Storey 1993;63), simply privileging some parts of popular culture -the popular arts- over others.

Though culturalism was to make positive advances on previous ‘idealist’ and ‘civilising’ definitions of culture by understanding culture as a wider formulation, that refers to ‘where and how people experience their conditions of life, define them and respond to them’ (Hall 1981;26), it has been taken to task for often being ‘uncritically romantic in its celebration of popular culture as expressing the authentic interests and values of subordinate social groups and classes’ (Bennett 1986;xii). It has also been criticised for its essentialist view of culture, searching for example for ‘the authentic voice of the working class, as if this could exist in some pure form’ (Bennett 1986;xii).

The ‘structuralisms’:

The paradigm established by culturalism, was seminal to the emerging discipline of Cultural Studies and was critically developed by theorists at CCCS (indeed it was Hoggart who set up the CCCS in 1964). However, a second theoretical paradigm stemming from
the structuralist anthropology, Levi-Strauss semiotics and Marxism of Louis Althusser, was also to dominate Cultural Studies and influence the theoretical perspectives that emerged from CCCS.

This paradigm was in part articulated around the concept of ideology and was ahistorical in its approach, focusing on the identification and understanding of the forms and structures through which society, and culture, operate. Althusser for example, drawing on Gramsci, developed the concept of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) to refer to the material or institutional form taken by ideology. ISA are the various social institutions (religion, the legal system, education, the family, culture and communication) within civil society that perform regulatory functions, reproducing ideology 'on behalf of' the state (O'Sullivan et al. 1994). Levi-Strauss however, informed by the structural linguistics of Saussure, conceived culture as 'the categories and mental frameworks in thought and language through which different societies classified out their conditions of existence' (Hall 1981:20). Culture, could be understood as operating similarly to language, with underlying rules and conventions that made meaning possible.

Thus the focus of structuralism in relation to cultural studies, was in particular on textual forms which could be 'read' to reveal ideology embedded within them and the structures that organised their consumption or 'reading'. To reveal the relationships and structures which determine the real conditions within which we live. This approach was not without criticism however, in particular structuralism has been challenged for its ahistorical nature, for not taking into account the contexts in which texts were produced or consumed.

Within the emerging field of cultural studies, the alternative paradigms of culturalism and structuralism that came to dominate, polarised the development of the field of enquiry. However, Bennett argues that in an attempt to escape the constraints imposed by the domination of these two traditions, there was a 'turn to Gramsci'. This helped to displace the culturalist/structuralist opposition, for by synthesising the best elements from both combined with concepts from Gramsci's work, the discipline of cultural studies was to enter a new phase (Bennett et al. 1992). Such an approach became particularly identifiable within work of CCCS.
Chicago School and the tradition of sociology:

Although the theoretical foundations of subcultural studies at CCCS were established within a dialogue that stemmed from the Frankfurt School, the traditions of culturalism and Marxist structuralism, it was from a sociological background that many of the early 'subcultural' texts emerged. The roots of subcultural studies lay in the Chicago tradition of sociology.

Robert Park was a ‘leading force’ at Chicago and his early project to map ‘The City’ (1915), used participant observation to investigate the ‘customs, beliefs, social practices, and general conceptions of life’ of urban ‘‘civilised’ man’ (Park 1997;16). Described as ‘a manifesto for urban ethnography’ (Downes and Rock 1998;61), it established the agenda for research at Chicago. Numerous investigations into urban community life followed, and although these studies may not have made use of the term ‘subculture’, their work set a precedent for subcultural studies proper.

It was not until the 1940s that the term ‘subculture’ came into usage and academics began to grapple with the concept. In 1947 Milton Gordon published the paper ‘The concept of the sub-culture and its application’. In it he suggested that ‘sub-culture’ could be used as a ‘keen and incisive tool’ to ‘enable us to discern relatively closed and cohesive systems of social organization which currently we tend to analyze separately with our more conventional tools of ‘class’ and ‘ethnic group.’ (1997;41). Gordon used the term ‘subculture’ to refer to sub-divisions within national boundaries, where social factors such as class status or ethnic background combined to produce a ‘functioning unity which has an integrated impact on the participating individual’ (1997;41). Drawing on the notion of culture as learned behaviour, individuals were thus understood to be socialised into cultural subdivisions (Brake 1980;5). However Gordon did identify a number of research problems related to the concept of subculture, but in calling for the wider application of the concept, he hoped that they would in time be answered through empirical research.

Other sociological enquiries also exist which attempted to make sense of the diversity of modern industrialised societies, but are of a theoretical rather than empirical nature. One such example is a paper by Tamotsu Shibutani. Calling for an end to referent ambiguity, he suggested that the concept of ‘reference group’ should be understood as a ‘group whose outlook is used by the actor as the frame of reference in the organization of his perceptual
field.' (Shibutani 1955:563, 565). He argued that restricted communication channels have lead to the formation of 'distinct cultures' which he refers to as 'reference worlds' or 'social worlds'. These are not necessarily tied to any collectivity or territory, and actors could simultaneously identify with more than one social world. This acknowledgement that social groupings were not necessarily static and territorially grounded entities, was also to influence subsequent writers on subcultures.

It was within the context of deviancy and the study of juvenile delinquency, however, that subcultural theory was to develop further. An important transitional work that addressed deviancy and bridged the theoretical and political agendas of the Chicago School with those that were to develop at CCCS (Gelder and Thornton 1997:15), was Jock Young’s *The Drugtakers* (1971). Engaging in a critical Marxist perspective, he made use of the Freudian and Marxist theories of Herbert Marcuse, and ‘ultimately integrates late Frankfurt School paradigms into Chicago School concerns’ (Gelder and Thornton 1997:15). His work was important to CCCS as it characterised the subcultures it addressed as ‘a product of or a reaction to social forces existing in the world outside’. He argued that in order to understand the meaning of deviant behaviour, one must address the values and world view of deviant groups such as drugtakers. Acknowledging the significance of capitalism to subcultural theorisation, he argued however, that subcultural values do not exist in a vacuum and what deviant groups do is live out the ‘subterranean values’ of society, characterised by a disdain for work and short term hedonism.

**Deviancy and juvenile delinquency theory:**

Deviance, i.e. ‘behaviour which infringes social rules, or disrupts the expectations of others, and as a result often attracts social penalty or punishment’ (O'Sullivan et al. 1994:83), has been subject to a variety of theoretical interpretations, however deviance is commonly understood to be a social construct which varies over time and place.\(^3\)\(^4\)

The Chicago School’s project to map the urban environment, highlighted a number of deviant communities; ‘hobos’ (Anderson 1923), gangs and juvenile delinquents (Shaw and McKay 1931; Thrasher 1927; Whyte 1943) and professional thieves (Sutherland 1937). Working to a social ecological theory of deviance, Chicago scholars understood deviancy

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\(^{34}\) Though several, often competing theories of deviance exist, attention here shall be limited to those texts which have had a baring on subcultural theory: the majority of which, orientate towards social explanations.
in terms of 'social disorganisation'; the result of the inability of social institutions or structures to keep up with social change. Conceiving the city in terms of concentric zones, they suggested that deviant behaviour would be found in the city zones where social disorganisation was at its greatest, particularly in the 'zone of transition'. Thus for example, the urban gang was found in areas characterised by 'deteriorating neighbourhoods, shifting populations and the mobility and disorganisation of the slum' (Thrasher 1927:20).

However, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that the theorisation of social deviancy was to undergo significant development in America. Within this period, the academic study of 'youth' or 'adolescence' as a distinct social category was established, and deviancy studies became increasingly preoccupied with research into juvenile delinquency, particularly young male, working-class gangs. A number of seminal texts drew from functionalist theories of deviance, and what is now referred to as the 'subcultural theories of deviance', emerged.

Influenced by Emile Durkheim's concept of 'anomie' which suggested that deviance, and crime, are common to all societies, Merton had argued that deviancy occurs when a 'strain' on the system means that 'acceptable goals' cannot be met by socially acceptable means (1938). His theories were to have a considerable influence on subcultural theory. Developing Merton's ideas but rejecting the value of anomie, Albert Cohen suggested that working-class delinquent gangs could be understood in terms of 'status frustration'; deviant behaviour occurs when the goals set by middle-class cannot be attained (1955). Subcultures, he argued, emerged as collective solutions to problems of social adjustment which individuals similarly encountered. Through a subcultural system, a new frame of reference would be created which could provide individuals with the sense of belonging they needed.

In applying this model to his research into delinquent male gangs, delinquent subcultures were thus understood as collective solutions to problems of status: the cultural frame of reference, which afforded individuals a low status, was replaced with a new frame of reference, that of the deviant group. Thus individuals could find validation in subcultural identification and subcultural formations were conceived as supportive structures:
delinquency was understood as 'a solution' rather than a 'problem' (Downes and Rock 1998; 145).

Cloward and Ohlin whilst also drawing heavily from Merton, suggested that the notion of working-class aspirations based on dominant, middle-class values, were over emphasised. They believed that delinquent subcultures had little interest in middle-class goals and values and that working-class juveniles sought higher status within their own class community (1960). Indeed, Walter Miller had argued (1958) that delinquent behaviour should be understood as autonomously 'lower class' culture. Subsequent studies into middle-class youth delinquency and gang formations (Shanley, 1966; Myerhoff and Myerhoff, 1964), also challenged the adequacy of subcultural analysis which located deviant behaviour in terms of working-class status frustration; the existence of middle-class delinquency suggested 'the need for more sensitive and dynamic studies of youthful deviance' (Aggleton 1987, 44).

British sociologists and criminologists had also been exploring deviancy and delinquency in this period. Fyvel in the late nineteen fifties for example, had undertaken empirical research into delinquent youth, in particular London Teddy Boy gangs (1963). He saw that these working-class youths reflected wider social changes, and he also drew attention to the significance of their sartorial style; the working-class delinquent 'swaggering' about 'drab' urban streets in an exaggerated costume of the Edwardian gentleman (Fyvel 1963). The work of others such as The Delinquent Solution by David Downes (1966; 10) and later Deviant Behaviour by Paul Rock (1973), also developed subcultural theory in reference to deviancy and delinquency, further.

Much of the work discussed above was concerned primarily with the causes of deviancy. However, alternative phenomenological theories of deviance developed which focused on the social processes through which behaviour comes to be regarded as 'deviant'. David Matza, taking issue with Cohen for 'over-predicting' delinquency, made a distinction between a 'delinquent subculture' and a 'subculture of delinquency', emphasising the significance of 'publicity' (Matza 1992). He conceived the existence of a subterranean world, operating its own set of values, that was part of, but existed beneath society (1961). Significantly, he rejected the conception of deviancy as an expression of deep oppositional values, and suggested that deviancy was 'willed' behaviour and that individuals 'drift' in
and out of delinquent subterranean world attracted by the promise of excitement and escape (Matza 1992).

Emerging from the phenomenological approach, interactionist theories of deviance developed, which studied deviancy in terms of the process of interaction between the deviant and non-deviant (Harvey and MacDonald 1993). Many studies were to follow an interactionist perspective. The collection of papers in Henslin’s *Deviant Lifestyles* for example, offered a ‘sympathetic understanding’ of groups in American society, whose lifestyle choices differed from the dominant norms (1977). Though the term ‘subcultures’ was not necessarily used, these papers explored how ‘non-normative’ behaviour was learnt i.e. the socialisation process into deviant lifestyle, and how deviant identities are managed. Again, the support subcultures give members is emphasised, as are the profound effects deviant life-styles can have on those who lead them.

Emerging from interactionism came labelling theory and the notion of ‘deviant career’, and from a phenomenological critique of interactionism, came the concepts of ‘moral panic’ and ‘deviancy amplification’. As theories on deviancy, they were to have a profound effect on subsequent studies into youth subcultures.

**Labelling theory, moral panics and the application of the concept of the ‘folk devil’:**

Labelling theorists argued that what society considers deviant is subject to variables such as time and place. Deviancy is socially and historically relevant and behaviour which is labelled ‘deviant’ or ‘criminal’ may not necessarily be inherently so: ‘The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied, deviant behaviour is behaviour that people label so’ (Becker 1966:9). The theory also suggests that definition produces deviant acts. Edwin Lemert (1967) for example, drawing a distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ deviation, believed that in order to understand juvenile delinquency, one must study the ‘societal reaction’ to deviance. He argued that it was within secondary deviation that deviant identities became crystallised, and that control agencies actually caused deviance (Aggleton 1987).

It was within the work of Howard Becker however, that the use of labelling theory to theorise deviancy was to become most famous. Becker in *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (Becker 1966), examined the processes through which groups came
to be labelled ‘deviant’. Developing the approach of symbolic interactionism, he examined how the deviant acts once labelled; how status and self-esteem may be generated by deviant symbolic solutions for example, within the ‘hip’ world of ‘jazz’ musicians, or deviant careers entered into in successive stages, for example with marijuana users. He considered the variable nature of social reactions to deviant behaviour, and with the concept of ‘deviant career’, Becker understood the process by which an individual becomes deviant, not in terms of an impulsive reaction but rather as a graduate process of socialisation. Other empirical studies which addressed various deviant ‘careers’ were also to emerge; see for example Polsky’s examination of hustlers (Polsky 1971), or the various papers collected in Henslin (1977)35.

The focus of deviancy theory, had thus begun to shift away from analysis of the deviant actor towards those with the power to label. Stanley Cohen in his seminal text *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1980) began to develop further the transactional approach to deviancy. Using the clashes between Mods and Rockers on the beaches of Brighton as a case study, he explored how the mass media helped to create deviant identities; he suggested that no structured gangs existed until media coverage, which tended to provide stereotyped accounts, created a ‘folk devil’ with a distinct identity. Developing Lemert’s notion that control agencies caused deviancy, he also argued that overreaction by the police, courts and mass media, caused moral panics. Moral panics in turn resulted in ‘deviancy amplification’: youth were attracted to the identity that was created, and identifying with the label that was attributed to them, they played out the deviant role that was expected (see Figure 2.).

![Figure 2: Deviancy amplification and the role of the media. (Muncie 1987;42)](image)

35 The idea of deviant careers continues to be used; see for example Marsh et al’s examination of the career structure within football hooliganism (1994).
Labelling theory was developed further at the National Deviancy Conferences in the late sixties, and the possibility of a ‘New Criminology’ was opened up, establishing Marxist theory into the theorisation of deviancy (Clarke 1982). Moral panic theory was further developed within a growing body of work, see for example (Cohen and Robins 1978; Cohen and Young 1973; Hall and al. 1978), and is still of significance today (see Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Thompson 1998). In defining deviance in terms of social creation then, enquiry has moved towards a more sympathetic approach to the ‘deviant’ subject.

Counter-culture:
Before moving on to explore the consolidation of subcultural studies in Britain in the 1970s, a brief consideration of the term counter-culture is appropriate. Counter-culture is a challenging term often used synonymously with ‘alternative’ or ‘underground’. Theorists generally understand that a distinction between the terms counter-culture and subculture exists; the former is not considered to be delinquent or exclusively related to youth, but to have its origins in the middle-classes, the educated, and to be based around organised systems of value and ideas.

Milton Yinger, critical of theorists for their lack of precision in the use of term ‘subculture’, had coined the term ‘contra-culture’ to describe ‘the normative system of a group [which] contains, as a primary element, a theme of conflict with the values of the total society’ (Yinger 1960;629). He was attempting to acknowledge ‘relatively cohesive culture systems’, which Brake argues could only possibly exist in a political subcultural context (like the Black Panthers) (Brake 1980;11). Though this term did not gain wider usage, it can be suggested that it was a move towards conceptualisation of the notion of counter-culture. It was not until 1970 however, with Theodore Roszak’s *The Making of the Counter-Culture* that the term ‘counter-culture’ was to enter theoretical debate.

Roszak conceived that a counter-culture was arising amongst (some sections) of the young, which offered salvation from the expanding ‘technocracy’ which threatened to engulf society. This youth was ‘our most important contemporary source of radical dissent and

36 Nelson for example, regards ‘counter-culture’ as an ‘elusive phenomenon’, referring simultaneously to a ‘social movement’ and a ‘mood’ expressive of the ‘spirit of the times’ in which it existed (1989;ix).
37 To add to the confusion however, some academics have understood the term counterculture to be a collective term for revolutionary orientated youth subcultures (O’Sullivan et al. 1994) while others as Nelson has pointed out, argue that counter-culture is “actually a subculture, since it depends on the larger, dominant culture for its existence” (Nelson 1989;5).
cultural innovation' (1970;1), and he saw that ‘alienated youth are giving shape to something that looks like the saving vision our endangered civilization requires’, that within counter-culture was the fuel for the ‘Great Refusal’.

In *Ecstasy & Holiness* (1974), Frank Musgrove also approached the counter-culture in positive terms, as a source of ‘hope’. Re-appraising his own analysis of British youth as expressed in *Youth and the Social Order* (1964), where he had conceptualised conflict in terms of the absence of power and status of young people, *Ecstasy* instead located generational conflict in terms of differences in values. He believed that counter-culture was not the outcome of ‘alienation’ but rather that of a new generational consciousness. The significance of the counter-culture was that it ‘is preparing the way for the rest of society’ (1974; frontispiece).

Other empirical forays into counter-culture, were not so positive. Richard Mills’ examination of ‘hippies’ in London for example, whilst acknowledging the significance of marginal communities like the Hippies, did not see them as offering a positive influence: ‘the people in this study express an important change in the social position of youth, and not necessarily for the good’ (Mills 1973; 188).

Counter-cultural expressions are understood then, to be expressive of a criticism of modern capitalism, articulating collective responses toward social, intellectual and political change. Counter-cultural values are thus understood in terms of a rejection of dominant or ‘straight’ society, from which counter-culturalists ‘drop out’ of (Musgrove 1974). The term also generally associated with the 1960s and early 1970s, refers to ‘loosely related organizations, networks, communes, music and drug scenes’ that emerged in this period (Brooker 1999), in particular with social movements such as Hippies and student radicals. It can be located within the traditions of bohemia, of nineteenth century Romanticism and the Beat Generation. Counter-cultural worlds are understood as expressions of experimentation: of drug use, alternative lifestyles, dissident politics and loose normative systems.

The counter-cultural phenomenon lead some theorists to re-think how subcultures were conceptualised. John Irwin for example, called for a re-examination of the concept of subculture to acknowledge the ‘significant shifts in the phenomenon to which subculture
refers’ (1970). Following the example set by Shibutani, Irwin rejected theorists who conceived subculture as a set of patterns located in definite group or segment, a particular collectivity or ‘territory’. Such theories he argued, left no room for cognitive recognition of the subcultural formation, except by the social scientist (Irwin 1970). For Irwin, the emergence of ‘folk concepts’ such as ‘scene’, ‘bag’ and ‘thing’, and their popular usage, indicated that social worlds were being recognised by both ‘outsiders’ and ‘insiders’. The existence of recognised explicit ‘life styles’, he believed, changed the phenomenon in ‘essential ways’: the subculture becomes a ‘concrete action system’, where cognitive awareness leads to ‘subcultural relativism’ and subculturalists become performers in a theatre of life (Irwin 1970; 69).38

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the consolidation of subcultural theory.

We have explored within this chapter then, the context from which subcultural theory developed and from which the subcultural paradigm established by the CCCS drew, for as it has already been acknowledged, the work at CCCS was a synthesis of many disparate theoretical traditions. It is now time to turn our attention to the work of CCCS proper.

Established in 1964 at Birmingham University, the aim of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was to ‘put Cultural Studies on the intellectual map’ (Hall 1980;16). Though the CCCS did not focus exclusively on subcultures, it was for this work that the Centre’s reputation became based. The main body of work (initially published as working papers) was produced in the 1970s and was to establish subcultural studies as a formal area of enquiry. Though, as we shall see, the subcultural theories stemming from CCCS should not be understood as homogenous, the work that emanated from CCCS, sometimes referred to as the ‘Birmingham tradition’ or as the ‘new subcultural theory’, was to secure the paradigm of subcultural studies that dominated the field for the next two decades.

Much of the focus of attention at CCCS was directed towards post-war British youth culture. The 1960s had seen the emergence of the category of ‘youth’ and this was

38 Irwin takes his theories further in ‘Scenes’ (1977), where he analyses urban ‘scenes’ within America, focusing particular attention onto ‘hippies’ and ‘surfers’. 
regarded as ‘one of the most striking and visible manifestations of social change in the period’ (Hall and Jefferson 1996;9). ‘Youth Culture’ became symbolic, particularly within the media, of post war ‘affluent consumer society’; the shift from work to leisure, from production to consumption. ‘Post war youth, the inheritors of affluence, therefore appeared as the vanguard of the coming ‘society of leisure’, in whose wake marched the ‘new’ working class’ (Murdock and McCron 1996;197). Youth culture fuelled the myth of classlessness, it was seen to transcend class, even to be a class in its own right (Hall and Jefferson 1996;15). However, youth was also positioned as a problem. Conflict between the generations replaced that between social classes and the existence of the ‘generation gap’ became a particular cause for concern.

CCCS researchers however, rejected both the reductive nature of the term ‘youth culture’ and the myth of classlessness. They understood the phenomenon of youth culture to be much more complex than was generally recognised, and sought to replace ‘youth culture’ with the ‘more structural concept of ‘sub-culture’’(Hall and Jefferson 1996;16). They also believed that class had not been eliminated but was indeed fundamental to any understanding of post war youth culture. Youth and class then, became two key themes that preoccupied CCCS work. Attention in particular, focused on spectacular working class youth; for these subcultures seemed to embody for those at CCCS, the instability and contradictions that the working class were experiencing.

The significance that was placed on class within the theorisation of subcultural formations, was articulated in Phil Cohen’s working paper Subcultural conflict and working-class community (1972). Indeed this set the agenda, establishing a framework to which many at CCCS worked. Reminiscent of the work of the Chicago School in its focus on East End London, the paper understood subcultures to be expressive of class in crisis: youth subcultures were understood in relation to working class or the ‘parent culture’, whose traditions and cohesion were under threat.

Cohen examined how the working class communities of this area, based on extended kinship networks, a dense ecological setting and diverse local economies, were being destroyed by redevelopment and the redistribution of the population into green-belt estates and high-rise flats, and changes to the local economy. He also considered how the ‘respectable’ working class was caught between two contradictory ideologies, that of
spectacular consumption and of the traditional work ethic of production (Cohen 1972;21). Understood within this context, youth subcultures, Cohen believed, were attempts to express and resolve the contradictions that remained ‘hidden or unresolved in the parent culture’ (Cohen 1972;23).

Though the problems facing the parent culture were played out in terms of generational conflict, Cohen saw that subcultures were attempts to retrieve the social cohesion that was being eroded within the parent culture. They were also a response to the options that confronted the parent culture; between traditional working-class puritanism and status as new lumpenproletariat or the new hedonism of consumption and a future as part of a socially mobile elite. Within the different forms that subcultural responses took, this choice was seen to be symbolically represented: the upwardly aspiring Mod whose ‘dress and music reflected the hedonistic image of the affluent consumer’ or the ‘traditional’ proletariat Skinhead whose ‘uniform...could be interpreted as a kind of caricature of the model worker’ (Cohen, 1972).

Cohen also saw that subcultures were an attempt by working class youth to ‘win space’ for themselves, replacing the lost working class community with subcultural territory. He argued however, that subcultural efforts to retrieve symbolically the cohesion that had been lost, offered only an ‘imaginary’ solution; for in being played out in the arena of leisure not politics, they could never make any real difference.

In the essay ‘Subcultures, cultures and class’ published in Resistance Through Rituals (Hall and Jefferson 1996), John Clarke et al provide an introduction to the theoretical framework that much of the CCCS work subscribes. Following Cohen’s lead, they also considered youth subcultures in relation to the principle structuring division in capitalist society, class: relative to class configurations ‘sub-cultures are sub-sets – smaller, more localised and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks’ (Clarke et al. 1996;13).

Within this essay however, subcultures are understood not only in relation to the parent culture but also the dominant culture and mass culture. Like their parent culture, subcultures are positioned in a subordinate position to the dominant social-cultural order. Their subcultural status is thus linked to their subordinate class position. Distinct
subcultures form as a response by some working-class youth, to their situation; they are 'concrete, identifiable social formations constructed as a collective response to the material and situated experience of their class.' (Clarke et al. 1996;47). Like Cohen, it is recognised however that the subcultures ultimately fail to provide a real solution to their problematic experience because their efforts are pitched at a symbolic level; 'They 'solve', but in an imaginary way, problems which at the concrete material level remain unresolved.' (Clarke et al. 1996;47)

Arguing that the notion of 'culture' should be replaced by one of 'cultures', and recognising a cultural dialectic of incorporation and resistance, Clarke et al emphasised much more than Cohen, the resistant nature of subcultures. Embracing Gramsci's theory of hegemony, subcultures were located within the struggle for cultural power and space and were understood as attempts to win space, both cultural and territorial. Building on work such as Becker's which established the idea that deviance was a social creation, they sought to establish how the deviant behaviour of youth subcultures was the result of something more than public labelling.

Subcultures were also understood in terms of culturalist definitions of culture, i.e. that 'culture' is the 'way, the forms, in which groups 'handle' the raw material of their social and material life-existence' (Clarke et al. 1996;10). Clarke et al believed that;

'the 'culture' of a group or class is the peculiar and distinctive 'way of life' of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in mores and customs, in the uses of objects and material life' (1996;10).

Though subcultures then, were understood to be derived from their parent culture, they were also understood to be distinct from it. Subcultures had 'reasonably tight boundaries, distinctive shapes, which have cohered around particular activities, focal concerns and territorial spaces' (Clarke et al. 1996;14). Attention then, was directed upon those sections of working class youth whose response to their problematic situation took a visibly distinctive form both from working class culture as a whole and from their peers or 'ordinary' youth.

Enquiry particularly focused on the style of subcultures, in dress, music, ritual and argot. Significance was attributed to the 'activity of stylisation - the active organisation of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organised group-identity in the form and
shape of a coherent and distinctive way of ‘being-in-the-world’. (Clarke et al. 1996;54) Subcultures were seen to be using the ‘raw materials’ provided by the new youth industries, to construct distinctive and meaningful styles for themselves; subverting and transforming the meanings and use of commodities to other meanings and uses. The styling of a subculture was regarded as homologous with ‘their focal concerns, activities, group structure and collective self-image’ (Clarke et al. 1996;56), and thus the symbolic aspects of subcultural styling became the subject of attention.

Marrying culturalism with a structuralist approach, CCCS research was concerned with attempts to ‘read’ subcultures, to understand the ‘maps of meaning’, the ‘symbolic ordering of social life’ that subcultures engaged in. Thus a defining feature of CCCS work was the emphasis placed on spectacular subcultures; on subcultural appearance, the ‘look’ of the subcultural actors. This agenda which lead CCCS researchers to prioritise the style of youth subcultures can be seen reflected in working papers such as Jefferson’s on Teddy Boys (1996) and Clarke’s on Skinheads (1973b) and (1973a). Drawing on Barthes, youth subcultural styling was read as a text or sign, providing the means to ‘understand’ and unlock the meanings behind subcultural formations. This approach is also evident in a number of the articles within Resistance Through Rituals, being particularly apparent in John Clarke’s chapter, ‘Style’.

Within ‘Style’, Clarke identified and elaborated on concerns that were pivotal to the CCCS understanding of youth subcultures. Subcultural identities were primarily understood to be located within the context of the ‘relative freedom’ of leisure: leisure occupied a privileged position in the post-war period, ‘where adolescence itself is seen as a time of relative indulgence and freedom before adult responsibilities set in’ (Clarke 1996a;176). The focus of attention was directed at ‘the ‘moment’ of stylistic creation...when activities, practices, outlooks crystallise around certain very limited and coherent expressive forms.’ (Clarke 1996a;177)

In particular, Levi-Strauss’s concept of bricolage formed the basis from which subcultural styles were understood: attention was directed towards understanding how symbolic objects were selectively appropriated from the ‘field of possibles’ (i.e. commodities of the youth market) and reorganised to create fresh meanings. New subcultural styles were thus understood as being created by the transformation and rearrangement of existing objects,
that already carried coherent meanings, into ensembles that carried new meanings. Why a particular group adopted a particular set of symbolic objects and not others was explained in terms of the homologies between a ‘group’s self-consciousness and the possible meanings of available objects’ (Clarke 1996a:179). Recognising the repressed potential meanings of symbolic objects, subcultural groups were thought to appropriate certain objects because they identified the possibility of reflecting their groups’ particular values and concerns within them. It was believed that group relations and practices thus became fixed around the way that ‘borrowed’ symbolic objects were stylistically organised. The appropriated objects, recontextualised to form a subcultural style, are also taken as objectifying the group’s self image.

The specificity of each style was stressed, in that one needed to take into account the different material and cultural conditions within which styles had been generated. It was also recognised that the development of a group identity must also be understood in relation to that of significant groups of ‘Others’. Group identity formation was as much due to negative as well as positive reactions to other groups: a subcultural groups’ identity in part, was therefore understood as being defined in relation to its difference from other ‘outgroups’. A main function of distinctive subcultural styles then, was to ‘define the boundaries of group membership as against other groups.’ (Clarke 1996a:180).

It was also believed that ‘Aspects of dress, style and appearance … play a crucial role in group stigmatisation, and thus in the operation and escalation of social reaction.’ (Clarke 1996a:184) In addition, it was suggested that adverse reactions to emerging styles, served to intensify commitment and the development of a distinctive style (Clarke 1996a:184-5). Given this and the subordinate position of subcultural groups both in terms of their wider class location and their subcultural identity, the bricolage that groups engaged in to create new, distinctive subcultural styles was understood in terms of its oppositional significance. Subcultural styles were taken to be expressions of resistance to the values of wider society: subculturalists were active agents in subverting the meanings and values manifest in the commodities they used to create new and resistant meanings and values.

Again however, the ability of the subcultures to resist was interpreted within the context of ‘magical solutions’, for they were perceived to be operating primarily within the sphere of leisure; youth subcultures were therefore regarded as unable to make any real challenges to
the hegemonic culture. As potential counter-hegemonic solutions they ultimately failed. In particular, Clark argued that subcultural styles were open to diffusion and defusion by the dominant mainstream, for example, ‘the Mods’ preoccupation with expressing themselves as a “style”, as “Image”, made them susceptible to incorporation by the commercial sector and the media’ (Clarke 1996a;189). Original subcultural styles became transformed into ‘pure ‘market’ or ‘consumer” styles as they were removed from their contexts and were commercially exploited and defused. Attractive to the market for their novelty value, only their ‘acceptable’ elements were stressed and utilised.  

The dominant culture also used ‘style-characterisations as convenient stereotypes to identify and, hopefully, isolate groups dominantly regarded as “anti-social”.’ (Clarke 1996a;185) However, even when presenting negative and selective characterisations of subcultures, Clarke suggested that what the dominant hegemony was inadvertently doing was to actually widen access to subcultural identities, permitting the re-appropriation of the style by geographically dispersed groups (1996a;186). This ‘genuine grass-roots reappropriation’ was viewed in contrast to the commercial defusion that produced generalised ‘market’ stylistic versions of subcultures.

It was through the work of Dick Hebdige however, that the spectacular styling of subcultures received extensive attention and was to be subjected to a more complex structuralist analysis than was illustrated in Resistance. Indeed Hebdige’s work, and in particular Subculture: The Meaning of Style (1988a), has been described as a ‘marked watershed in subcultural analysis’ (McGuigan 1992;100).

In privileging the referent of race, Hebdige offered a more complex analysis of subculture than one grounded in the structure of class. Hebdige maintained that ‘the history of post-war British youth culture must be reinterpreted as a succession of differential responses to the black immigrant presence...from the 1950s onwards.’ (1988a;29). The ‘hidden history’ of the influence of black immigrants and black music on white youth subcultures and ‘a

39 Clarke gives an example by citing the popular television programme Ready, Steady, Go. Drawing on Mod styling, the programme suppressed any negative aspects of Mod so as to present a “kind of castrated mod, with no pills, no punch-ups, just the prettiness...the more unpleasant aspects had to be ignored if the mods were to be allowed to dance in front of the cameras.” (Clarke 1996a;188)

40 Evident in Hebdige’s early work such as Reggae, Rastas and Rudies (1977), and consolidated and developed in Subcultures, this privileging of ethnicity over class as the most significant referent, was to continue through his work; see for example Cut ‘n’ Mix (1987) and Hiding in the Light (1988).
phantom history of race relations since the War' he revealed as being 'played out on the loaded surfaces of British working-class youth cultures' (Hebdige 1988a;45).

This reinterpretation of the history of subcultural styling was grounded in what was to become a most influential exploration based on a semiological perspective. Again like Clarke, borrowing from Saussure and Barthes, Hebdige presented a structuralist methodology which regarded subcultural styling as a form of language (indeed Subcultures was published as part of the New Accents series in literary studies). He tried to understand and decipher the internal logic of the sartorial innovations of subcultures, attempting to build up a 'grammar' from which 'the hidden messages inscribed on the glossy surfaces of style' could be decoded (Hebdige 1988a;18). Interested in the processes by which objects become symbolic for subcultures, he aimed to 'tease out meanings' embedded in subcultural styles that he considered were 'pregnant with significance'.

Hebdige also utilised the concept of bricolage and for him, Punks were the ultimate bricoleurs, engaged through their subcultural styling in 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' against hegemonic culture. Thus locating subcultures as subordinate groups, the sartorial styles of post-war subcultures were 'read' in terms of their subversive implications; as a 'form of Refusal'. Indeed, he regarded the emergence of subcultures as signalling the breakdown of hegemonic consensus in the post-war period, whereby challenges to the hegemonic order were expressed obliquely through subcultural style (Hebdige 1988a;17). The 'semantic disorder' of punk for example, transgressed accepted and taken-for-granted codes of behaviour. Drawing from Althusser, he argued that subcultures do not make themselves from the raw materials of alienation, but through mediated systems such as the mass media who provide ideological frameworks. Hebdige then, suggested that subcultures were as much a response to the media, as to the lived realities of the participants. Indeed, Hebdige identified a homology between punk style and the state of the nation: punk dramatised the rhetoric of crisis, of Britain's decline in the 1970s.

As Cohen and Clarke et al had regarded the emancipatory potential of subcultures as limited, so too did Hebdige; he believed that any subversion of the social order could only be momentary. Given that subversion took place only on the level of style, the stylistic innovation of subcultures could be quickly incorporated back into the established orders of
meaning, both on a ideological and commodity level, inevitably ending up as establishing new sets of conventions (Hebdige 1988a;96).

An alternative to the structuralist methodology of theorists such as Hebdige, was offered by Paul Willis who authored the only real works to come out of CCCS that engaged in the methodology of ethnographic research. Within *Learning to Labour* (1977) for example, Willis offered an examination of ‘lads’ in a West Midlands school and how their lives inevitably led from school into manual work. It is his examination of Hippies and Motorbike boys in *Profane Culture* (1978) however, that is of particular interest here. Central to *Profane Culture* is the idea that culture can be made by the ‘oppressed, subordinate or minority groups’. Rejecting the cultural dupe theory of the Frankfurt School, Willis argued that subordinated groups are not necessarily ‘victims’ of dominant ideology, rather they have the ability to see through it. He explored homologies of the lifestyles of Hippy and Bike-boy groups and engaged in a homological analysis of how cultural choices are used to create cultural meaning: how music helped to mark difference and provide sense of authenticity, validating their lifestyles and epitomising them. He highlighted the ‘profane power’ of subordinate and marginal groups to ‘sometimes take as their own, select and creatively develop particular artefacts to express their own meanings’ (Willis 1978;166). Exploring culture that forms in places where hegemonic culture cannot fully penetrate, he emphasised the contradictions of lived culture.

We see then, that whilst it is necessary to recognise the different perspectives, structuralist and culturalist, of the work emanating from CCCS, it is possible to identify within the different works common themes to the study of subcultures: indeed a recognised ‘Birmingham tradition’ or ‘CCCS paradigm’ became established. As Ken Gelder has suggested, the dominance of the CCCS paradigm had its limiting effects however: ‘if seen in the context of the Chicago School’s engagement with so many different kinds of ‘deviant’ behaviours’, the focus of CCCS work exclusively on youth arguably ‘resulted in a substantial narrowing of the range of subcultural activity under discussion’ (1997;83). Gelder argues that in particular, the ‘emphasis on style, fashion and the ‘look’ of subcultures has proved extraordinarily influential’, so that this prioritisation of style has been at the expense of other subcultural features such as modes of pleasure or fun, or use of space for example (1997;88). Thus the work of CCCS may have legitimated
subcultures as a subject for serious scholarly enquiry, however they also served to constrain the boundaries of that enquiry.

‘Contesting the subcultural terrain’.

The work of CCCS provided the dominant paradigm for subcultural studies for over a decade, and although criticisms were levied at CCCS, the precedence of the paradigm was not truly challenged until fundamental changes in society and cultural theory, forced a re-negotiation of the tradition and brought in new approaches to subcultural studies.41

Great epistemological shifts have occurred since the CCCS project attempted to consolidate subcultural studies. Postmodernist theory has articulated widely on postmodern condition; consumption theory has challenged the Marxist stronghold, and there has been much work on the politics of identity and representation, giving currency to concepts of difference, hybridity and Diaspora. In many discipline areas there has been a ‘crisis in representation’ and a move away from the concepts of ideology and hegemony towards an engagement with modernism and postmodernism. (McRobbie 1994c;24).

The challenge presented to the Birmingham tradition was also due to a shift in the phenomenon of subculture itself. ‘Dance culture’ emerged in the eighties which was a phenomenon that simply did not fit the CCCS paradigm; ‘subcultures’ were not necessarily spectacular, they were increasingly self referential and ever quicker to hybridise or divide. The use of new technologies also created new precedents of creativity and subcultural forms, for example virtual subcultures.

This section then, attempts to identify the key theorists, that in reacting to such changes, came to take issue with CCCS paradigm as outmoded and sought to engage in the theorisation of subcultural formations more fitting to the contemporary context. With some of this criticism coming from within the CCCS itself, the challenge was initially more a revision than a total break from the tradition, however the influence of postmodern and post-structuralist theories was such that by the early 1990s, the CCCS paradigm had well

41 It should be noted that the CCCS paradigm was not widely taken up outside of Britain, for its Marxist slant and emphasis on class structures ‘held little appeal and relevance for Australian and US academics, who liked to regard their own societies as ‘classless’” (Brooker 1988,82).
and truly been put to rest. The common themes that become identifiable in this work include a re-negotiation of the concept of resistance, of notions of authenticity, consumption and an acknowledgement of postmodernity as the dominant cultural condition. Symbolic class authenticity and the search for fundamental class meanings in subcultures, is firmly off the agenda as research is less influenced by the ideas of Gramsci and Althusser, and has moved to embrace the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault and Fredric Jameson.

This section then, is not intended to stand as a comprehensive guide to all critical engagement with CCCS, but rather, together with the final section of this chapter, provide an overview of academic literature on subcultures which offers significant challenges to the CCCS paradigm.

Gary Clarke:
Clarke’s working paper Defending Ski Jumpers (1982) was an early critique of the Birmingham tradition from within the Centre itself. The paper sought to assess the value of ‘new sub-cultural theory’ in light of recent developments within youth culture and young people’s position in contemporary society. In doing so, Clarke was to question the orthodoxy of the CCCS paradigm on a number of counts.

He believed that a fundamental flaw in the paradigm was its concentration on the signifying power and the ‘stylistic art of a few’; the dichotomy that had been constructed between subculture and ‘straight’ youth Clarke argued, was a false one. He saw that the marginalisation of the latter from the enquiry could no longer be substantiated given that the ‘wardrobes of post-war styles have been exhumed, re-adopted in a way which makes conventional sub-cultural analysis virtually impossible.’ (1982;a). In questioning the assumption which positioned subversive defiance as the sole preserve of a creative subcultural minority, Clarke was also challenging the notion of authenticity which theorists such as Hebdige had so readily celebrated subcultures for. Indeed, Clarke provided an in-depth critique of Hebdige and the limitations of taking style as the sole defining feature of subcultural identity; he takes issue with a theory that takes as its starting point ‘card carrying members of spectacular subcultures’ and a methodology which assumes that all members come from the same class (1982;8-9).
Clarke challenges the CCCS paradigm for focusing exclusively on spectacular subcultures at the point which they were believed to be most authentic - the moment of their inception. Such theories he argues could not account for how the desire to resolve problems could lead to the adoption of particular styles, or why some working-class youths joined up whilst others did not: 'We are given no sense of ages, income (or source of income), the occupations...' (1982;18), different levels of commitment are not examined, nor was 'how and with what consequences the pure subcultures are sustained, transformed, appropriated, disfigured or destroyed.' (1982;8).

Clarke does offer an explanation for problems he perceived in CCCS subcultural theory. He believed that the context in which the subcultural theories emerged, 'overdetermined the authors approach' by imposing 'severe limitations and restrictions upon the project' (1982;1). He is suggesting then, that the fundamental problems of the CCCS paradigm can be explained by the starting point from which the project emerged, i.e. within an attempt to develop labelling theory and resolve its inability to explain 'primary deviance'. Clarke called for a demystification of the subcultural image, challenging the romantic view of the theorists and their 'latent contempt' for 'straight youth' (1982;4). Taking issue with theory for its elitism in its focus on 'originals', he calls for the study of youth culture to be widened and for empirical analysis based on ethnographic research.

Angela McRobbie:
McRobbie has been a prolific contributor to subcultural theory, publishing a number of seminal texts. She has become particularly renowned for the feminist contribution she made to subcultural studies, however, she has also published important work which acknowledges subcultural consumption and has engaged in a reassessment of subcultural theory in the light of postmodernism.

An early piece that McRobbie wrote while at Birmingham, together with Jenny Garber, was 'Girls and Subcultures'. Published in *Resistance Through Rituals* (1996), it offered a feminist critique of subcultural theory, and as such, was a new direction for the Centre. Posing some fundamental questions about the position of girls in subcultural theory, McRobbie and Garber criticised their male colleagues for their exclusive focus on male subcultural styles. Attempting to address the invisibility of girls within subcultural theory, and taking issue with the stereotypical image of women that was uncritically reinforced if
they did appear, they explored the assumed marginality of girls: are they actually marginal or just invisible; how could their roles relate to wider structural positioning of women; do girl subcultures exist? (1996;211). Concluding with examination of the ‘teenybopper’, they suggest such a phenomenon could be conceived as an example of an all female subculture.

In ‘Settling the accounts with subcultures’ (1980), McRobbie was to continue this debate. Again calling for a critical analysis of ‘classic’ subcultural texts, she engaged in a feminist re-reading of Willis’s Learning to Labour and Hebdige’s Subculture. Taking issue with their assumptions that located subcultures exclusively within the public sphere, the street, she highlights the absence of the private sphere, of family and domestic life, from such accounts. Exploring the contradictions apparent in the masculinity of Willis’s ‘lads’, she challenges the authors unquestioning acceptance of their aggressive and sexist rhetoric. Similarly, she challenges Hebdige for his failure to consider sexuality or sexism in his exploration of subcultural style.

McRobbie offered an early elusion to the existence of a ‘entrepreneurial infrastructure’ within subcultures, in the article ‘Second-hand dresses and the role of the ragmarket’ (1989a). Considering second-hand style within the broad context of post-war subcultural history, McRobbie explored how subcultural style is bought and sold within the market place. Here she locates what was normally considered a feminine activity, within a wider context, acknowledging the social dimension in the act of acquiring style, and exploring a way that women have made a significant contribution to subcultures. Within the article McRobbie also begins to engage with the postmodernist theories of Fredrick Jameson, however the account is still infused with the Birmingham tradition’s romanticism for its subjects and to an extent, the paradigm of resistance.

The anthology of essays Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen (1991b), further explored femininity and its relationship with consumption, in particular the use of comics and magazines by girls. Within ‘Dance narratives and fantasies of achievement’ she also challenges male theorists, with certain exceptions, for their marginalisation of dance from subcultural theory: she argues that because dance has traditionally been regarded as a ‘trivialised or feminised’ form, it was ‘ritual without resistance’ and its subcultural significance was thus ‘played down, if not altogether ignored’ (1991a).
The theme of subcultural role within cultural production and consumption, and the life skills that involvement can lead to, was also explored in the article ‘Shut up and dance: youth culture and changing modes of femininity’ (McRobbie 1993). Here McRobbie argued that the tradition of conceiving subcultures in terms of the final signifying product, led theorists to ignore female involvement. If however the material processes involved in creating a subculture were recognised, a greater level of involvement by young women in subcultural formations would be highlighted. This article in particular, reveals a move in McRobbie’s work toward a recognition of postmodernity. She considers youth cultures’ ability to engage with the profound social changes occurring in Thatcherist Britain, actively creating new social meanings and a ‘frenzy’ of cultural production (1993;407). This leads McRobbie to an analysis of the rave phenomenon, where she explores the paradoxes of a culture that is neither subcultural nor mainstream, a ‘culture of avoidance’ (1993;422).

The articles included within *Postmodernism and Popular culture* (1994c), further reflect McRobbie’s attempts to create new paradigms for understanding youth and popular cultural expressions in light of postmodernist theory. Taking an enthusiastic attitude to postmodernism, McRobbie explores the possibilities that the ‘condition’ presents: rather than being overwhelmed by media saturation and cultural fragmentation, she suggests subculturalists have engaged in the politics of empowerment. She argues for the need to develop a new critical vocabulary, one that can take the postmodernist condition, rapid movement, self-referentially, eclecticism, into account’ (1994c). ‘The moral panic in the age of the post-modern mass media’ article, she also explores the history of moral panic theory in sociology and concludes with an examination of moral panic within postmodern media (1994a). In a reflexive response to such postmodernist inspired work, the essays collected in *In the Culture Society* (1999), present her most recent attempts to engage in a feminist inspired examination of cultural practices within contemporary consumer culture. Here she addresses new forms of dance music and subcultural or underground forms such as Drum ‘n’ Bass.

**Steve Redhead:**
A Professor of Law and Popular Culture at Manchester Metropolitan University, Steve Redhead’s work has also been seminal to the re-negotiation of subcultural theory. In particular, Redhead offers a critique of traditional subcultural paradigms which attempts to
recognise changes in youth culture and engage with postmodernist theory, and indeed he helped instigate a move towards the recognition of the clubcultures phenomenon.

*The End-of-the-Century Party: Youth and Pop Towards 2000* provides a 'contemporary archaeology of discourse on pop' (1990,8), offering within this an insight into the limitations of the traditions of subcultural analysis. Challenging for example, the taken-for-granted assumption that subcultural styles unfolded, generationally, over a linear period of time (1990,23), Redhead argues that the apparent end of the subcultural lineage in the 1980s, exposes not the 'death of youth culture', but the inadequacies of a paradigm of subcultural studies itself: whose limitations were revealed by the inability of the traditional subcultural analysis to deal with the changes that occurred in youth culture from Punk onwards.

Drawing on the challenges that postmodernist ideas present to the primacy of the concept of 'authenticity', and the rigid definitions of identity that subcultural theory enforced, Redhead attempts to lay to rest the accepted dichotomy between authentic subcultures and superficial pop culture. He takes issue with those that,

‘tended to look beneath, or behind, the surfaces of the shimmering mediascape in order to discover the 'real' subculture, apparently always distorted by the manufactured press and television ‘image” (1990,2).

He rejects the proclamations that the ‘endless succession’ of deviant youth subcultures had come to an end in the 1980s and that youth had become ‘conformist’, offering an alternative perspective of youth culture and music which identifies Political Pop and its deviant offspring ‘Post-Political Pop’ as important sites of resistance. However, he claims that when considering such new cultural formations it is important not to recourse back to established criteria as he argues it is necessary to theorise resistance differently. He argues that the CCCS tradition gave ‘too much credence to the notion of subculture as a self-generating process’, paving the way for ‘major’ misreadings of subcultural styles, identities and sexuality’s of Punk and post-Punk formations (Redhead 1990,41).

Redhead identifies therefore a ‘crisis of meanings’ associated with youth subcultural analysis by the 1980s. He suggests that there has been a ‘profound questioning’ of the meta-narrative of the ‘liberation of youth’ which he argues has been one of the ‘most dominant of post-war mythologies in the West’ and a foundational concept to orthodox
subcultural analysis since the 1950s (1990;89). Postmodernist theories have revealed the shortcomings of such meta-narratives that assume a unified subject from which discourse can reveal its truth.

_Subcultures to Clubcultures: An Introduction to Popular Cultural Studies_ introduced the term ‘clubcultures’ into the debate in an attempt to indicate the ‘complexity of a cultural condition which has too often been reduced to one dimension’ (1997,xi). For Redhead, ‘clubcultures’ is both a concept and a ‘global youth formation’ that ‘supplements ‘subculture’ as the key to the analysis of the histories and futures of youth culture.’ (1997;x) Through the series of papers, Redhead attempts to engage with the new youth cultural phenomenon that emerged in the 1980s and came to dominate in the 1990s. Questioning whether we are now in an age of ‘club’ rather than ‘sub’ cultures, he explores the possibility that the criminalisation of certain types of music in the 1980s and 90s, produced new youth cultures. In particular he focuses on how the popular cultural forms of pop music and soccer have developed in the context of moral panics over them.42

Again the analysis is positioned as a challenge to the orthodoxy's established by CCCS. He argues for example that the spectacular subcultures of Hebdige had already largely disappeared by the time that _Subcultures_ was published; that the basis of Hebdige's theory of subcultures, debatable when applied pre-1979, no longer worked well after 1979. Indeed that the fragmentation of the audiences for popular music and its cultures had made such theories ‘outdated’. Drawing on the work of Sarah Thornton, and her account of clubcultures, he suggests that this does not mean that subcultures no longer exist, just that they are ‘frequently grounded in market niches of the contemporary global music industry...even when they ‘originally’ came from the ‘streets’.’ (Redhead 1997;103)

_Sarah Thornton:_

In ‘Moral panic, the media and British rave culture’, Sarah Thornton, like the other authors mentioned above, rejects the dichotomy between ‘straight’ and subcultural youth that the Birmingham tradition established. Arguing that such assumptions cannot account for recent youth cultural phenomenon, she examines how the media was integral to the social

42 An example of the criminalisation of certain types of music enshrined in law, is the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which puts in place ‘Powers to Remove Persons Attending or Preparing for a Rave’, to stop persons proceeding to a rave, and the power to enter such an event and seize the sound equipment. (Redhead 1995;x-xi)
and ideological formations of rave culture; 'Media and commerce do not just cover but help construct music subcultures.' (Thornton 1994;188). She also identified what little attention has been paid to the existence of hierarchies within popular culture itself the systems of cultural distinction that operate. Offering a critique of resistance and subcultural 'authenticity', she borrowed Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' to explore the idea of the existence of 'subcultural capital': status conferred by 'hipness', 'coolness' and 'being-in-the-know'.

The ideas presented in ‘Moral Panic’ are explored to greater depth in Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital. Here Thornton suggests that subcultural theorists have underestimated the problems inherent in investigating a subcultural web of ideologies, value judgements, complex stratification's and mobility's (1995;92). She introduces the concept of 'clubcultures', which she argued, are not expressive of an organic collective unconscious, but rather 'taste cultures', which exist as a fragmented phenomenon tied together by a network of communications. Such phenomenon she argues, cannot be explained by traditional subcultural theory which placed too much emphasis on static boundaries and territorial affiliations. Thornton argues for a much more reflexive methodological approach which accounts for the complex stratification's and mobility's of contemporary youth culture.

Providing further insight into the concept of 'subcultural capital', Thornton explores the ways in which alternative cultural worth is measured against an imagined 'mainstream'. Thus she argues that the dichotomies of mainstream/subculture and commercial/alternative, do not necessarily describe the way in which clubcultures are objectively organised, rather they reveal the imagined structures through which 'many youth cultures imagine their social world, measure their cultural worth and claim their subcultural capital.'(Thornton 1995;96)

The work then, whilst challenging the CCCS paradigm and engaging with postmodernist discourse to develop a more reflexive and relevant theorisation of youth culture, also serves to challenge some of the assumptions made by postmodernists. She challenges Jameson's notion of the 'death of the imagination' and Baudrillard's dismissal of the discotheque as the lowest form of entertainment, argued that rather than regarding youth culture as the epitome of the postmodern condition of a constant plundering from ever
recent past and a sign of the death of 'real' culture, it should be considered within new epistemologies and celebrated for its creativity. Like Redhead, Thornton is calling for a renegotiation of the concept of authenticity and a recognition of the new authenticities. She argues for the development of theorisation's of youth culture which recognise the integral role the media plays in the formation and prolonging of subcultural formations.

**Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC):**

MIPC is a post-graduate research centre that was created at Manchester Metropolitan University in 1992, combining two pre-existing research units. It was established in order to promote and 'push forward' theoretical and empirical research and debates into contemporary popular culture (Redhead 1993b). On the agenda in particular, was the aim to begin to reorient cultural studies. The work at MIPC contributed to an emerging interdisciplinary academic field of 'popular cultural studies' which is distinguished from the 'contemporary cultural studies' work undertaken at CCCS (Redhead, Wynne, and O'Connor 1997). Whilst acknowledging the debt due to the pioneering work of CCCS, the MIPC work questioned the appropriateness of the CCCS paradigm to the contemporary context; much of the agenda of MIPC has been to understand and theorise youth culture within the context of the 'accelerated culture' of the 1990s. Unlike much CCCS work, this re-theorisation has its basis however, in ethnographic research and participant observation.

From a series of seminar working groups, three significant collections of essays were produced: *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture* (Redhead 1993b), *The Passion and the Fashion: Football Fandom in the New Europe* (Redhead 1993a) and *The Clubcultures Reader: Readings in Popular Cultural Studies* (Redhead, Wynne, and O'Connor 1997). Within *Rave Off* an attempt was made to make sense of youth cultural formations of 'Madchester' and 'Acid House' or rave culture, particularly within the framework of deviancy and regulation, and the conception of popular culture. Constructed as the latest folk devils and the object of public moral panics and governmental regulation, it is argued that such cultural expressions cannot be explained by orthodox subcultural or deviancy theory. The various papers thus attempt to address misreadings of such cultures that have resulted from the CCCS legacy, and to take account of the global changes that have occurred in youth and youth subcultures since Punk.

*The Clubcultures Reader* takes the project further, offering a wide range of ethnographies
into contemporary 'sub' and 'club' cultures. Intended as a complimentary text to *Subcultures to Clubcultures* (Redhead 1997), the theory sections of *The Clubcultures Reader* in particular, offer a commentary on popular cultural agenda: for example, Best attempts to re-theorise the position of resistance within popular culture (1997), Muggleton questions the viability of 'spectacular' subcultural styles in a postmodernist context, suggesting the concept of the 'Post-subculturalist' as an alternative (see below), while Grossberg offers an insight into the move to 're-place' the 'popular' in cultural studies (1997).

The above section serves to introduce, in brief, seminal theorists that began to contest the subcultural terrain the CCCS had established. It is important however, to recognise that other early contributions were made, some of which were focused directly at a critical appraisal of CCCS theorisation.

Stanley Cohen for example, in his introduction to the new edition of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1980 (1972)), rejects the CCCS's tendency to privilege resistance and spectacularity. He criticises their constant impulse to only decode styles in terms of opposition and resistance, and the tendency to believe that styles developed internally with commercialisation and co-option happening later. He also questions the extent to which the subculturalists themselves are aware of the symbolic meanings that theorists decode from their styles and levies the criticism of over-interpretation; 'my feeling is that the symbolic baggage the kids are being asked to carry is just too heavy, that the interrogations are just a little forced.' (Cohen 1980 (1972)) Ultimately Cohen argues that there should be a return to sociology, to ethnographic research, in subcultural analysis.

Others also criticised the lack of specificity to CCCS research. Chris Waters for example in a review of CCCS work, argues that we never learn how much time participants spent involved in subcultural activity, how much income they had to spend on leisure pursuits, what occupations they were involved in, and indeed none of the work for Waters, accounts in a suitable manner for the rise of particular subcultures (1981). Like Cohen who took issue with CCCS's unproblematic readings of subcultural symbols such as the swastika, Waters also criticised these theorists for their romanticisation of youth culture and their privileging of spectacular forms of youth culture (1981). Waters also calls for the
exploration of girls role within subcultures, and stresses the need to 'tone down' the stress on universality of subcultures.

In an early recognition of the significance of the mass media and consumerism of subcultural formations, Jon Stratton also considered the problem of how subcultures originate. Exploring how subcultures can either centre around an individual’s relationship with a particular object (commodity) or be defined through their intersection with dominant culture, he argued that the cultural specificity of subcultures should be recognised. He suggests that ‘two distinct but overlapping types of youth subcultures’ developed in the post-war period: spectacular youth subcultures originated in Britain and commodity orientated subcultures in America (1985;194). He thus takes issue with some CCCS theorists, particularly Hebdige who assumed that subcultures are ‘generalisable across cultural boundaries’. Though Stratton does provide an alternative theorisation which recognises subcultural relationships with the commodification processes of dominant culture, he does however also maintain many CCCS inspired assumptions in his characterisation of British spectacular subcultures: that these are youth cultural formations, that they represent spectacular solutions to inherent contradictions in working-class culture, and although they appropriate aspects from black culture (music) and women (fashion), subcultures ultimately replicate the dominant culture’s marginalisation of these groups within them.

Some theorists then, made a break more distinctly with CCCS than others. In particular it is the more recent works which, in beginning to engage with postmodernist theories, presented the greatest challenges to the continued dominance of the CCCS paradigm. Clubcultures as we have seen for example, emerged as an alternative concept to subcultures, however a small number of theorists have begun to utilise postmodernist theory, in particular that of Maffesoli, to explore the alternative concept of ‘neo-tribe’.

Regarding ‘subculture’ as a ‘deeply problematic’ term, Bennett proposes an alternative theoretical framework that ‘allows for the pluralistic and shifting sensibilities of style that have increasingly characterised youth ‘culture’ since the post-Second World War period’ (Bennett 1999;599). In a reconsideration of the subcultural relationship to consumption, Bennett argues that rather than using newly found commodities to resist cultural changes and reclaim working-class identity, young people used the opportunity presented by
commodities to break away from their traditional class-based identities' (Bennett 1999:602). Arguing that the appropriation of style is the result of 'active decision of individuals' rather than 'the influence of structural conditions', Bennett suggests that the 'concept of 'lifestyle' provides a useful basis for a revised understanding of how individual identities are constructed and lived out' (1999:607). He moves away from notion of identity as a 'way of life' which is more stable. Rejects the constraints of class and suggests that lifestyle is freely chosen, active consumption to self-construct a chosen identity.

Kevin Hetherington also suggests that youth subcultures can be understood in terms of Maffesoli's neo-tribe (1998). Hetherington takes issue with traditional subcultural analysis, arguing that the boundaries it created between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic cultures are too static. He argues that it is increasingly difficult to identify what dominant culture is, and that the boundaries between areas of dominance and counter-hegemonic subcultures, should be thought of as 'mobile, partial and porous' (Hetherington 1998:56). Rejecting the neo-Marxist structuring of CCCS analysis, but continuing to privilege style as an important issue, he suggests that subcultures as neo-tribal expressions use style to convey a shared sense of identification and belonging. Understood in neo-tribal terms however, this identification recognises identity not as essentialist but rather performed: subcultures are elective i.e. individuals can make choices about whether they want to be involved. The concept of neo-tribe therefore, can account for the fluidity, difference and mobility within and between subcultural formations.

Another significant challenge that has been presented to the Birmingham tradition that should be addressed before we move on, is the concept of 'post-subculturalist' coined by David Muggleton (1997; 2000). Muggleton considers the implications of postmodernism for subcultural formations, for if the logic of Baudrillard's simulacra is followed, subcultural notions of 'authenticity' can no longer exist as subcultural styles become

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It should be noted that Ted Polhemus has also used the term 'tribe' or 'styletribes' but with much less theoretical depth than the aforementioned writers. A social anthropologist, Polhemus argues that 'the tribal imperative' is a fundamental part of human nature, equating modern, western 'styletribes' with non-western, indigenous tribal societies. Though he interprets subcultures or styletribes as providing a sense of belonging, in contradiction to Maffesoli's use of the term tribe, he interprets subcultures as 'tribal' because their use of distinctive appearances is inherently conservative and traditional; they aim to be timeless and unchanging (Polhemus 1994). In contrast to Hetherington also, Polhemus claims a homology between sartorial choices of styletribes and their ideologies. A 'tribespotter' extraordinaire, Polhemus is all too ready to formulate theoretically weak analogies between western styletribes and 'traditional tribes of the Third World' (1994:129), and as such his use of the term 'tribe' in relation to subcultural formations should be questioned.
copies with no original. The 'post-subculturalist' then, could be conceived as revelling in the availability of subcultural choice, no longer having to worry about authenticity as 'correct interpretations' of styles no longer exist (Muggleton 1997:198).

Postmodernist inspired analysis of subcultures thus present fundamental challenges to the CCCS paradigm, the implications of which shall be explored throughout this thesis.

The fragmentation and hybridisation of subcultural studies.

Though CCCS established youth subcultural formations as a legitimate area of study, it did not sustain a monopoly over subcultural studies. Indeed, work emanating from MIPC for example, begun to provide alternative theoretical frameworks. The popularity of the subject has lead to a proliferation of publications which explore youth culture and subcultural formations, and with this growing interest, subcultural studies within the past two decades has itself fragmented. Reflecting the changes that have happened within cultural studies in general, there has been a move away from class based analysis towards a privileging of other referents; in particular gender, race and ethnicity, and sexuality. Engaging with postmodernist and post-structuralist discourse, a more dispersed micropolitics utilises new models of power and resistance, community and identity. There have also been shifts in the conceptualisation of 'youth' and 'youth culture' which have begun to challenge the essentialist nature of traditional accounts and recognise the complex and shifting nature.

In turn, this has produced a hybridisation within subcultural theory, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of cultural studies from which subcultural studies was grounded. While subcultural style still does receive attention particularly from the growing discipline of fashion theory, work has emerged from other disciplines that focuses on other aspects of subcultural expression, notably music, use of space and language.

While some authors have worked within or developed the CCCS paradigm, others have chosen to challenge it: while for example, deviancy, moral panic and labelling theory has continued to be of significance (see Redhead, Wynne, and O'Connor 1997; Thompson 1998), analysis of subcultural expression is not always located within a discourse of
resistance. Also in terms of methodologies utilised, there has been in particular a return to sociological enquiry and to texts based on empirical research. Within this section then, some of the most productive fields of enquiry are identified and key texts are explored.44

Privileging new referents:

Gender

Though issues of gender were clearly not on the program for subcultural studies at CCCS, we have seen that a critique was offered by a contemporary, Angela McRobbie. This omission also did not go unnoticed by other female academics at Birmingham, and in 1978 the Women’s Studies Group at CCCS published *Women Take Issue*. A foundational work in its feminist analysis of popular culture, it also challenged the male theorists for their inability to perceive subculture as anything but deviant, spectacular and male, and their uncritical celebration of practices that were often sexist and racist (Group and studies 1978). Feminists also addressed the inadequacies in subcultural theory by engaging in projects which attempted to locate and explore female subcultures. Projects which explored distinct elements of female subcultures, included those of Gannetz (1995) and Nava (1992), and a more recent example is Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs’ research into female Beatles fans, whose public expressions of sexuality contain the ‘germs of an oppositional identity’ and of a defiant subculture, (1997).

However, criticisms have also been raised at feminists such as McRobbie for romanticising ‘cultures of femininity’ by studying female subcultures in isolation: subsequent feminists saw them as guilty of replicating the assumptions of their male counterparts, leading to ‘equally naïve representations of the young women’s practices as exemplars of autonomous feminine cultures of “resistance”’ (Roman and Christian-Smith 1988,17). In privileging consumption over production and in locating girl subcultures within the domestic arena, they left unchallenged, theories which identified ‘the street’ as the male preserve and women as marginal to subcultural formations.

Other theorists then, have taken gender as a central issue in the male dominated subcultures they observe. Roman and Christian-Smith for example, undertook ethnographic research into young Punk women’s’ participation in ‘slam’ dancing (1988),

44 Note that this is not intended as a comprehensive account of everything that has been published, but rather the offering of a brief guide to the variety and depth in which subcultures have been explored. Also whilst the texts have been allotted into a particular field of enquiry, some do straddle one or more of these areas.
Fonarow has considered gender in relation to the participant frameworks operating within indie music gigs (1997), Pini explored women's involvement in the early British Rave scene (1997) and Stedman examined how postmodern fragmentation and hyper-commodification within surfer culture is effecting group cohesion, and threatens to reduce women's position within the subculture itself (1997).

Other texts like Linda Andes' 'Growing up punk: meaning and commitment careers in a contemporary youth subculture' (1998), have discussed how feminist critiques of the flaws of male subcultural theorists, can lead to breakthroughs in the theorisation of subcultures: she suggests a model which identifies commitment as a process, conceiving subcultural identification in terms of a 'career' that individuals move through in stages. Research into recent subcultural expressions, have also highlighted how gender can be present as a critical dialogue within the essence of the subcultures themselves. Caroline Bassett's research into the world of Internet subcultures for example, uses Judith Butler's notion of performity to explore how gender identity is negotiated within virtual reality (1997). While a number of works have explored the Riot Grrl subculture and its feminist engagement with identity politics (Kearney 1998; Leonard 1998; Soccio 1999).

**Ethnicity and Race**

As we have seen, issues of ethnicity and race remained invisible within the majority of CCCS subcultural studies until Hebdige asserted the centrality of race to subcultural formations and revealed the 'hidden history' of black immigrant culture and music behind white youth subcultures (Hebdige 1977; Hebdige 1987; Hebdige 1988a). Through Hebdige's influence, subcultural theory not only began to trace and explore the black origins of predominantly white subcultures, but also black subcultures began to be addressed. The dramatic epistemological shifts in the study of race and ethnicity, influenced by post-structuralist theories, the politics of representation and post-colonialist theory, have also influenced subcultural studies, and race, once marginalised like gender, now receives attention.

Whilst some work considers subcultures where white and black youth come together or are of influence (see for example Cohen and Bains examination of Two Tone and Oi. (1988)), others concentrate on black subcultural expressions.
Within the 1990s there has been an increased amount of literature concerned with black music based subcultures such as rap (see for example Brennan 1994; Shusterman 1995). Gangster rap has been a particular focus of attention because of the moral panic that has surrounded it (see hooks 1994). Cultural forms such as rap have been theorised within the framework of deviancy and resistance, as they are understood to be 'attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization'; to be expressions and 'aggressive public displays of counter-presence and voice', of social alienation and the Afro-Diaspora (Rose 1994;84).

A number of publications have also focused on the politics of Black style, locating subversive expression in hairstyles (Craig 1997; Kelly 1997; Mercer 1994) or items of clothing such as the Zoot Suit (Chibnall 1985; Cosgrove 1984) for example. Carol Tulloch focuses on counter and subcultural contexts to discuss the creation and assertion of black identity through dress (Tulloch forthcoming).

**Sexuality**

Although the subject of a number of deviancy studies, homosexuality was invisible within the subcultural accounts that emanated from CCCS. As with the gender and race of subcultural members, assumptions were also made about their sexuality, and heterosexuality was taken to be the norm for the male delinquents under study at CCCS. Whilst feminists criticised the Centres’ male theorists for not addressing issues of gender, their inability to consider sexuality and the absence of any examination from their enquiries, went largely unchallenged.45

Where any mention of sexuality can be located within early explorations of subcultures, analysis was superficial and articulated within the dominant heterosexual structural frame. Fyvel for example, in his examination of Teddy Boys, pointed to a certain 'homosexualism' in the way that the gangs comprised of narcissistic all-male groups who dressed for the admiration of one another rather than that of the girls (1963). Similarly, George Melly also suggested that there was a 'strong homosexual element' to the Mods, however he acknowledged that this was not 'overt homosexuality' but a narcissistic obsession with clothes and appearance (1972).

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45 It should be noted here, that whilst a feminist perspective is now widely acknowledged within subcultural studies from all the various fields of enquiry, issues of sexuality are still very much under theorised in relation to subcultural formations.
Such theorists in describing the male subculturalists narcissistic attention to sartorial style, which they saw as a new phenomenon, invariably alluded to the only other referent they had, the male homosexual: until then ‘only tarts and homosexuals wore clothes which reflected what they were.’ (Melly 1972, 147) The sexuality of subculturalists however was never interrogated for although their attention to style was considered novel, the masculinist assumptions of subcultural studies, which emphasised a working-class, aggressive, delinquent subcultural participant, meant that subculturalists were never confused with homosexuals, who in the minds of the theorists were defined as middle-class and effeminate. Comments such as ‘Subcultural studies of youth never mention homosexuals, and this is hardly surprising given the masculinist emphasis of practically all youthful subcultures’ (Brake 1985, 181), reveal the polarity that was constructed around the heterosexual, masculine subculturalist and the effeminate homosexual.

Whist some texts have considered homosexuality as a subcultural entity in its own right, the influence of postmodernist theories recognise that a homogeneous ‘gay subculture’ does not in fact exist, and that to label homosexuality in terms of a coherent subculture, is too reductive. Issues of sexuality in relation to subcultural formations are complex and can gay culture cannot be understood in terms of a monolith. There has been a limited amount of research into subcultures which have been marginalised within lesbian and gay ‘communities’; includes for example work on gay dance subculture (Lewis, 1995), performance in ‘vogueing’ (Becquer and Gatti 1997), and the butch/femme lesbian (Case 1993; Faderman 1992).

Some academics have also begun to challenge the heterosexual assumptions of CCCS theorists and examine the contribution that lesbian and gay ‘communities’ made to subcultural identities traditionally defined within the CCCS paradigm. An important acknowledgement of the homosexual roots to the subcultures can be found in Healy’s chapter ‘Kids, cults and queers’ (1996). The contribution made to Punk has been explored for example (Cole 2000; Peacott and Nicholas 1990-1991; Viegener 1993) as have Skinheads (Bell et al. 1994; Haines 1998; Healy 1996). Identities such as the Gay Skin begin to upset many of the structural assumptions that subcultural theory has made: structures which located Skinheads (masculine, violent, working-class, right-wing) at one end of the scale and gay men (effeminate, passive, middle-class, left-wing politics) at the other (Healy 1996). The Gay Skinhead challenges the essentialist discourse of the
traditional subcultural paradigm which cannot accommodate such complex and apparently contradictory identities, and demands the re-conceptualisation of subcultural theory.

Other accounts have addressed the influence of the gay (Black) underground, to dance culture (Thornton 1995). Thornton points out that sexuality is not ‘a conspicuous feature of the discourses of straight club cultures’; authentic is generally assumed in masculine (Thornton 1995,72). Much work still needs to be done however, to retrospectively critique how sexuality’s were negotiated within spectacular subcultures as defined in the Birmingham tradition, and how sexuality’s are articulated in contemporary subcultural formations.

Youth

Whilst many of the texts which address individual youth cultural expressions, are covered in other parts of this section, the paradigmatic shifts that have occurred in relation to the concept of youth culture need to be acknowledged. 46 As we have seen, the contradictory status of ‘youth’ as a concept, was raised by Gary Clarke (1982). The appropriateness of a model of youth based on the 1960s, has been challenged as ‘outdated and obsolete’ and it is suggested that theorists need to stop conceiving youth as a ‘transhistorical and timeless entity’ (Lipsitz 1994). Amit-Talai and Wulff, theorising youth culture in relation to ethnicity, open up the concept of youth culture (1995), presenting a collection of papers which view youth as cultural agents. A preoccupation with the past is suffocating the youth of present as are oppressive social hierarchies which demonise youth and challenge their rights to discursive and physical space. As Hebdige argued (1988), youth often only gets recognised when they become a problem (he thus suggests there is sense to their transgressions).

CCCS and the deviancy theorists on which the CCCS subcultural paradigm was based, have been criticised for locating youth studies firmly within the realm of deviancy and juvenile delinquency from the outset of its emergence in the 1950s (Skelton and Valentine 1998). Works such as those collected together by Epstein (1998), attempt to replace theories of deviancy which outmoded, and consider youth culture and subcultural identities in new ways. Many studies can now be identified that focus on youth and their leisure activities and lifestyles, without the emphasis on deviancy, see for e.g. (Amit-talai and
Wulff 1995; Hendry et al. 1993). Indeed Gordon Tait argues that subcultural theory all too often dominates youth research, and he goes so far as to reject this ‘knee-jerk use of subcultural theory’, arguing that writers such as Michel Foucault offer ‘a more fertile ground for understanding ‘youth’ than the repeated recourse to the romantic and redundant ‘rituals of resistance’ described by the CCCS’ (1992,9).

Within much work however, the legacy of CCCS can still be traced. Work often examines the homologies of youth cultural expression and the contemporary environment participants are located within, e.g. Rose’s examination of Hip Hop as urban black response to subordinate position (1994), or Donna Gaine’s work into lower middle class ‘dead end’ suburban subcultures (1992). Epstein sees a homology between social circumstances of the young people and their adopted style and identity - they wear their alienation (1998), and creative resistance is still the focus of attention (see for example Lipsitz (1994) who suggests that today’s youth ‘ironicize and invert the iconography of counter-subversive demonization’. ‘Youth’ remains a popular area of study however, and subcultural expression continues to feature within such work: see for example the papers emanating from the ‘Youth 2000’ conference held at the University of Teeside in July 1995, (Muggleton 1995a).

**Widening discipline attention:**

Although the study of subcultural formations originated within the discipline of cultural studies, subcultures have commanded attention from an increasingly diverse range of disciplines. This has lead to an expansion and intensification of theorisation concerning all aspects of subcultural expression.

**Costume and Fashion**

The discipline of costume studies has been relatively slow to engage with sartorial choices of subcultures and their contribution to costume history. Ignored for many decades (see for example the invisibility of subcultures from an important journal of the discipline, *Costume*), an acknowledgement of the relationship and significance that subcultural styling has with ‘mainstream’ fashion, happened relatively recently. However, an opening up of the discipline to embrace cultural studies and methodologies such as feminism, has lead to

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46 Fundamental assumptions that have been made about ‘youth’ are being challenged; for example Caputo rejects the assumptions that position youth as an incomplete state before adulthood (1995).
the emergence of some important texts.

Subcultural dress was to seriously enter the arena of fashion debate with the emergence of feminist critiques of the history costume. Elizabeth Wilson’s seminal work *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985) set a precedent for the exploration of, what she termed, ‘oppositional dress’. Significant was Wilson’s account of subcultures and the meanings they signified through their dress: like many other texts that were to follow, this account was couched in the rhetoric of the Birmingham tradition. Another seminal text written from a feminist perspective was *Women & Fashion: A New Look* (Evans and Thornton 1989). In a case study of Punk dress, the way Punk women posed a challenge to established notions of acceptable femininity and negotiated social and ideological space through their use of oppositional dress, was explored.

The discipline of fashion and costume history however, has been arguably theoretically and empirically weak. Since the 1980s, subcultural styles began to be featured, often briefly, in chronological or decade accounts of fashion, however the examinations offered are often clichéd in nature: they over-generalise and present a CCCS inspired picture with subcultures as working class, resistant and defined through spectacular styles and homogenous identities. Often typologies of, or guides to ‘street-fashion spotting’ are created (see publications which have become course texts for fashion studies: Drew 1992; Polhemus 1994 for example; Rouse 1989). Attempts to decode the meanings behind subcultural styles also remain popular although the theoretical problems of semiotic readings of subcultural styles have been exposed (see for example Beezer 1992;112-115).

Often more thorough accounts of subcultural styling are provided in relation to specific topics, such as hairstyles (Jones 1990), fetish clothing (Steele 1996), 1960s fashions (Lobenthal 1990), Black style (Tulloch forthcoming) or cross-dressing (Garber 1993). Or in relation to a specific garment types like the leather jacket (Farren 1985), denim jacket and jeans (Finlayson 1990) or the Dr. Marten boot (1999), where they have played a significant part in the sartorial choices of subcultures.

47 Roses sees Hip Hop’s response as creative, while Gain’s ‘dead end’ subcultures are viewed as embodying middle-class self pitying characteristics of ‘fatalism’ or ‘exhaustion’.

48 As we have seen, much of what was written of a solid theoretical or empirical nature came from outside of the discipline in the work of John Clarke, Dick Hebdige and Angela McRobbie for example. Or a little later in CCCS inspired work on style, for example Peter York (1980).
In particular, subcultural styles have received theoretical attention from Ted Polhemus. *Fashion and Antifashion: an anthropology of clothing and adornment* (1978) and *Pop Styles* (1984), both with Lynn Proctor, are early examples of his attempt to theorise and catalogue subcultures through their styling. In relation to the *Streetstyle* exhibition that he co-curated at the Victoria & Albert museum, he was to popularise the term 'streetstyle' to refer to subcultural dress. The associated publication takes the reader through guided tour of the history of subcultural styles and explores the relationship of streetstyle to high fashion, arguing that influences ‘bubble-up’ from the street as much as they ‘trickle-down’ from the fashion industry (Polhemus 1994). Within this work he also introduces the concepts of ‘gathering of the tribes’ and ‘the supermarket of style’ in an attempt to recognise the heterogeneity and eclecticism of contemporary youth sartorial expression. His most recent work *Style Surfing: what to wear in the 3rd millennium* (Polhemus 1996b), develops his attempt to engage postmodernist theory with the analysis of subcultural style, and acts as a guide to the fragmented and highly personalised stylistic choices that now proliferate.

A major development in application of solid theoretical enquiry and critical analysis, has been the establishment of *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*. Providing interdisciplinary forum, and expanding the disciplinary remit to consider more than just clothing, a number of important papers have been published. Papers of significance here, range from explorations of cultural practices in contemporary western society such a tattooing and piercing (Hardin 1999) and (MacKendrick 1998), to anti-fashion in the 1970s (Steele 1997).

Of particular significance is a paper by Caroline Evans (1997a). In ‘Dreams that only money can buy...’ she argues that the concept of subculture as ‘subaltern’ is obsolete and that new theories which question position of resistance and consumption to subcultural theory, need to be established. She quotes Maffesoli’s metaphor of the ‘tribe’, as a ‘troubling’ but useful concept to consider subcultural formations in late capitalism. Resistance can no longer be understood in terms of spectacular sartorial deviance and Evan’s argues that cultures like rave offer new ‘repertoires of resistance’: resistance in their ‘flight from discourse’, their use of the ‘tactic of making themselves invisible’ (1997a;170). Neither can subcultures continue to be understood as stable entities, rather they are ‘identities that are on the move’ not fixed but ‘fluid, unstable, complex and
shifting' (Evans 1997a:170).

David Muggleton's critique of the CCCS paradigm provided by Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style (2000) has also already been mentioned. Part of the interdisciplinary Dress, Body, Culture series which publishes works that explore the connections between culture and dress, Inside Subculture addresses the extent to which contemporary subcultures display modern or postmodern sensibilities. Based on empirical research, it examines the subjective interpretations of their style given by subcultural participants themselves. This leads Muggleton to stress the importance and interrelationship of aspects such as postmodern hyper-individualism and fragmentation and authenticity and essential identities, to subcultural style.

**Popular music**

Music has been regarded as a key means through which subcultures articulate and negotiate their collective identities: subcultural use of music was first noted in the 1950s by the American sociologist David Riesman who described a divide in the popular music audience between a conforming majority and 'symbolic' rebellious minority (Storey 1996). Indeed, Steve Redhead has noted that it has been the tradition to yoke successive rebellious youth subcultures to specific musical forms (1990:11) even though a connection between the two does not necessarily exist in practice. This thus challenges ideas such as those of Willis who argued that visual style (i.e. subcultures) and musical taste are bound together in a homological relationship (1978:191). Indeed Bennett argues that 'the concept of 'subculture' is essentially flawed due to its attempt to impose a hermeneutic seal around the relationship between musical and stylistic preference' (1999:614).

The study of popular music itself, has grown as a field for serious scholarly enquiry (musicology) and within it the subcultural side of music culture has received significant attention. Much of the writing locates and places analysis of music within the context of youth culture, see for example the work of Frith (1981; 1990; 1996) or (Ross and Rose 1994; Shuker 1994). Subcultural expression also features in historical accounts of post-war pop (see Chambers 1985), explorations into the politics of pop and rock (Denselow; Garofalo 1992) or on the lyrics (Frith and Goodwin 1990; Laing 1985). Work also explores the consumption of music and the sense of community provided by that consumption (Storey 1996:102). Much work has also been published on specific subcultures that focuses
on their musical origins, see for example work relating to Punk (Savage 1992). Work also utilises various methodologies; for example empirical research into rock bands and their fans (Fornas, Lindberg, and Sernhede 1995).

Identifiable in much of the writing is the legacy of the CCCS subcultural paradigm, for example the distinction between rock (as 'authentic' music for the 'intelligent' consumer) and pop (as banal commercial ditties for the cultural dupe) is a dichotomy often perpetuated. While class distinctions also structure some work, Pete Fowler (in Frith 1996) for example has argued that popular music consumption is based around class: intelligent middle-classes consumed rock while working classes consumed banal pop. Others have argued that Punk makes nonsense of this theory as any attempt to locate class within Punk leads to 'confusion and ambiguity'; Punk stemmed both from working class and middle-class art school (Frith 1996). An obsession with locating deviance, resistance and the use of labelling theory can also be identified (Dotter 1994).

**Geography**

As we have seen, the CCCS paradigm firmly located subcultural expression within 'the street'; taken as given, other sites within which subcultures operated, and the ways in which these spaces were utilised, received limited analysis. However, there have been recent moves to address this and the discipline of geography studies has placed youth subcultures on its agenda. Tracey Skelton and Gill Valentine in *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (1998), draw together a collection of papers which attempt to address youth culture in geographic terms. These papers explore how young people use spaces such as shopping malls, the street, their homes, clubs and so forth, to negotiate their identities. David Sibley also explores the different forms of social and spatial exclusion, ways in which space is used to affirm difference and as means of control of youth (1995).

Work which examines subcultural formations that have embraced new technologies have also begun to challenge assumptions that subcultures must maintain a sense of 'community' through physical space. Work examining the Riot Girrl subculture for example, explore how identities are formulated, articulated through internet and fanzines, though participants may never actually meet (Leonard 1998).
Law and Politics

In *Unpopular Cultures: The Birth of Law and Popular Culture* Steve Redhead attempted to 'sketch the outlines of a new discipline: law and popular culture' (1995; backcover). Here he outlines the conditions behind the emerging discipline, the changes to the sociology of law and of deviance, and the regulation of popular culture, whilst again reflecting the agenda of popular cultural studies has grown. Whilst still a relatively small area of research, the means in which the law operates on, and shapes subcultural formations and their expressions, work on protest and subcultural reaction to political disenfranchisement, has also been published, see for example the work of McKay (1996; 1998).

Linguistics and literature studies

Another significant aspect in the articulation of subcultures that was marginalised by CCCS, has began to receive attention. Sue Widdicombe and Robin Wooffitt have undertaken empirical research into the way subcultural groups use language to construct, maintain and negotiate identities (1993; 1990; 1995). Stemming from an effort to extend the methodology of the Social Identity approach and apply it to young people, their research published in *The Language of Youth Subcultures: Social Identity in Action*, shifted to an investigation of how language was used to construct their identity as subcultural members and their relations with wider society; research into Punk, Skinhead, Gothic and Rocker subcultures incorporating accounts from members of subcultures themselves, provides an empirical analysis of subcultural language.

In relation to literature studies, song lyrics of subcultural groups have come under analysis, for example in Heavy Metal (Friesen and Helfrich 1998; Sloat 1998) and in Punk (Laing 1985). Work also examines texts of a subcultural nature, see for example the 'Youthsploitation' fiction, of Richard Allen and the pulp novels published by New English library. Subcultural theory has also been used to examine cult novels (Reynolds forthcoming), and much work has been undertaken on so-called Cyberpunk writing. A body of work exists which addresses the production and consumption of subcultural texts from 'punk writing' (Rivett 1999) to football fanzine subculture (Haynes 1995) and underground fanzines in general (Duncombe 1997).

We can see then that the very narrow attention that CCCS researchers gave to subcultural formations, has been challenged. Work is now being undertaken which explores the
significance of referents other than class, and as the different disciplines bring their own methodologies to the study of subcultural formations, so our understanding of the complexity and multifaceted nature of subcultural expressions, expands.

Conclusion: the position of material culture within subcultural studies.

This chapter has addressed how the study of subcultural formations developed into a specific area for academic enquiry and a paradigm for that study was consolidated in Britain at CCCS. That paradigm however, was gradually challenged and subcultural studies fragmented to become a subject of enquiry that spans many disciplines and methods of analysis. We have seen how subcultures have been subject to both textual and empirical analysis and how theorists have struggled with terminology to refer to what is increasingly a complex phenomenon. We have also seen that conceptualisations of 'subculture' are fluid just like the subject they attempt to describe.

Given that the aim of this thesis is to address subcultural formations from a museological perspective, where ultimately a material culturalist dialogue is entered into, it is appropriate to conclude this chapter with a brief summery of the place that material culture has been given within the study of subcultures.

Although much significance is attributed to material culture, in that it is through objects that subcultures are seen to create their distinctive styles, little attention has actually focused on detailed study of the material itself. Although Hall et al suggested for example, that

‘...what is needed is a detailed picture of how youth groups fed off and appropriated things provided by the market, and, in turn, how the market tried to expropriate and incorporate things produced by the subcultures’ (Hall and Jefferson 1996;16),

as Waters argues, ‘one is struck by how seldom such dictates are heeded.’ (1981;30): we are told that the Teddy Boys created their style from the Edwardian suit but we are not told why this artefact was chosen over others, where the suits were obtained from, how much they cost to be made, what they were worn with, and so on.
Thus although CCCS theorists regarding style as pivotal to any understanding of post-war youth subcultures, the focus of their attention in general was directed not towards the objects themselves but on the uses that they were put to, and new meanings and signification's that were constructed through them: objects were regarded as being used symbolically to consolidate and express internal group cohesion. Objects were thus understood as homologous with a subcultures' 'focal concerns, activities, group structure and collective self-image' (Hall and Jefferson 1996;56).

Hall was to indeed argue that 'While taking seriously the significance of objects and things for a sub-culture, it must be part of our analysis to de-fetishise them' (1996;54). He criticised 'journalistic treatments' which he argued;

've have tended to isolate things, at the expense of their use, how they are borrowed and transformed, the activities and spaces through which they are 'set in motion', the group identities and outlooks which imprint a style on things and objects.' (Hall and Jefferson ;53)

Thus he argued that whilst the various subcultures have been identified by 'their possessions and objects', it is the active organisation of objects with 'activities and outlooks' which create a coherent group identity. CCCS was interested in therefore, how subcultural styles were actively constructed but the onus was not directed at objects: Phil Cohen for example attempted to shift the emphasis away from objects towards the modes through which subcultural style is symbolically created: dress, music, ritual and argot. (Hall and Jefferson 1996;54).

We have noted however, that the approach of CCCS to subcultural studies was varied, and we have identified how John Clarke and Dick Hebdige formulated their enquiries around sartorial styling. Hebdige in particular, was to be the most prolific exponent of studying subcultures directly in relation to the material culture they utilised: believing that subcultures could be 'readily identified' through their characteristic styles, he directed attention towards reading the objects that subcultural styles were constructed from. Indeed as Cohen (1980) has commented;

'the new theories about British post-war youth cultures are massive exercises of decoding, reading, deciphering and interrogating. These phenomena must be saying something to us- if only we could know exactly what. So the whole assembly of cultural artefacts, down to the punks' last safety pin, have been scrutinized, taken apart, contextualized and re-contextualized.'
For Hebdige the key to understanding subcultures was located within their material culture; 'the tensions between dominant and subordinate groups can be found reflected in the surfaces of subculture' (Hebdige 1988a:2). Class he argued, was worked out in practice as a material force: 'The raw material of history could be seen refracted, held and 'handled' in the line of a mod's jacket, in the soles on a teddy boy's shoes.' (Hebdige 1988a:78). For Hebdige then, 'humble objects' could be,

'magically appropriated; 'stolen' by subordinate groups and made to carry 'secret' meanings: meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination.' (1988a:18)

Hebdige thus understood Punk for example, as translating into tangible and visible forms, the economic crisis and the fears and anxieties of 1970s society (Hebdige 1988a:87).

Some theorists have continued the semiological agenda established by Hebdige (see for example in the work of Ted Polhemus). Gottdiener has also analysed the counter hegemonic use of mass culture by subcultures, which he viewed as deep in meaning, providing innovative changes and the 'raw material' that dominant mass culture uses (1995). Challenges have also been directed at such an approach as the recognition that subcultures are articulated through more than just dress, has lead to attention being increasingly focused on other mediums of articulation (music, argot, use of space, and so forth), and this has left material culture out of the frame of analysis. Dave Laing takes issue with Dick Hebdige for example, for missing the point as regards to Punk which Laing regards as a foremost a musical genre (McGuigan 1992;104). Similarly, Steve Redhead has argued that too much attention is directed towards the subcultural appropriation of objects: again the focus for him is on the cultural meanings and significance of pop and rock (1990;26).

Angela McRobbie has argued that with the influence of postmodernists such as Baudrillard and the new politics of consumerism, the usefulness and materiality of objects has often been forgotten. Calling for a return to the phenomenological/ empirical field of analysis, she identifies a 'disturbing trend' in cultural studies that extrapolates 'cultural objects out of the context of their usefulness' (1994c:27), where analysis becomes dominated too much by cultural intellectuals rather than the voices of those that use cultural objects. Some theorists of subcultures such as David Muggleton however, have taken up the challenge and have begun to engage with the subjective interpretations of participants themselves. In some instances as with Muggleton, this had lead to work which locates
material culture firmly at the centre of its analysis (2000). Thus, whilst the recognition and exploration of how subcultural formations are mediated through tangible objects, is limited within subcultural studies, an area of possible growth can be located in work that has a solid grounding in empirical research.

Subcultural analysis from the discipline of material culture itself has been rare. Will Straw’s article ‘The thingishness of things’ (1999) however, does engage in a material cultural analysis. Highlighting the fact that objects exist as physical artefacts long after their economic and cultural significance’s have disappeared, Straw considers ‘the fate and significance of the detritus of subcultural commodities’ (Herzog, Mitchell, and Soccio 1999). Taking issue with subcultural theory which tends to regard objects as signifiers distinct from their political and economic value, Straw considers the economy of musical legitimacy in his homeland Canada by tracing the lifecycles of 12” import records and used vinyl.

Attention to the material culture of subcultures can also be located outside of academia however, within publications that are often visually rich and popular in their appeal. Such literature tends to focus on dress, on particular garments or body adornment, for example haircuts or tattoos. However to a lesser extent, other artefacts can be seen as mediators in subcultures, and literature has been published on club flyers, customised bikes and cars, records, fanzines and so forth. Here material culture is placed as the starting point for explorations of subcultural formations.

To conclude then. We have explored how the theorisation of subcultures has undergone much change, debate and re-negotiation, and that the phenomenon of post-war youth subcultures is complex. It has been important to trace the way that subcultures have been conceptualised by academia, for as we shall see, paradigms established by the CCCS for example, can be identified as being reflected in museum representations of subcultures, even if the museums themselves are not aware that they are replicating such approaches. Material culture does play a significant part in the formation and articulation of subcultural formations although the degree of attention that this area has received within academia,

49 My own work concerned with subcultural material culture is located within the discipline of museology (Clayton 1997/8; Clayton 1999).
50 See also Straw’s analysis of the ‘objectness’ of musical commodities in ‘Music, material culture and museums of failure’ (1997).
varies. As it has been argued elsewhere in this thesis (Chapter 3), a potential wealth of material culture relating to subcultures does exist to be documented, collected and exhibited by museums.

The implications for possible museum representations in the future however, will be challenging if the postmodernist and post-structuralist theorisation's of subcultures presented in this chapter, are recognised and engaged with. Indeed, recent work which explores the problematics of subcultural identification, boundaries, authenticity and the possibility for articulating resistance for example, posit a fundamental challenge to the modernist paradigm of the museum.
CHAPTER THREE

The contemporary British museum scene and the dominance of the modernist museum paradigm

Introduction.

Having established the theoretical basis on which this thesis is grounded, let us now move on to examine the current state of the museums profession in Britain within which this examination of the marginalisation of subcultural identities, histories and material culture takes place.

As the introduction to this thesis stated, many changes have occurred within the museums profession over the past two decades. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill has argued that museums 'are in a period of transition and transformation [where] the idea of the museum is being reborn': that the modernist museum is beginning to be challenged by a new idea, the 'post-museum' (2000a) which offers a more democratic paradigm. Museums are being encouraged to be accountable to the public they serve, responsive to the needs of communities and play an active part in encouraging a more inclusive society. However, although moves towards this open, responsive and democratic museum model are identifiable, we must question the extent to which such changes have really been made throughout the profession: incisive questioning of the museum as institution may have become widespread in museology, but this has not yet engendered significant changes in practice.

In considering the marginalisation of subcultural identities, histories and material culture from museums, the limited extent to which museums have become responsive, inclusive and democratic becomes revealed. Whilst subcultures are not the only ‘groups’ to be disenfranchised from museums, they do continue to be marginalised where others have begun to gain recognition. This chapter then, begins this enquiry into the marginalisation of subcultures by grounding it within a wider context. It asks the question whether current worthy aspirations for inclusiveness can be achieved whilst, as this thesis argues, the modernist paradigm of the museum remains dominant? An introduction to the origins of today's public museums is therefore also provided through an examination of the key
features which characterise the modernist museum paradigm. By defining what this thesis takes the ‘modernist paradigm’ to mean, by identifying the origins of the ‘modern public museum’, one can then start to explore the changes that have been made since its inception in the nineteenth century. One can be led into a penetrating investigation as to whether such changes have actually challenged the dominance of the modernist paradigm or have simply remained constrained by it?

Origins of the modern public museum: the modernist museum tradition.

Formulating from the late eighteenth century, the model of the modernist museum consolidated within the mid to late nineteenth century and became the paradigm that operated as the structuring force behind the intense growth of public museums that occurred within the nineteenth century; from the establishment of major national museums such as the Victorian and Albert Museum, to the formation of large local authority museums such as those in Manchester and Liverpool. It was a period where ‘the museum’ was refashioned into the paradigm we now recognise, and from which the professional practices and mentalities that have shaped museums until recent times, were developed.51

Formulated through the Modern episteme, the paradigm for modern public museums ‘embodied and produced the social and cultural values’ of the time. The modernist period, roughly the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, was a period which ‘encompassed the development of urban centres, the growth of secular society, industrialisation, colonialism and the exclusion of women from the public sphere’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000a;4). The modern public museum developed as an integral part of the modern condition and the processes of modernisation. As Walsh argues,

‘The foundation of modern museums is essentially a part of the emergence of modern ideas regarding order and progress, and the related experiences of time and space, with their roots firmly placed in industrialization and urbanization.’ (1992;31)

The modern public museum thus embraced modernity and inscribed modernist values and assumptions within itself. Indeed modern public museums were established to realise the beliefs and ideals of the Enlightenment in tangible terms: the existence of universal truths

51 Note that ‘paradigm’ and ‘model’ are not used synonymously within this thesis; rather models are plans through which differing modes of practice within the paradigm are realised.
and systematic knowledge; mankind’s dominance over the natural order; that through reason, knowledge and society could advance; and so on.

Central to modernity was the idea of progress, and the meta-narratives that emerged to dominate in this period, Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and Marx’s analysis of Capital for example, illustrate a shift away from mythical and superstitious frameworks to a rationalised world that was knowable. Such discourses implied ‘rigid objectivism’, a belief in the possibility of representing reality and defining eternal truths (Walsh 1992;7). A belief in ‘progressive evolutionism’, that society was advancing and that ‘Man’ held a dominant position in the scheme of things, became central to the modern ordering of the world. A new understanding of time and history had emerged. A linear conception, where it was recognised that the present was a result of the past.

These epistemological changes were to give the modernist museum its particular character. Indeed, Walsh has argued that ‘Museums should be considered as part of the project necessary for the imposition of capitalist time - a precise time, a time that flowed in linear progression.’(1992;33) The concept of time that governs museum displays is thus a Western conception of time, developed during the Industrial Revolution to meet its needs. Museums were part of the project of modernity, not simply reflecting but also making ‘real’ the meta-narratives located in the sciences. Their collections and displays worked on unificatory and universal principles and aimed at encouraging consensus by claims to (re)present reality how it was. By presuming the stability of representational meanings and developing operating structures accordingly, external legitimating narratives thus shaped the operating structures the museums worked to. Museums were constructed as spaces of solidity and permanence, providing the State with a continuous ideological backdrop (Bennett 1997;80). This however, came at the expense of short term ideological requirements and museums thus developed an inability to easily be responsive to change; only to be achieved through exhibitions.

Museum displays allowed a control over history and a representation of past progress that was authoritatively produced and therefore beyond question. By creating a past, the museums authority was implied by its command over time and space:

‘The developing ability to place objects in ordered contexts often implied a unilinear development of progress. Such representations implied a control over the past through an emphasis on the linear, didactic narrative, supported by the use of
the object, which had been appropriated and placed in an artificial context of the curator's choosing.' (Walsh 1992;31)

The public museums established in the nineteenth century also 'saw themselves as separate from the mundane world of the everyday, as standing for higher, purer values.' (Hooper-Greenhill 2001a;1) The paradigm of the modernist museum established itself therefore as an important medium that not only embodied dominant cultural assumptions regarding value, but also made them. Museums came to 'play an important part in the validation of object status and an equally large role in the withholding of that status through exclusion or misrepresentation.' (Hein 2000;55). The modernist museum was grounded therefore in a shared mind-set which worked by establishing distinctions and difference, a shared classical and Christian tradition, and a particular relationship with objects and their accumulation, that is implicit in Western value systems and traditions (Pearce 1995;285).

Figure 3 plots the structuralist thoughts and feelings, the particular 'deep-seated European practice of distinction' inherent in this European tradition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>us</th>
<th>them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authentic</td>
<td>non-authentic/spurious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>normal</td>
<td>odd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identifiable</td>
<td>unidentifiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>art</td>
<td>non-art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real</td>
<td>fake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowable</td>
<td>unintelligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scientifically recorded</td>
<td>no context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>special/important</td>
<td>standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interesting/provocative</td>
<td>boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultured</td>
<td>uncultured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>rootless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masterpiece</td>
<td>artefact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3. 'Oppositions of thought and feeling which structure traditional value judgements' (Pearce 1995;286)

On the left-hand side sit the aspects of material goods that are most prized by modern European society and on the right sit the aspects that go unvalued. Pearce argues that this structural plot can be 'read' in a number of ways. Made up of the politics of aesthetics 'implicit in words like 'art', 'masterpiece', and 'cultured'' and the politics of knowledge 'implicit in words like 'authentic', 'real', and 'known'' (1995;287), the set of oppositions reveals the politics of value that structure relationships with objects in the West. Pearce
also suggests that what is also revealed is a 'mechanism for endorsing distance and difference' implicit in the 'us' and 'them'.

The modernist museum being embodied with such values of the West, and inextricably linked with a particular European mind-set, a European tradition, led objects and their accumulation to be positioned as fundamental to the concept of 'museum' (Pearce 1995). Bennett quoting Foucault, also argues that the museum, as well as the library, 'are peculiar to, and characteristic of, nineteenth-century Western culture' by being places that attempt to indefinitely accumulate time,

"the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organising in this a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity."  (Bennett 1997;1)

Bennett has also illustrated how the modern museum was fashioned as a new space of representation that attempted to differentiate itself from other exhibitionary institutions such as the fair and circus: striving towards the rational and scientific principles as its basis, the modern museum attempted to distinguish itself from such attractions which were seen as the embodiment of disorder, of the irrational and chaotic.52 This not only included distinguishing itself from popular contemporary cultural entertainment's, but also from the museums own origins. In emphasising its instructional and scientific qualities, the modern museum distinguished itself from it's predecessors, i.e. the 'jumbled incongruity' that cabinets of curiosity were seen to characterise. Rejecting pre-modern 'museums' that embraced surprise and provocation of wonder, the modernist museum symbolised order and system coming out of chaos. Objects were displayed for their instructional rather than curiosity or ornamental value and museums, together with fairs and exhibitions, functioned as 'technologies of progress', the embodiment of scientific reason, rationality and 'truth' (Bennett 1997;2-3).

The attainment and control of knowledge was fundamental to the European tradition, its social codes being based on overarching narratives of 'knowledge'. The modern public museum grew out of modernity's claims to objective truths; that truth and 'facts' could be

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52 Bennett argues that although fairs and museums functioned as contraries in the nineteenth century, in reality connections are identifiable between fairs, museums and exhibitions. As exhibitionary institutions they shared common concerns and developed similar strategies; the manner in which the conduct of their visitors was regulated for example (1997).
discovered about the world and man’s position within it. The truths and knowledges of 
meta-narratives, based on Western notions of time and progress, were made visible and 
legitimised by the modernist museum. Knowledge was taken to be inherent within material 
culture, and objects were understood as the means by which eternal truths and reality could 
be represented.

Duncan has also argued that as a secular invention, the museum was an agent in the 
transformation of secular truth into ‘authoritative truth’: a truth that was understood to be 
‘rational and verifiable’, and thus gained the status of ‘objective’ knowledge: ‘It is this 
truest of truths that helps bind a community into a civic body by providing it a universal 
base of knowledge and validating its highest values and most cherished memories’ 
(1995;7-8).

Thus ‘Integral to modern thought was an idea that the ‘realities’ of the world were 
potentially knowable, and ‘From this it follow[ed] that the world could be controlled and 
rationally ordered if we could only picture and represent it rightly.’’ (Walsh 1992;30) The 
birth of the modernist museum therefore, brought changes in representational practices. A 
new set of knowledges had emerged which lead objects to be arranged as part of 
evolutionary sequences: with the modernist museum, the world was ordered not according 
to abstract connections but in accordance with theories of evolution.

Indeed the historicised framework for arrangement of objects was a ‘significant 
innovation’ of museums of this period (Bennett 1997;75). Museum collections made visual 
therefore, the prevailing thought of the period which viewed history and pre-history as a,

‘linked chain of events-natural and human-which press ever-forward to the present 
point of civilisation which is both their culmination and the point from which 
these connected sequences are made retrospectively intelligible.’ (Bennett 
1997;180)

Evolutionary narratives were realised through the narrative machinery of the exhibition, 
which provided ‘a context for a performance that was simultaneously bodily and mental’ 
(Bennett 1997;179). Evolutionary narratives were realised spatially as museums became 
committed to providing visitors with a linear route within exhibitions through which an 
evolutionary itinerary could be followed: a route which illustrated the progression from 
simple to complex forms of higher life. The museum also compressed time to make it
visible and performable: museum exhibitions functioned and were experienced 'as a form of organized walking through evolutionary time' (Bennett 1997, 186).

Museum displays therefore, were reorganised in accordance with an evolutionary historicist perspective, and collections were arranged according to a principle of representativeness rather than one of rarity as they had previously. Rearranged in accordance with the requirements of evolutionary historicism, the new principles of scientific rationality were applied to collections where the 'typical' rather than the 'unique' was sought (Bennett 1997, 41). Natural history now worked to the 'principle of sparsity' where the objects displayed were seen to be representative of all the others in their class. This Bennett argues, is quite different from 'principles of curiosity' where objects are valued for their uniqueness and there are no limits to what the objects could mean.

Such classificatory principles were also to govern other disciplines: for example, modes of representation utilised within anthropological collections. The classification principles of the Pit Rivers museum emphasised:

"ordinary and typical specimens, rather than rare objects, have been selected and arranged in sequence, so as to trace, as far as practicable, the succession of ideas by which the minds of men in a primitive condition of culture have progressed from the simple to the complex, and from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous." (Bennett referencing Lane-Fox 1997, 43)

Art museums however, retained principles and values based on notions of the unique, yet they were also still dominated by the "technology of the series" for as Bennett agrees with Philip Fisher, the art museum maintains systems of historicised order where it is implied that works of art follow on from and lead to each other (Bennett 1997, 44). Such representational practices therefore, concerned with 'public legibility', attempted to eradicate any ambiguities of meaning and were structured by narratives of evolution where every object could be assigned its place (Bennett 1997, 42).

A characteristic which emerged distinguishing the public museum from its predecessors therefore, was that the display of objects was no longer socially exclusive but open to all within newly constituted ideas of 'the public'. Space however, was clearly defined into that where knowledge was made, behind the scenes curatorial space, and that where knowledge was consumed, the public space of the galleries. However, although as Hooper-Greenhill argues, the modern public museum was created out of a desire to unify society by
providing a common ground, provide neutral spaces, where all classes of people might meet (1991;9-10), what museums helped to do was maintain the hegemony of the dominant order by presenting society as equal and thus serving to hide the actual inequalities and gaps between the classes that existed in reality.

A number of tensions and contradictions can therefore be identified within the modernist museum. Bennett for example, points to the ambivalence of the status and demands for the modern museum to be a public institution: while the paradigm was based on ideals of universality and equal access to all, in actuality, they were not the universal and undifferentiated public spaces that they claimed to be. As Bennett argues, there was a mismatch between intentions for the public museum to be a vehicle of democratic education and instrument for reform of public manners (1997;90). Hooper-Greenhill also points to the contradictory functions of the museum: to be 'elite temple of the arts' and a 'instrument for instruction of democratic education' (2000).

The paradigm was riddled with exclusivity's, with systems of power and structures of value. Although held up as universal, the modern public museums established in the Victorian period articulated a bourgeois rhetoric of progress and were partial, incomplete and inadequate (Walsh 1992;97). Characterised as one of the three technologies of power of the modern age, the census and the map being the others (Hooper-Greenhill 2000;17), the museum employed technologies of observation and classification whose claims of objectivity are questionable. A neutral, rational, universal paradigm was not realised in practice and a power/knowledge/value lexicon can be identified that permeates the very foundations and structures of the modernist museum. Engendering the form the modern museum took, this lexicon effected what was to be the modern museums role and function as institution with the modern state.

Postmodernist inspired critiques have also revealed that modern public museums, amongst other institutions, were enlisted as agents within new economies of cultural and governmental power that were established with the move away from sovereign power towards disciplinary power, that began in the seventeenth century and were consolidated and firmly established within the nineteenth century. Bennett for example, adds the museum to Foucault's list of institutions that operated as disciplinary apparatus within the new systems of governance that were formulated to cultivate the capacity for voluntary
self-regulation in the general population. Together with art galleries and libraries, Bennett suggests that museums acted as disciplinary alternatives to the attractions of the public house and conjugal relationships (1995;881).

The aim of disciplinary technologies, of which the public museum can be considered one institutional form, was to forge a ‘docile body that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved’ (Foucault 1991;198). Bennett however, takes issue with Foucault regards the manner in which that control was exercised. Whilst Bennett accepts that there had been a shift in the focus of power away from the monolith of the State to a level of micro-relations of dominance and resistance where power was no longer co-ordinated from a pre-existing centre but comes from everywhere, he argues that the move away from the spectacular was not as total as Foucault suggests. Conceptualising the notion of the 'exhibitionary complex', Bennett suggests that cultural formations such as museums, art galleries, expositions and fairs, through spectacle ‘formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the messages of power…throughout society'(1995;61). That through,

‘object lessons in power - the power to command and arrange things and bodies for public display - they sought to allow the people, and en mass rather than individually, to know rather than be known, to become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge’(Bennett 1997;63)

and thus a voluntary self-regulated citizenry was encouraged.

That required however the refashioning of the museum from private cabinet of curiosity of the King or elite, in order to be an effective instrument in the new forms of governance. Bennett argues that museums were refashioned into spaces of emulation where civilised forms of behaviour were learnt and thus diffused, a space of observation and regulation where the visitor was moulded to requirements of new modes of public conduct (1997;24).53

53 As the move in modern disciplinary society for Foucault, was one from public to private, Bennett argues that in relation to museum and to the exhibitionary complex, the move was the opposite from private to public. Bennett thus argues for two different sets of institutions and accompanying knowledge/power relations that have parallel histories but opposing directions (1997;61). Bennett thus moderates a Foucauldian notion of disciplinary society with Gramscian terms; the power of the spectacle was utilised but it was radically altered so that power was not directly exercised but rather won by consent; by the winning over of ‘hearts and minds'. This was a power not of terrorisation, but to which people are both subject to and beneficiary of. Thus in the exhibitionary context, ‘power made manifest not in its ability to inflict pain but by its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order’(Bennett 1997;67). As Bennett argues, the museum and the penitentiary can thus be understood as representing the ‘Janus face of power’ (1995;87).
Museums used the power of the spectacle; by rendering things visible and therefore knowable, museums took command not only over the material world but over their visitors, who through the museum's architecture, were a public subject to the gaze of one another. Like Bentham's panopticon which Foucault regards as a paradigm of disciplinary technology, 'a mechanism of power reduced to its form' (1991;205), museums through the organisation of the public space were geared to efficiency and productivity. Museums enabled a permanent display of power; power that was no longer displayed periodically but rather 'manifested itself precisely in continually displaying its ability to command, order, and control objects and bodies, living or dead.' (Bennett 1997;66)

Museums, conceived of as places of instruction and as reformatories of manners, played a role in the governmentalisation of culture. As Bennett argues, culture was used 'as a resource through which those exposed to its influence would be led to ongoingly and progressively modify their thoughts, feelings and behaviour' (1995;24). Thus the modern public museum was formulated as a governmental instrument, fashioned to operate as a vehicle for the exercise of new forms of power. By exposing the masses to the refining and civilising agent of culture, and in particular art, it was believed that behaviour could be transformed. Public museums became spaces where high culture was used for the edification of the masses; to create an environment of self-improvement where current forms of civilised behaviour could be learnt (Bennett 1997). Culture was therefore used as a resource to regulate social behaviour: that exposure to high culture could directly effect individuals to develop the capacity for self-monitoring and regulation.

"The Museum will certainly lead him to wisdom and gentleness, and to Heaven, whilst the latter [the public house and gin house] will lead him to brutality and perdition." (Bennett quoting Sir Henry Cole, 1997;21)

Thus the modern museum provided a new setting in which 'works of high culture were treated as instruments that could be enlisted in new ways for new tasks of social management' (Bennett 1997;6). Cultural artefacts and the environment of the modernist museum were deployed as part of governmental programme to reshape the general norms of the populations moral, mental and behavioural characteristics. The modern public museum was thus formulated as part of the organisation and exercise of social and political power.
It should be recognised however, as Foucault urges us to do, that this power should not be understood simply in repressive terms;

'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces; it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.' (Foucault 1991;194)

Power produced here the modernist museum paradigm, which it should be recognised, did grow out of philanthropic intentions. As Pearce suggests, enlightened modernity was,

'grounded in the belief in overarching narratives which tell of the reality of scientific reason, the value of past historical experience, and the conviction that there exist realities to know about, that people are capable of knowing about them, and that they are able to use this knowledge to create better social systems.'(1992;233)

As Gramsci has also argued, hegemony is won by consent and concessions that are made by the dominant group must be genuine. Thus whilst it is appropriate to conclude this preliminary examination of the modernist museum by locating the power relations operational within it, as an instrument in nineteenth century reform, the power structures founded within it stem from a desire for education, advancement and social unity, not simply from repression. As Foucault has argued however, power and knowledge are inseparable and no institution is neutral.

It should also be noted that in attempting to identify and define a modernist paradigm of the museum, one is not neglecting to recognise the diversity of museums that emerged within the nineteenth century. What the concept of the modernist museum paradigm does do however, is identify an underlying pattern, a set of characteristics that embodied and were generated by the modern episteme, and governed what modern public museums became. It should be recognised therefore that within this paradigm, many models of the museum existed and many modes of operation were realised. Even if the ideals of the modernist paradigm may not have always been realised in practice, the various models of the museum were governed and contained by the modernist paradigm: they were grounded within a modern episteme. How ever the models may have been realised, worked within or even reacted against the modernist paradigm, it could not be escaped.
Thus although it is important to recognise that the genealogy of museums is not one of continuous development and progress\textsuperscript{54}, and that the identity of ‘the museum’ as institution is not fixed, the concept of ‘museum’ that has prevailed for much of the twentieth century is based on a public museum paradigm which in Britain is ‘essentially a nineteenth-century creation’ (Kavanagh 1993). That museums are now seen to be ‘in crisis’ can be accounted for by the prevalence of an inadequate paradigm. Though it remains the structuring force behind existing public museums, the modernist museum paradigm now exists outside of the episteme within which it was generated. Now in what can be called the postmodern episteme, the ‘constructedness’ is beginning to be revealed and its inadequacies exposed.

**Positive developments.**

Although many of the national and local authority museums surviving today were established with philanthropic intentions - to provide education in the arts and sciences, to offer an antidote ‘to the brutalizing effects of mechanization, industrialization and urbanization’ (Kavanagh 1994a;11) and to expose the populace to culture that was perceived as morally uplifting and instructional - they are not in our contemporary eyes, the democratic institutions that their creators believed them to be. Symbols of a civilised state and the nation’s power, public museums were based on meta-narratives of truth, universalism and progress that operated through a paternalistic and authoritarian relationship with the public. Though museums attempted to make culture available to more of the population, access to this culture was tightly regulated and controlled; many voices and histories were denied space within early modern public museums.

The twentieth century brought the emergence of a ‘museums profession’ and within the last quarter of this century significant efforts have been made to make museums democratic institutions. Fuelled by an increased recognition of duties to the public which the profession purports to serve, and growing concerns for greater accessibility, a move towards democratisation has lead to an acknowledgement and a celebration of the cultural identities and needs of 'others' hitherto ignored. Through both practical initiatives and theoretical literature, restricted assumptions about who museums are for and what the role

\textsuperscript{54} Indeed Hooper-Greenhill’s effective history of museums in *The Shaping of Knowledge*, offers a challenging critique of the essentialist museum and provides an insightful account of the various ruptures that have occurred in the histories of the ‘museum’.
of museums is, are beginning to be challenged and attention is being directed at those previously marginalised.

There has been a discernible shift towards social responsibility and accountability, and in some quarters, the recognition that people rather than objects need to be the primary focus of museum attention, has come to inform museum practice. The changes that were made in 1998 to the Museum Association's official definition of a museum, from 'an institution that collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit.' (1995;3) to,

'Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.' (information leaflet)

is symbolic of an ideological shift that is occurring within the profession regarding its perceived aims and role. The latter definition encompasses more than the functions of collecting, documenting, conserving, exhibiting and interpreting, emphasising the museums potential role as enabler and facilitator.

The museum world has sought to strive towards increased professionalism, and to this end there has been a consolidation and rationalisation of British museums in recent decades. The Registration Scheme introduced in 1988 is now in its second phase for example, the Designated Museums Scheme has been established, and various professional codes and guidelines such as the 'Code of Ethics' have been created. Numerous professional bodies also hold an array of conferences, study days, training seminars and so forth.

The development of the museums profession has been forced to a large extent by external agents. Museums 'have always had to modify how they worked, and what they did, according to the context, the plays of power, and the social, economic, and political imperatives that surrounded them.' (Hooper-Greenhill 1992;1) In particular, the pressures directed at museums and the necessity to reinvent themselves has been brought on by external forces such as increased financial insecurity, government agendas and pressures from marginalised communities themselves.

Museums have found themselves in a period of change where their futures can seem increasingly insecure. One pressure has been increased competition as museums have become just one area within a rapidly expanding cultural sector. As Macdonald has argued,
‘electronic media and other leisure pursuits, all threaten the future of the museum’ (1996). This has forced museums to consider their ‘product’, their marketing strategies and to understand the needs of their audiences, for example improve visitor services and facilities.

In many ways this change has also occurred because the financial security of museums has become increasingly precarious. In a climate where financial stability is not assured, museums have been forced to become more accountable in order to survive. As an Audit Commission into local authorities noted, it is no longer acceptable for museums to pay little attention to attracting the public and to fail to take account of the different needs of various user groups (Commission 1991;6). Museums that receive public funds are increasingly finding their core funding reduced, and are being forced to ‘seek additional revenue from visitor-related sources of income, including admission charges, retail and catering services’ (Dodd and Sandell 1997;6). However, museums have also become more dependent on external grants and awards and increasingly funding bodies are requiring museums to illustrate their commitment to access and demonstrate the social significance of their activities. The pressures to secure funding have forced museums to change whether they like it or not.

Changes in the political climate have also effected museums, placing increased pressure on them to become more accountable and responsive. The introduction of legislation regarding equal opportunities such as the Disability Discrimination Act (1996) for example, has helped to put inclusion firmly on museum agendas. Local authorities are also increasingly adopting ‘core values’ and strategies which they expect museums to contribute to their achievement (Dodd and Sandell 1997;6). The government is also making money available through schemes such as the National Lottery Fund (NLF) and New Opportunities Fund (NOF), to encourage cultural services such as museums to undertake projects that relate to government agendas. Increasingly then, museums are having to be purpose driven, considering their outcomes and the benefits in real terms of what they do; what Stephen Weil has referred to as the ‘realistic’ mode of museums (1997).

55 This Act makes it illegal to discriminate against disabled people in the provision of goods, services and facilities and in employment (Museums Briefing no. 12).
56 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s has for example, established through the NOF scheme, a Community Access to Lifelong Learning (CALL) programme, which provides money for projects that address social exclusion via websites. (editorial 2000;11)
In particular, the Labour government has put the issues of social exclusion and life-long learning firmly on the political agenda. To quote Maurice Davies, ‘there is a shift taking place in museum philosophy and purpose as a result of New Labour’s stress on ‘education, education, education’ and access for ‘the many, not the few’” (Davies 2000). Chris Smith for example has stated that ‘Combating social exclusion is one of the Government’s highest priorities, and I believe that museums, galleries and archives have a significant role to play in helping us to do this’ (Fleming 2001).

The Government has recognised the relevance of a social inclusion agenda for museum practice through policy guidelines and reports (Department for Culture 2001; Department for Culture 2000; Re:source 2002) and there is increasing widespread belief in the potential for museums to act as agents for positive social change, indeed that it is their responsibility to do so (Dodd and Sandell 2001; Galleries 2000; Sandell 2002).

As museums do ‘take on the colouring of the society in which their activity takes place’ (Hudson 1987,3), the changes in museums have also come about as a result of wider changes in society. The multicultural nature of Britain for example, is becoming acknowledged and celebrated and previously disenfranchised or marginalised groups themselves are finding a voice. The new social movements are demanding acknowledgement and change. Equal access to services, including museums, is increasingly being recognised and demanded as a right for all.

The barriers that prevent people from visiting museums are now understood more widely as not just physical ‘but also intellectual, emotional, financial and cultural barriers’ (Dodd and Sandell 2001,75). Work is being undertaken to encourage culturally diverse audiences (see Dodd and Sandell 1997; Hooper-Greenhill 1997) and to involve communities within the decision making processes. It has been recognised that museums need to be more flexible and responsive and change their relationship with audiences and challenge the authoritative and elitist model of the museum that the modernist museum paradigm engendered. As titles such as Treasures in Trust (Heritage 1996) and A Common Wealth (Anderson 1997) suggest, there has been a move towards the recognition that museums hold in trust their wealth for the public good, not just for themselves and a scholarly elite.

57 An example of New Labour’s desire to be seen to encourage public culture that is accessible to all, can be seen to be behind the abolition of admission charges at national museums.
The changes in the profession are discernible in the proliferation of official publications and reports that have been based on notions of museums’ responsibility to serve society and be accessible to all. Building Bridges (Dodd and Sandell 1997) for example, explores the barriers that can serve to exclude groups and provides guidance on developing new audiences. The ethos of the report is one of access enablement and inclusion, encouraging museums to be ‘outward-looking and responsive to the changing needs of society’. These themes have been taken up by similar publications which have focused on issues of access (Department for Culture; Foster 1996; Rayner 1998) and education (Anderson 1997; Moffat 1995) for example. Such reports promote good practice and provide support to the museums community, to encourage an understanding of the barriers to museum visiting, and to help museums to become culturally responsive. A growing number of study days and conferences have also addressed issues such as social exclusion (Museum Professionals Group 1999; University of Leicester 2000), and a glance at the sessions topics at the Museums Association’s Annual Conference over recent years, also provides an indication of the new inclusive agendas of the profession.

Currently a number of museum services are leading the way in the adoption of inclusive agendas, these include those in Glasgow, Nottingham and Tyne and Wear. Also notable for their efforts are a number of individual museums such as the Ragged School Museum in London and Hackney Museum and Art Gallery. Establishing reciprocal relationships with local communities, they have worked in partnership with a variety of groups and organisations, and have attempted to meet the diverse needs of today’s pluralistic society.

Many problems can still be identified with museums however. Indeed in response to widespread fears about the state of major regional museums and galleries, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport formed a Task Force to report to government on how the major problems could best be tackled. The resulting Renaissance in the Regions report (2001) identifies fundamental issues such as shortages in storage space, lack of sufficient budgets, poor IT provision, inadequate labelling and interpretation of collections, and so on. It presents recommendations for the development and modernisation of museums and galleries and suggests a new framework for regional museums, based on a network of ‘hubs’, should be adopted.
The New Museology.

As the profession has been forced to increasingly interrogate itself, to question who museums are for and what the role of museums should be, an unprecedented level of interest from the media and academia has been enjoyed (Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; 1). As Eileen Hooper-Greenhill acknowledges however, it 'is only fairly recently that museums have been subjected to any rigorous form of critical analysis', as 'virtually all' of the critical studies relating to museums,

‘have been written from outside a direct experience of the museum as a profession. Museum workers have, until recently, remained unaware of their practices, and uncritical of the process that they are engaged in everyday.’ (1992; 3)

Whilst this was written some years ago now, it would still be fair to state that a gulf between museological theory and practice does exist and moves towards closing this are arguably ‘still actively resisted’ in many quarters: the prevailing professional culture is empirical and strongly anti-theoretical (Porter 1996).

The critical analysis of museums which particularly emerged in Britain in the late 1980s, has often been referred to as the ‘new museology’. Whilst there is some disagreement in the definition of the phrase ‘new museology’\textsuperscript{58}, in Britain it came to be taken to refer to museology which considered the purposes rather than methods of museums, one that offered a ‘radical re-examination of the role of museums within society’ (Vergo 1989). New museology encouraged the examination of the institution of the museum, challenging notions that museums are neutral spaces and are not value laden. Thus by the end of the 1980s, the lack of theory in relation to museums, began to be challenged. Within the 1990s self-reflective discourses of the profession itself have grown, and research published by bodies such as the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester or Re:source itself, have made significant contributions to the understanding of and practice within museums.

\textsuperscript{58} Describing how the term was first defined in 1984 in Quebec, Kevin Walsh contests the use that Peter Vergo was to put the phrase to in 1989 when he used it for the title of his book. Walsh maintains that in the original usage the phrase referred to museums that ‘espouse the idea of the ‘active’ museum -museums which are concerned with involving people in the processes of both representation and interpretation’ whilst what Vergo addressed ‘did not explicitly consider what the rest of the world considers to be the new museology at all.’ (Walsh 1992; 162, 161). Both Walsh and Vergo do share however, a dissatisfaction with the ‘traditional’ conception of the museum.
Let us now consider in more depth what has been explored within museological literature. In particular we will focus attention on the work that has been undertaken to expose absences within museums; the museological research that has begun to explore how histories and identities of the working classes, women, ethnic communities, the disabled and young people have been marginalised. We will also consider how in turn, forward thinking museum professionals have helped develop a critical practice within museums, attempting to address absences at ground level.

Changes occurring in disciplines distinct from, but related to, museums have affected the profession. A recognition that class, gender, and race could be effective tools for historical analysis, occurred within the discipline of social history for example. Here the importance of 'history from below' began to be acknowledged, and the discipline was transformed by socialist, feminist, radical and black historians (see Hasted 1987-88; Trustram 1993a). Such changes began to be slowly reflected in museum theory and practice. Much of the 'new museology' began to focus attention onto absences within museums, for example the silences in museum representations. Work also began to explore museums as projectors of identity; places that are 'implicated in the articulation of identity' (Macdonald and Fyfe 1996). As Macdonald wrote;

'The emphasis upon museums as projections of identity, together with the idea of museums as 'contested terrains,' has become increasingly salient over the past decade as museum orthodoxy's have been challenged by, or on behalf of, many minorities which have previously been ignored or marginalised by museums.' (1996;9)

One of the first minorities to be acknowledged were the 'working classes', for whilst the first public museums had sought to educate 'the masses', their culture was not considered worthy of inclusion in museums (see Chapter Four). The first moves towards a recognition of working-class history, were made in relation to the 'folk-life' movement that was popular in the first half of the twentieth century and seen with development of rural life museums which addressed working-class customs, especially in rural context. It was not until the post Second World War period, that interest in addressing everyday, ordinary life was recognisable (Trustram 1993a;74). In the 1970s labour history begun to be represented in a few pioneering museums such as the People's Palace in Glasgow and the National Museum of Labour History now in Manchester. The collecting strategies of many museums however, has meant that the 'less advantaged, affluent, and articulate groups -
such as unskilled and casual workers, unemployed people, migrants, and travellers - are underrepresented or omitted from social and industrial museums.' (Porter 1988,104)

Not until the late 1980s however, especially in relation to what became known as ‘the heritage debate’, did the manner in which working-class history was represented in museums, receive any real critical engagement. The past increasingly became a contemporary preoccupation (Fowler 1992; Walsh 1992), the focus of tourism initiatives, and living working-class culture became fossilised in open-air museums as heritage was used in the regeneration of areas of industrial decline. This ‘heritage industry’ came under attack (Hewison 1987) and sites like Ironbridge Gorge Museum (West 1988) and Beamish (Bennett 1988) became the focus of theoretical enquiry. Dismissed as places where heritage and history had become sentimentalised and a ‘people without a politics’ was presented (Bennett 1988;67)\textsuperscript{59}, the erroneous nature of the notions of authenticity, nostalgia, ‘pastness’, and the ‘people’, that open-air museums propagated, were revealed and explored (Lowenthal 1985; Shanks and Tilley 1987; Vergo 1989; Walsh 1992).

In more general terms, the extent of representations of working class and labour history in museums, has been considered (Bott 1988; Moore 1994; Trustram 1993a), as have representations within particular museums such as the National Museum of Labour History (Trustram 1990), The Museum of Liverpool Life (Trustram 1993b), and the People’s Palace (King 1985; 1988). To a limited extent, working-class representations have also been discussed in relation to the wider context of popular culture as the invisibility afforded popular culture by museums, began to be addressed seriously from the 1980s onwards; in academic literature (Digger 1994; Martin 1999; Moore 1997; Schroeder 1981; Wilkinson 1989), through conferences such as Sex, Drugs and Rock ’n’ Roll in 1994, and exhibition initiatives such as the People’s Shows.

The value placed on popular culture may in part, be linked to the genealogy of the inclusion of working class culture within museums. The Labour history movement’s influence on museums in the early 1980s developed a more critical and urban approach to the folk museums that preceded it, however it was the political and trade unions aspects of working class history that were concentrated on, ‘other aspects of popular culture tended to

\textsuperscript{59} Such critical analyses of open-air museums and the versions of ‘the past’ they present - a past that has been sanitised, de-politicised and invariably romanticised - can be taken as ‘concrete proof of a lack of democracy in museum-making.’ (West 1988;60)
be ignored, as being by comparison rather lightweight’ (Moore 1997;75). According to Moore, integrated histories of working-class life, relating popular culture to class, have rarely been addressed. He argues that the representation of popular culture within social history displays, has been ‘limited, marginalised or subsumed within a rather bland portrayal of leisure activities’ (1997;vii), often equated with ‘a handful of stereotypical leisure activities…rather than the broader meaning as the culture of everyday life.’ (Moore 1997;75) Thus although he identifies a growing number of notable initiatives that address popular culture, ‘there remains the feeling that many social history curators in museums still do not take popular culture as a subject entirely seriously, as though it can be treated as a bit of light relief’ (Moore 1997;77). The issues raised and initiatives cited within Making City Histories In Museums (Kavanagh and Frostick 2001) has addressed this to a degree. Thus although in practical terms, working-class culture has received increasing recognition within the second half of the twentieth century, and the influence of social history has lead to a recognition of the lives and culture of ordinary people as well as that of the rich or famous, much work still needs to be undertaken in this area.

Another area from which the effects have been slowly felt within museology, has been from feminist discourse. Feminist theory widely influenced academia as well as the wider socio-cultural and political environment, before its influence reached museums, for as Gaby Porter reveals, ‘Feminist critics, in particular, have focused on other media such as history, television, cinema and magazines and have overlooked or avoided museums.’ (1996;106) Not until the 1980s did a small body of work, often produced by women working within the museums profession, begin to emerge, and the Women, Heritage, and Museums (WHAM) was formed to campaign for equalities in the profession and challenge representations of women (1984).60

Feminist influences on museology, lead not only to a questioning of the inequalities in relation to gender in the profession itself, but also within reference to the collections and exhibitions of museums: analysed from a feminist perspective, the invisibility of the representation of women's history in all museum discipline divisions has been highlighted. Research revealed that museum ‘displays and collections did not represent the histories and experiences of women as fully and truthfully as those of men’ (Porter 1996;106).

60 It is revealing to note that WHAM, formed in 1984, was received not as a positive, corrective move for museums, but as a threat and was met with hostility from some parts of the museums world. (Kirby 1988;99; Porter 1988)
Constructed categories of masculinity and femininity Gaby Porter has argued, are 'central to the production of meaning in museums' where femininity is positioned as 'other' to and subordinate of, the rational and dominant position of masculinity (1991:103-104). The roles of women as represented in museums are restricted to 'relatively passive, shallow, undeveloped, muted and closed' whilst 'the roles of men are, in contrast, relatively active, deep, highly developed, fully pronounced and open.' (Porter 1996:110)

Whilst there have been important moves to represent women's history and identities (see Carnegie 1996);

'the intrinsically perishable nature of women's products make it doubly hard to interpret women's history. Not only are the women themselves perceived as invisible, but there is little material evidence of their existence.' (Carnegie 1996)

Indeed, 'some aspects of women's history such as birth, health and sexuality remain invisible, for reasons associated with power, cultural squeamishness, privacy and shame' (Carnegie 1996:60). Even in spaces such as the domestic sphere, stereotypically associated with women, much of women's experiences remain invisible: divisions of work and home for example mean that women's work in the home is not acknowledged as work, nor is work that fits either area such as paid work in the home (Porter 1988).

Whilst many approaches can be taken to address the marginalisation of women from museums (Porter 1993;78), what is required, Porter has argued, is not the slotting in of women histories and experiences into existing collections and representations, but rather a total change in the assumptions and organisational structures of museums (1996). Thus whilst there has been a perceptible growth in literature that critiques museums from a feminist perspective, exposing the absences and inadequacies of representations of women\(^6\)\(^1\), such work invariably comes from women and much work is still to be done to inform and change both museum practice and theory more widely.

Given the long history of migration into Britain and the diversity of 'British' peoples, an acknowledgement and reflection of the multicultural nature of Britain in museums has arguably been long in coming. The notion that museums 'must be sensitive to the richness and diversity of the society of which they are part, but should also offer us a vision of society as it could be' (Anderson 1997;xiii), is still in its infancy in Britain. Whilst many

\(^6\)\(^1\) It should be acknowledged that this growth is international in nature as publications such as the special issue of Gender & History have illustrated (1994).
museums hold material culture that does relate to 'minority communities'62 as a consequence of Britain's imperial past, such collections until recently, went interpreted solely from the perspective of the dominant white culture, rarely engaging with the actual communities that live in Britain and whose histories such material is also a part of (Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996).

Only within the last decade or so have museums begun to engage with post-colonial discourse, attempting for example, to address the problematic nature of 'ethnographic' collections (Durrans 1988). Museums such as the Pit Rivers Museum in Oxford and the Horniman Museum in London, in different ways have faced the difficult task of redressing without concealing their colonial heritage. Some museums have responded by creating 'transcultural collections' such as those at Bradford Art Galleries and Museums (Poovaya-Smith 1988) or Gallery 33 at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (Simpson 1992). It is shocking to consider however, how long it has taken museums to acknowledge the less than savoury sides to their collections or to the civic pride of their locality, and broach the issue of the slave trade for example, on which so many cities were established. It is even more shocking however, to reflect on the controversy and hostility that exhibitions such as the National Maritime Museum's Wolfson Gallery of Trade and Empire have received from some quarters (see Vaswani 2000).

Efforts to actively address minority histories in any comprehensive manner, have often come from outside of the museums world, the establishment for example, of the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) in Brixton in 1982 and the exhibition 'A History of the Black Presence in London' in 1986 by the Greater London Council (Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996;178). Indeed calls for the establishment of a black cultural museum (Walker 1997), are to be met through a collaborative project between the BCA and Middlesex University: plans for the National Museum and Archives of Black History and Culture (NMABHC) has come about as a response to the continued lack of representation:

'Britain is a multi-cultural society and has been for several hundred years but in spite of this, of over two thousand museums and archives in the country, none has a specific remit to document and display objects and papers which attest to the presence of black settlers in Britain.' (handout 2000)

62 Merriman and Poovaya-Smith state that 'ethnic minorities' is an 'unsatisfactory heading'. Instead they use the term 'minority communities' to refer to 'non-dominant groups classified by ethnic, religious and linguistic differences from 'mainstream' culture' (Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996;176)
Museum initiatives to address minority communities are growing, whether that be large scale exhibitions celebrating culture or pamphlets that provide a means of highlighting minority community contributions in displays (such as those summarising the Black, South Asian and Irish contributions in Lifetimes at Croydon), or trails (such as the Black History trail produced by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery). However, arguably many projects are of a temporary nature, and often they rarely are widely reported: 'the lack of an overview and their piecemeal and fragmentary nature in relation to the whole, mean that these initiatives or continuing developments can be overlooked and their lessons lost.' (Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996;179) The body of work that is calling for more to be done by museums, that is critically evaluating what has been achieved (Green 1985; Hasted 1987-88; Hooper-Greenhill 1997; Spruit 1982), and in some cases revealing the bias and censorship of museum representations of black histories and identities (Johnstone 1992), is growing however. An increasing number of conferences and study days such as ‘Connections and disconnections: museums, cultural heritage and diverse communities’ held at the V&A (22.06.02) and ‘Whose Heritage? The Impact of Cultural Diversity on Britain’s Heritage’ (1999), are also helping to raise awareness of the issues.

Slower in coming has been the recognition of the cultural histories of disabled people. Even though the rights of disabled people to equal access to museums, are now beginning to be recognised and acted upon, their identities and histories are still not celebrated in the content of museums. Resources such as the Museums & Galleries Disability Association (MAGDA) and Re:sources’ ‘The Disability Directory’ have emerged to support and encourage change, however the onus has been on physical changes to museums rather than ideological. Disabled history is still very much as ‘hidden history’ in museums and a ‘kind of active prejudice against disabled people’s appearance in historical collections and records’ can be identified (Delin 2000). Where representation does occur, disabled people often appear in limited roles as freaks or beggars (Delin 2002). Voices which challenge this absence are beginning to be heard however, and partnerships between museums and disabled people are emerging (Hartley 1995), however at present any real effort to record disability history has come from the communities themselves: the Deaf History Society is leading the way, encouraging research into deaf artists and historical figures (Delin 2000).

Whilst museums have a long tradition of oral history recording and reminiscence work with older people, and work relating to older people and museums has been published
(Beevers et al. 1988; Marwick 1995), the absence of young people as visitors has only recently really been recognised. Research has indicated that young people (15-24 year olds) are 'the section of the public least likely to visit museums' (Anderson 1997;53). As with the groups already discussed here, young people are arguably alienated from museums because a lack of representation of their culture. Research is only beginning to be undertaken to access the needs of this group or to challenge the negative attitudes that the young people themselves may have towards museums, and museums themselves;

‘may be discouraged from taking initiatives for this age group by the difficulties of contacting them, and an awareness of the gap between youth cultures on the street and the cultures represented by museum collections.’ (Anderson 1997;54)

Whilst overviews of what museums have achieved in this area, are promising (Harland and Kinder 1999; Lemerise 1999; Rider and Illingworth 1997), and investment is being put into addressing young people within museums (see for example the HLF funded ‘Opening the Doors: Increasing Young People’s Access to Museums’ project), much work is yet to be done to represent youth culture in museums and challenge the negative attitudes towards young people and projects directed at them.63

This brief overview of the attention increasingly directed at previously marginalised groups and identities, illustrates the challenges that are beginning to be presented to the modernist paradigm in Britain. Changes in Britain are still in the early stages compared to other countries however. America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have all for example, been forced to address the exclusive cultural assumptions and prejudices that their museums held towards the cultural histories and identities of minority communities, by first nation peoples.

As a growing body of literature has subjected museums to much critical analysis, challenging previous fundamental beliefs, forcing museums to face for example, the fact that they are not neutral spaces but value laden institutions, the roles that museums play in identity formation and articulation have been recognised. The politics of representation and exhibiting culture is being addressed (Karp and Lavine 1991; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Macdonald 1998), and museums are beginning to renegotiate their relationships with the

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63 One example of such negative attitudes from the profession that this researcher has encountered directly, was being told by two representatives of an Area Museum Council, that to try to engage young people with museums was ‘pointless’.

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people of the cultures they exhibit, developing new policies and practices as a result (Karp and Lavine 1991; Pearce 1993; Simpson 1996). Indeed, the potential for museums to be sites where the ‘emerging identity dilemmas of late modernity’ can be explored, has been recognised (Macdonald 1998a).

Whilst the review given here is in no way comprehensive, it serves to highlight the major histories that having been marginalised from museums, are now undergoing a slow process of recognition and reclamation. As has been illustrated, their voices are starting to be heard through the mediums of publications, conferences, and a growing number of exhibitions, however what is being achieved is often addressed in a piecemeal fashion. Much work has still to be done within these areas and on other histories and groups, such as those disenfranchised from society in general - the unemployed, homeless, travellers.

Although Macdonald has commented that ‘the social scientific study of the museum is still relatively under-developed’ (1996:3) and further theoretical developments are needed both in terms of broad questions concerning the changing nature of museums and of questioning the specific content of displays and visitor narratives (1996:4), as this section has illustrated, there is a growing body of work which does challenge and examine museums critically, that this thesis can draw from. The situation in relation to the representation of subcultural identities, histories and lifestyles, is not as positive however.

**Museums, and subcultures?**

The difficulties encountered in representing the cultural heritage of so called ‘deviant’ or subcultural groups, are actually akin to those invoked by marginalised others. Collecting and exhibiting material culture for example, calls for both political and cultural sensitivity where issues of identity, community, and ownership come into play, and good relationships between institutions and communities need to be carefully established and nurtured. Such similarities have not been acknowledged however, and subcultural identities are not regarded with the same degree of seriousness that other previously marginalised identities are now beginning to experience.\(^{64}\)

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\(^{64}\) It should be acknowledged that this researcher recognises that the adoption of a subcultural identity is invariably a matter of choice whereas, the colour of one’s skin or one’s disability is not. That an identity is consciously adopted should not however, be used as justification for discrimination or marginalisation.
Apart from the work published by this researcher that directly addresses the material culture of subcultures (Clayton 1998b), the collecting of subcultural material culture (Clayton 1999) and the representation of subcultural identities in relation to museums (Clayton 1997/8), museological work that links subcultures and museums together, has not been published. What has been produced results from practical initiatives, invariably temporary exhibitions, rather than any theoretical perspective.

The most extensive body of work to date, stems from the major exhibition ‘Streetstyle: From Side Walk To Catwalk, 1940 to Tomorrow’ held by the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1994-5. This exhibition focused on the sartorial styling of subcultures, tracing ‘the history of a host of different youth subcultures or “tribes”’ (exhibition poster) and displaying ‘authentic’ clothes alongside high fashion to chart how the latter had been influenced by ‘the street’. Although two major publications resulted from this groundbreaking exhibition (Haye and Dingwall 1996; Polhemus 1994), attempts to place the exhibition within a theoretical framework were limited however.

*Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk* (Polhemus 1994) was a potted guide to the various subcultural styles that had been represented in the exhibition, but no attempt was made to place the work within a museological context. Whilst *Surfers, Soulies, Skinheads & Skaters: Subcultural Style from the Forties to the Nineties* (Haye and Dingwall 1996), acted as the official catalogue to the exhibition, it only provided a relatively brief introduction to the methodology behind the exhibition and some of the key issues that the project raised: the main body of the publication consisted of professional colour photographs of the outfits on display stands. Whilst the insight it provided makes an important contribution to understanding the challenges that museums face in collecting subcultural material culture, it is limited in that its reference is restricted to dress and the context of the decorative arts museum.

The only work of a theoretical nature to come from the exhibition, was published in Gaynor Kavanagh’s *Making Histories* series, by Amy de la Haye, a co-curator of the exhibition. de la Haye’s chapter explored ‘the nature of sub-cultures and the role of style as a means of expression within them’ using ‘Streetstyle’ as a case study to discuss ‘the possibilities and constraints of making histories of sub-cultures within museums’ (1996:143). Whilst this made a positive contribution to raising awareness of the
possibilities of representing subcultures within a museological context, a major
shortcoming of the piece was its limited understanding of the phenomenon of subcultures:
the only academic reference made was to the now dated *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*,
and no references were made to more recent reconceptualisations of subcultures and
subcultural theory (such as those discussed in the previous chapter).

A further related work was also to be published by Manchester University Press and co-
edited by Cathie Dingwall, co-curator of 'Streetstyle', however at present the future of this
publication is uncertain. Entitled *That's Not What I Wore*, the planned publication had
stemmed out of a symposium, *Theory, Popularism and Sub-cultural Dress* that was held at
the V&A in November 1995. Set to examine 'the meanings contained in subcultural and
popular dress and adornment' (draft plans), of the twelve agreed papers, just two would
have actually examined subcultural dress in relation to museums, or addressed the issue of
collecting within the museum context (Cole unpublished; Dingwall unpublished).

The V&A also held two study days, *Representing the Street: Subculture and Image* (Nov.
1994) and *Mapping the Street: The Material Culture of Streetstyle* (Jan. 1995), however
the papers did not address 'streetstyle' in relation to museums. Amy de la Haye however,
did talk about the *Streetstyle* exhibition and the process and challenges behind its creation,
at museum events including 'Sex, Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll: Museums and Popular
Culture', Christmas Lectures organised by the Department of Museum Studies at
Leicester. Other sources to come out of 'Streetstyle' were exhibition and book reviews
(Clayton 1998a), and the exhibition did receive extensive news coverage (too numerous to
list here), within Britain and abroad, in all manner of media (arguably because of the
nature of the subject matter and of the national status of the V&A).

Literature relating to other initiatives are of a much limited nature however, with the
exhibitions being less high profile than that at the V&A. The small scale of many
initiatives has meant that associated publications such as exhibition catalogues, have not
been produced, and published material is generally limited to exhibition reports or reviews
in journals such as that of *The Social History Curators Group* (SHGC). Thus although
some exhibitions have been held which address subcultures, academic literature which
examines such exhibitions in a serious theoretical manner, is scarce.
In relation to subcultures defined through their sexuality, nothing has been published relating to museums, however the work that has been relates to the lesbian and gay community as a whole, but this itself is limited. Gabrielle Bourn in her M.A. thesis *Invisibility: A Study of the Representation of Lesbian and Gay History and Culture in Social History Museums* (1994), explored the extent to which the gay community has been represented in social history museums. Rachel Hasted and Angela Vanegas from Croydon Museums Service have been continuing research in this area (2002), revealing that 'most British social history collections have little or nothing to represent lesbians and gay men and are not doing much about it' (Fussell 2000). In 1994 Bourn identified only five museums that were actively collecting lesbian and gay material, and from her research in 2000, Hasted discovered their had been little change as only 7 museums were now actively collecting (Fussell 2000). One reason cited for this exclusion is institutional homophobia. As we shall see is the case with subcultural material, 'many museum staff appear confused about who should collect gay and lesbian material, how to record it and, indeed, what it might be.'(Vanegas 2002;99)

In relation to practical initiatives, a paper has been written by Shaun Cole (unpublished) and Nikola Burdon has a paper in *SHCG News* which discusses the *Pride & Prejudice: Lesbian and Gay London* exhibition she curated for the Museum of London in 1999 (2000). As part of Kavanagh's *Making Histories in Museums* series, a chapter on 'Making histories of sexuality' has been published (Liddiard 1996); it makes curiously scant reference to lesbians, gay men or homosexuality however, and does not acknowledge any practical initiatives to address these sexualities. The forthcoming book of the same title, may be more illuminating however.

Within museological literature that addresses wider, but related issues, references to subcultures can occasionally be found. Kevin Moore for example, in his exploration of the position and representation of popular culture in museums, acknowledges subcultural material culture, using the example of a black plastic bag to plot the ways in which meaning and values attributed to artefacts can change in museums (1997;74). Other references that Moore makes, include a brief analysis of two exhibitions which addressed subcultures *Bike Art: the Art, Craft and Lifestyle of the Custom Bike Movement* at The Gas

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65 It is interesting to note that Pearce (1998) and Martin (1999:31) have also made reference to the black plastic bag in relation to Punk.

In relation to the issue of contemporary collecting, where again popular culture is of key concern, nominal acknowledgements of subcultural material culture and the need to address such material culture, are also revealed. Paul Martin considers the cultural significance of Punk in his examination of the significance of popular collecting for example (1999). In an article in the Museums Journal, Oliver Green enquired as to where ‘are the museum collections covering youth sub-cultures…?’ (1985;6) and at a SHCG Annual Study Weekend, Mark Suggitt urged delegates to ‘consider the dominant mainstream forms as well as those that react against them. We will have to look at new ‘sub-cultures’ such as ‘youth-culture’ and their obsession with objects and symbols…’ (1989). As young people also begin to be recognised as an audience for museums, initiatives that address ‘youth culture’ have also been acknowledged; see for example Lemerise (1999) and, Rider and Illingworth (1997).

In relation to works that address more general topics that are not necessarily linked to subcultures at all, subcultural material culture does occasionally make an appearance: Pearce, in relation to the construction and changing meanings of objects (1992;214), and Kavanagh, in relation to forms of communication (1990;108-109), both use Punk to illustrate points they have raised. Such instances are rare however, and no real insights into subcultures are provided, rather subcultures are just one of a myriad of symbols and stereotypes that could be drawn upon from a vast cultural repertoire.

We see then, that limited reference has been made of subcultures in museological literature, and those references made often draw on the same subcultures (as defined by the CCCS paradigm: white, working-class, pre-nineteen eighties, oppositional) and make the same stereotypical references to sartorial styling (the Punk’s black plastic bag, shocking hair and make-up), rather than recall other examples (middle-class, black or dance orientated sub/clubcultures) and reflect the heterogeneity of subcultural identities or acknowledge more recent academic challenges to the concept itself.

Finally, work that has not emanated from a museological context but which references initiatives that museums have undertaken, should also be acknowledged here. At present,
such work of a theoretical nature is scarce, and is more likely to appear at the point where the disciplines of dress history, sociology and cultural studies meet. David Muggleton for example, makes reference to the Streetstyle exhibition in a critique of the work of Ted Polhemus (a co-curator on the exhibition) and his approach to subcultural history. He also comments on the insight Streetstyle gave him into the 'internal diversity' of subcultural styles (2000;163-164). Caroline Evans also briefly acknowledges representation of subcultures in the context of the museum, in an article exploring the concept of subculture and the notion of resistance (1997a). Here she identifies 'curatorial discourse' as one of four discourses that define, describe, report and inevitably change the nature of subculture (1997a;177).

Away from an academic context, a limited amount of material can also be found in 'lifestyle' and specialist magazines. Coverage normally serves to notify readers of a museum initiative that is of relevance, provide a topical article that links to a current museum exhibition, or an exhibition review (see for example Deep 2000). Bradford Art Galleries and Museums in 1995, even published the short catalogue to their Sound and Fury: The Art and Imagery of Heavy Metal exhibition in the magazine Metal Hammer.

This examination of the extent to which subcultures have been addressed within available literature, has revealed that subcultures have received very little attention. This leads one to question the extent to which museums are achieving their aim to be inclusive. In the final part of this chapter then, it is appropriate to return to the concept of the modernist museum paradigm and to begin the examination of the extent to which it's limitations and inadequacies have, and can be resolved. This brief, generalised review then sets the context for the more in-depth examination that will be presented through a detailed exploration of subcultural marginalisation in the following chapters.

The 'museum': a democratic institution?

We have seen then that the public museums of the nineteenth century were hailed as democratic and universal not only in their being open to all sections of the populace, but also because of their claims to tell the story of 'Man'. However, their democracy rested on
a principle of ‘general human universality’ operating within a universal time, which was actually exclusive; ‘it incorporated a principle of generality in relation to which any particular museum display could be held to be partial, incomplete, inadequate.’ (Bennett 1997, 97). As Bennett has argued,

‘the conflict between the theoretical universalism of the museum’s discursive space and its actual articulation to existing social hierarchies has been, and continues to be, responsible for fuelling a politicization of the museum as it has been called on to reverse these exclusionary and hierarchical effects.’ (1997, 46)

Particularly excluded, were non-white peoples who were assigned to earlier stages in the evolutionary process. They served to create a normalising unity between the visitor, the superior ‘we’, as opposed to the ‘Other’, of radically different ‘primitive’ peoples. Similarly, the female gender was also assigned a place behind the male; their physiology being seen as evidence that they underdeveloped as compared to man.

Although such beliefs have long been discredited, their legacy remains with museums for as we have seen, it has been a long, drawn out process to readdress the exclusivity’s and prejudices of the modernist paradigm. Thus whilst this chapter has revealed the professionalisation of museums and the positive steps that have been made to make museums inclusive and democratic institutions, certain structures of operation and assumptions of practice continue to be perpetuated within contemporary museums because they have become the ‘norm’; excepted ways of working that are seemingly beyond question. Because on the surface of things, it may appear that the exclusivity’s that characterised the museums of the Victorian period have been addressed, one may be led in to believing that the museum has finally become a democratic institution. Examination of positive developments reveals however, that examples of best practice are often restricted to the most progressive museums, and do not necessarily reflect the aims and practices of the majority of museums.

Fleming has argued, ‘any attempt to bring about radical change to the traditional museum, with its narrow appeal and its insularity, inevitably provokes howls of outrage from people who, for various reasons, want to retain the status quo’ (2001, 17). It can also be argued however, that in recognising the positive changes that are being made, and seeing them as evidence that contemporary museums are radically different from their predecessors, the profession is in danger of believing its own hype. Despite the valid efforts of many museum professionals, there is evidence that the public still regards museums having no
relevance to their lives and that attempts to devolve control, to be more inclusive, only go so far. Museums are still part of the disciplinary apparatus, continuing to hold the authority to know and tell.

Fieldwork for this thesis revealed that even museums which have been held up within the profession as models of best practice, in terms of social inclusion and cultural diversity, admit they have hardly made any inroads to becoming truly culturally diverse and an integral part of local communities. As one award winning museum put it;

"I mean all this talk about community advocacy and working within the community and doing this amazing stuff, in a way ultimately its tokenistic. If you're a social scientist looking at figures, we're talking about maybe, say you've worked with seventy or eighty people out of a population of a quarter of a million, it hardly stacks up does it, under those bold terms" (Interviewee JL; 8)

The detailed examination of available work on subcultures also illustrates for example, that certain sectors of the public and types of material culture continue to be marginalised. Often the progressive and challenging work being undertaken is small scale, part of temporary initiatives or projects, undertaken by specific departments such as education, and is limited to outreach initiatives and to excluded groups traditionally recognised. As the next chapter will reveal, that more is not done to address subcultures, or other excluded 'groups' or communities, is often attributed to the lack of resources that museums are currently suffering from. However, whilst it should not be denied that there exist real problems of resourcing shortages, that more is not achieved cannot simply be explained away in these terms.

An ignorance about the need for change in wider museum philosophy and practice, not just areas of education and outreach, exists; 'in the sector as a whole, there remains considerable confusion, misunderstanding and reticence' about issues such as social inclusion (Dodd and Sandell 2001;4). As Dodd and Sandell have argued, the idea that museums should act as catalysts for change and respond to issues of social exclusion 'remains alien, even abhorrent, to some' (2001;3). That museums can make meaningful contributions are not always understood or accepted from within and outside the profession, and indeed the negative response towards museums' role in tackling social exclusion highlights widespread resistance to change within the profession (Dodd and Sandell 2001). Similarly, in relation to issues of cultural diversity, although museums are starting to hold 'culturally specific' exhibitions and work directly with communities, these
positive strategies ‘are often developed in isolation, on an ad-hoc basis, and often in the short-term to secure or fulfil funding opportunities and current Government agendas. In some instances they mask the need for more radical and fundamental change.’ (Shaikh 2001;99).

Museums still have a long way to go, not only in changing themselves, but in changing the public’s perception of them. Although some museums are making attempts to become more responsive and accessible, the word ‘museum’ itself acts as a barrier, connoting ‘boring, dusty, stuffy, dead, empty, cold, smelly, static’ places (Macdonald 1992;24). Indeed Nick Merriman has argued that

‘Modern museums may be suffering from the fossilisation of this outdated image, whereby, despite improvements in displays and facilities they are unfairly seen to be irrelevant to the concerns of the contemporary world and of interest only to those who are initiated into the mysteries of those silent cathedrals of learning.’ (1991;88)

New projects such as Lifetimes in Croydon and @ Bristol, in Bristol, have purposefully avoided the use of the term ‘museum’ in their titles: the ‘M-word is considered the kiss of death.’ (Whitley 2000)

In particular, groups often marginalised within the wider context of society, perceive the museum as exclusive and unattractive places. Research has revealed that ethnic minorities for example, are more likely to feel that museums do not meet their needs; as one respondent from an African-Caribbean background was quoted, ‘“It would put you off, when every museum you go into, it doesn’t have anything to do with you.”’ (Dodd and Sandell 1997;12). A Greater London Arts survey of 1989 has shown for example that ‘white people were 50 per cent more likely to visit museums than Asian people, and 100 per cent more likely to visit than people of African Caribbean background’ (Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996;176). Such findings have also been substantiated by more recent research into the public attitudes towards museums (Desai and Thomas 1998; Macdonald 1992; Trevelyan 1991). Visitor research conducted by MORI for Re:source (MORI 2001), also identified museums’ core market as students and social class ABs aged 45 to 65, with ethnic minorities still making up small proportion of visitors. In relation to barriers to visiting it showed that 41% said there was nothing they particularly wanted to see and 12% because they thought museums were boring (MORI 2001;6).
There is much then to do towards the democratisation of museums, and it is certainly not time to become complacent. Given that a key factor behind change, arguably relates to the ‘deep personal commitment’ of curators ‘no longer prepared to tolerate exclusions’ (Kavanagh 1994b:370), the type of people who museums employ, can be seen as crucial to the achievement of truly representative museums. Though it is an under researched area and published statistics have been conflicting, work has revealed that within the professional make-up of museums, inequalities do still exist. Although women are reaching more senior positions for example, an imbalance relating to gender in terms of positions and disciplines is still prevalent (Prince 1994), see also (Porter 1988).

An MTI study calculated that of the national museums workforce only 22% of workers were from an ‘ethnic minority’, most of whom were employed in security and support roles (Institute 1993). Posts that have been created such as an Assistant Keeper of Indian Art and Crafts at Leicestershire in 1982, an Assistant Keeper of Ethnic Arts in 1985 at Bradford, and a Multicultural Officer also in 1985 at Kirklees (all of which are job titles that have now changed), are ones that ‘are the exception rather than the norm’ (Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996:178).

Thus the positive inroads that have been made, as Shaikh has suggested, can mask the need for more radical and fundamental changes. The traditional separation that exists between theory and practice can lead the profession to locate problems simply within the practical resourcing problems it experiences: museum professionals because of practical pressures do not have the time, space or energy to stop, question the things they do. Meanwhile museums are undergoing a ‘crisis of representation’ regarding their fundamental purposes and practices (Pearce 1992:241), and although this may be being addressed within theoretical discourse, such realisations do not engender fundamental changes within the majority of public museums. Underneath the surface of positive changes that have occurred, continues to lie the modernist paradigm grounded in the Western tradition, which structures museum operations and practices, assumptions and ideologies.

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66 Indeed Hooper-Greenhill argues that it is imperative that museums start to employ people because of their knowledge of audiences rather than a subject. (Hooper-Greenhill 1997:8).
67 Efforts are being made however to challenge this: Richard Sandell and MGC have been working together to provide bursaries to support students from an Asian, Afro-Caribbean or Chinese background with a place at the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester (marketing leaflet).
68 And this researcher speaks from experience, for in working for a local authority museum service the daily demands and pressures make it difficult to find the time and space to start to engage with some of the issues and challenges that this thesis raises.
The inappropriateness of the modernist museum paradigm to the current contemporary post-industrial, post-modern and post-colonial context is being exposed. For the modernist museum paradigm was established within an epistemological context quite different from our own, and modernist museum values and practices have become unstable as the grand narratives which established structures of power, knowledge and value, begin to be challenged. However, whilst it may appear that contemporary museums are far removed from their Victorian predecessors, it is possible to identify structuring practices and modes of operation that govern assumptions and practice. That positive developments have been achieved within the profession does not mean that the modernist paradigm has been discarded/escaped. Indeed practical initiatives to tackle the widespread problems that museums are currently facing, fail to acknowledge the dominance that the modernist paradigm retains: whilst the creation of regional hubs may seem a radical solution to some, on closer examination it does not go far enough to challenge the practices and assumptions that have been inherited from the modernist paradigm.

The reappraisal of the modernist paradigm has been stimulated by the recent ‘demolition of the assumptions of the Western tradition’ (Pearce 1992,229). Postmodernist and post-structuralist theories have revealed for example, that knowledge and value are social constructions not givens that are ‘natural’, and the authority of one perspective over another is now increasingly being questioned. It is also being revealed for example, that objects have been utilised within the modernist tradition in the creation of master narratives, that have produced ‘social, racialised and cultural hierarchies’.

Museums were established as instruments of power in modern disciplinary society. Although the power that museums now command in contemporary peoples’ daily lives, may be nothing compared to that of the media and advertising industries, museums still continue to function implicitly as disciplinary apparatus, demonstrating a power of command over objects and people; rendering society visible and therefore knowable and controllable through representations. Power was, and still is, manifested therefore in the continual display of museums ‘ability to command, order, and control objects and bodies, living or dead’ (Bennett 1997,66). The exhibitionary complex continues to manifest power through making visible ‘its ability to organize and co-ordinate an order of things and to produce a place for the people in relation to that order.’ (Bennett 1997,67)
The act of ordering is not innocent therefore, as museums are inextricably linked with the 'power of the gaze'; 'an ability to observe, name and order, and thus control.' (Walsh 1992:32) Systems of classification are chosen over others, selective judgements are taken and criteria for in/exclusion, made. The systems of classification that the modernist museum established, have therefore effected the ways in which museums have known, understood and represented the world. By privileging some, and excluding other systems, limitations have been placed on ways of knowing. The contexts in which objects are placed are often 'limited, selective and manipulative', giving the viewer only one perception, one interpretation. 'The homogeneous form of the museum display represents the past as an undifferentiated path of progress towards the modern, where our discovery and acquisition of past material culture legitimates the modern Western position as the inheritor of civilization.' (Walsh 1992:36)

As Pearce argues, 'our collections and our accustomed habits belong to a traditional mindset which has been shaped by cultural bias.' (1992:241) The series of oppositions that Pearce drew up in Figure 3 shape our 'instinctive reactions, mental and emotional values and judgements' that are determined traditionally (Pearce 1995:286). Museum organisational structures are still encoded within modernist parameters of value for example, for it is only recently that the fundamental ideological underpinnings of museums as institutions which reflect and perpetuate judgements of value and taste, inclusion and exclusion, are being identified and challenged. As British museums stem from a European tradition and draw their values from prevailing social patterns, the disposition to be subjective in the selection of objects for collection, to create hierarchies of value, is inherent in their nature as institutions. As we have seen in relation to knowledge, organisational structures implicit in the modernist museum reveal ideologies of 'us' and 'them', the known and unintelligible.

It has been the role of curators to discriminate for example: regarding art, a function of the art historian and curator is 'to judge the quality of one picture against another and of one artist against another, in order to establish a league table championship in which there are winners and losers' (Pearce 1992:234). We can see how these systems of value have not only operated to regulate what traditionally has been regarded as appropriate for museums to collect and to exhibit, but also operate to create hierarchies within the organisational structures of the discipline divisions inherent in museums. In terms of allocations of
budgets and resources, of prestige and power, the arts and the sciences are located at the
top of the discipline hierarchies, with social history at the bottom.

Whilst it is now argued that in the West we are within a postmodern epoch and the
distinctions between high and low culture have been broken down, and indeed theorists
such as Jameson have lamented the loss of modernist values and the predominance of a
culture characterised by depthlessness and pastiche, popular culture does still struggle to
gain recognition within museums. That modernist values are still embedded in museums, is
illustrated by the aggressive responses that initiatives to represent popular culture can
elicit. In response to an exhibition on Agatha Christie at the British Museum, one reviewer
wrote,

‘The British Museum inspired some of Keats’ and Shelley’s most famous poetry. It
is home to world-beating collections. And what does it give us? An exhibition
about Agatha Christie. It’s shameful’ (Jones 2001; 12)

Combining archaeology and a popular detective series, ancient artefacts and popular
culture, Jones takes to be ‘disgraceful’: ‘It’s one thing to make the past accessible, another
to turn it into dreck’. Taken to be a ‘desperate piece of popularism’ far removed from the
‘weighty, ambitious exhibitions’ Jones believes the museum should engage in, he argues
that such exhibitions represent ‘a lack of dignity that is unbecoming of so great a museum’
(Jones 2001; 12).

The widespread criticism that the pursuit of a so-called ‘popularist agenda’ can bring, has
also been directed at museum professionals as well as museums themselves. The
controversial decisions of Elizabeth Esteve-Coll when director at the V&A for example, to
bring in a new and younger audience by exhibitions of popular cultural objects such as
Elton John’s ties, brought her years of personal abuse ‘unprecedented in the rarefied
museum world’ (Lister 1994).

Thus although museums may be attempting to embrace postmodernist values, in reality,
modernist structures of value remain dominant. Indeed the modernist museums’ belief that
museums are their to educate and uplift the public, to be institutions which use high culture
to expose the masses to positive, elevating influences of culture, is evident behind the
arguments against what is seen as the ‘dumbing down’ of museums. Thus although in the
wider context, the boundaries between high and popular culture are being broken down,
modernist value assumptions still constrain museum practice and influence public perceptions concerning what subjects are regarded as appropriate for museums to address.

Museums also still continue to construct knowledges which become ‘reality’ within the interpretative framework of museums, to the end that the ‘modernist museum depicts ‘reality’ and shows ‘the way things are’ in an apparently neutral way’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000;17). The prevailing epistemology which believed the world was knowable and could be represented through the ordered accumulation of objects, was self-legitimating, for through the museum an institution was created where the authenticity of what was being represented was beyond question. Such assumptions continue as claims to truth and authenticity established by the modernist museum are thus fundamental to contemporary museums. Museums hold objects that are viewed as having a tangible relationship with the past, they hold objects that have become sacred because of their supposed authenticity. Indeed, this authenticity that is seen as the ‘special magic of museums’ (Horne 1984;16).

What would happen to the power and legitimacy of museums, if this authenticity were called into question? What would happen if the very ‘real’ was itself questioned?

The modernist museum’s claim to truth, to represent objective ‘realities’ was governed by the belief that it possible to achieve ‘by the ordered display of selected artefacts a total representation of human reality and history’ (Macdonald and Silverstone 1990), that the rational ordering of things could mirror the real order of things. Theorists such as Foucault and Lyotard however, have revealed that supposed universal truths are not beyond history and society, that the modernist metanarratives were constricted within and by the prevailing epistemology.

Our ability to know and to represent ‘reality’ is now questioned and as it is recognised that ‘Since ‘reality’ does not exist in itself, we create it - with the result that each society and each age has different versions of what that ‘reality’ might be.’(Horne 1984;1) Museums play a role in constructing and confirming such realities through claims to represent ‘this is how it really was’.

Part of the modernist museum’s claim to know and represent reality was grounded however, in the assumption that the meanings were embodied within objects. That just by being put on display, object meanings could be communicated; that objects speak for
themselves. Hein suggests that ‘museums are unique among cultural institutions in their veneration of objects as bona fide carriers of meaning and value’ (2000:13) Post-structuralist thought in particular however, has revealed that meanings are not fixed and this has lead to the recognition that objects can embody a multitude of meanings simultaneously. As Hein comments,

‘It seems that things never were what they seemed; their fixed identity, whose humble honesty was contrasted with the mendacity of words, turns out to be just another delusion. Things, like words, can indeed tell many stories.’ (2000:13)

It is also being recognised that objects can have a multitude of authenticities. Objects have life histories and thus a number of claims to origin and genuineness can be valid.

The new technologies that have emerged in particular, have embraced the multiplicity of reality with representations that are multifaceted and interactive. Indeed, modes of representation that create ‘realities’ such as virtual technologies or new institutions of entertainment such as theme parks, have been regarded as challenging to museums as they ‘offer a fuller sensory representation than the predominantly visual experience that museums have typically presented’ (Macdonald and Silverstone 1990;182). Museums can no longer lay claim to be the only representators of reality, even if ‘[t]he ‘reality’ that theme parks present, though often not ‘real’ in the senses of authenticity on which museums traditionally relied, is often superlatively real in experiential terms’ (Macdonald and Silverstone 1990;182). Museums may claim to represent ‘the real’ but as new technologies establish the hyper-real, museum representations begin to be revealed as unreal by comparison. Other modes of representation such as television have ‘in effect, issued a challenge to museums’ claims as proprietors of authenticity and immediacy’ (Macdonald and Silverstone 1990;181).

Some have argued that rather than issuing a threat, the emergence of new technologies has strengthened the position of museums;

‘paradoxically, the very explosion of reproductions (postcards, posters, advertising, television programmes) has reinforced the aura of authenticity surrounding the original, and hence the particular value attached to seeing it in person.’(Lumley 1988;15)

Museums however have been accused of perpetuating the ‘mystique of authenticity’ (Phillips 1997;25) for their own ends. Museums purport to offer a special kind of experience, and this is predicated on the notion and importance of ‘the real thing’.
Conclusion.

This chapter has illustrated that changes are happening in the world of museums, and that the dominance of the modernist paradigm is beginning to be challenged. However, the extent to which a new model, Hooper-Greenhill’s ‘post-museum’ which reflects the ‘post-industrial, post-modern, post-colonial society’ of which it is a part (2000a), may be on the point of emerging, needs to be questioned.

Though many positive changes are occurring, the current more inclusive philosophy that is evident, in real terms is often limited to a small number of progressive museums or services, often inspired by forward thinking individuals and enabled by supportive directors or trustees. For the majority of museums however, changes that have occurred are peripheral; for them to become inclusive institutions would require a fundamental rethinking of the organisations purpose and structures at all levels requiring a dramatic shift in ideology as well as practice.

To suggest that a modernist paradigm still dominates what museums do and are, is not to deny the diversity of museums nor the positive developments that have been made. However, as it has been argued, the identification of such a paradigm seeks to reveal the deep-seated structuring practices and ideologies that ultimately govern contemporary public museums in Britain. Whilst the mind-set of the profession may have apparently changed, contemporary museums still hold on to, as we shall discover in the following chapters, structures of power, knowledge and value, a belief in the real, in authenticity, the essentialist nature of things, in the importance of objects, in the need for sovereignty of reason, the rational, the objective, to label and classify the world, and engage in the production of singular liner narratives to explain it.

To expose the modernist paradigm is to expose established practices and a taken-for-grantedness ‘that’s how things are done’ attitudes; the self-legitimating influence within which normative practices have been established and are perpetuated. Indeed that museums have an inertia is characteristic of the institution itself.
CHAPTER FOUR

Attempting to establish the parameters of subcultural marginalisation: 
a problematic revealed.

Introduction.

The previous chapter established that subcultural identities and histories have been marginalised from museological theoretical discourse, both from a critical perspective and in relation to practical museum initiatives. It explored how such marginalisation and disenfranchisement are not just common to subcultural formations but can also be identified in relation to many other ‘groups’: women, ethnic communities, the disabled, poor and homeless for example. It did reveal however, that whereas the other aforementioned ‘groups’ are beginning to receive recognition, subcultures have not to the same extent.

That positive changes are being made by museums to become more inclusive does not mean however, that a paradigmatic shift has been made in the way the ‘museum’ as institution is understood and operates. As the last chapter revealed, this thesis argues that British museums are still governed by the modernist museum paradigm, and that this leads to the marginalisation of identities and histories like subcultures; because subcultures are understood as expressions that can be conceptualised in postmodernist terms they cannot be accommodated by the paradigm.

This chapter now reveals the process of how this realisation was come to by this researcher. How primary research undertaken to ascertain whether an initial hypothesis - that subcultural identities and histories are marginalised from British museums - could be substantiated, lead to the realisation of a more fundamentally challenging hypothesis and in turn thesis: i.e. that the marginalisation of subcultures from museums is a symptom of a much larger and more fundamental problem, the cause of which is the continued dominance of the modernist museum paradigm.

This chapter then, presents the research that was initially undertaken to establish in ‘real terms’ the levels to which subcultures have been marginalised from museums; introducing
the fieldwork undertaken, explaining the methodologies chosen and the general findings of that research. It also reveals however, the challenges that the primary fieldwork threw up for this researcher, and the unrealisable aim of that early research: The impossible task of attempting to record in an objective and quantitative manner what subcultural material museums had in their collections, and had represented within their exhibitions.

This chapter ultimately explores the issues and problems that the primary research revealed, that were to become the driving force behind the thesis. What the findings revealed was not simply that subcultural identities and histories have been marginalised from British museums, but that the whole process of attempting to measure the extent to which they have or have not been addressed is fraught itself with problems. That whilst one can gain some measure of the amount of representation that subcultures have had, this can never be complete, categorical or objective. In dealing with such fluid, shifting, subjective and often elusive identities, it is impossible to gain anything other than an approximation of what has been undertaken.

Although the problems of the methodology chosen for empirical research were revealed with hindsight, the information that was collected did provide invaluable insight how subcultures are marginalised. However, whilst issues such as the lack of knowledge that curatorial staff have of subcultural formations, and the practical problems that seem to mitigate against representations, were made clear, in-depth analysis of the primary research revealed that such issues were not the actual cause of subcultures being marginalised from museums. Analysis of the fieldwork responses led this researcher eventually to identify the dominance of the modernist paradigm as the cause of the problems: of which the marginalisation of subcultures was a symptom. This chapter ultimately then, is an examination of a process which this researcher found to be inadequate. It therefore sets the scene for the in-depth analysis of the modernist paradigm that is addressed in the following chapters.

**The fieldwork.**

The fieldwork that was undertaken included a postal survey of British museums, follow-up telephone interviews, in-person interviews, and visits to relevant exhibitions and conferences.
The first stage - museum survey.

The fundamental aim of the survey was to ascertain the extent to which British museums had, or were planning to document and represent subcultural material culture, identities and histories in respect of their permanent collections, exhibitions and displays, to undertake other projects such as oral history or photographic ones, and to measure what links or involvement had been made with 'subculturalists'. An objective of the survey therefore, was to collate empirical data that would provide a representative cross section of subcultural representation within museums, at a fixed point in time. This body of information could be used to test and substantiate the hypothesis that subcultures had been marginalised from museums. A further objective of the survey was to use it to identify those institutions which should be examined in more detail through further fieldwork, in the form of telephone and personal interviews.

Survey methodology:

In order to explore the level of subcultural marginalisation from British museums to a comprehensive degree, any survey needed to attempt to solicit a large enough response to make the findings valid. In addition, the research had to be conducted within a limited budget and it had to be manageable by one person. A postal survey was therefore chosen as the most appropriate method as it was possible to self-administer a large-scale survey this way, in a relatively inexpensive manner.

Experimental work into postal surveys, testing the effects of different methods, have greatly improved the response rates and quality of information that can be received using this method (Merriman 1991;147). It was decided that given the requirements listed above, the 'Total Design Method' (TDM) formulated by Dillman (1978) would be used as the organising principle behind the survey. This method promised 'to maximize both the quantity and quality of responses' (Dillman 1978;vii). The decision to adopt this method was also influenced by the precedent set by two successful museological related surveys that had utilised the TDM (Merriman, 1991; Pearce, 1998).

Dillman highlights in detail the various causes of non-response and provides a detailed outline of how a mail survey should be implemented (1978;160-199). The TDM organisational framework, based on an initial mailing, consisting of a questionnaire,
covering letter and a stamped, self addressed return envelope, and three reminders, a postcard and two follow-up letters (1978;163), was adhered to in the most part, however some alterations did have to be made.

It is a labour intensive method and due to the enormity of the task, cost implications and other professional commitments of the researcher, all the questionnaires were not mailed out at the same time but in batches. The above factors also influenced the length of time between each mailing, which were longer than the periods that Dillman had advised (1978;163). Museum staff have many commitments and pressures on them, and therefore a period of a month was decided as the optimum period between each mailing: a week before the first reminder was sent for example, would have been too short notice for museums to have had chance to complete a questionnaire, however, any much longer than a month and museums might forget about the task.70 Although the details of the TDM have been designed to solicit an optimum response, the 86% response rate that was achieved seems to indicate that the changes made did not have a detrimental effect on the end result.

A fundamental principle of TDM is also the importance of personalisation; ‘whether respondents feel that they are accorded individual attention’ (Dillman 1978;164). Whilst this factor is particularly relevant to general public surveys, this philosophy has been noted and efforts were made to adhere to it in reference to a more specialised target audience.

The first mailing was sent out between the end of February to mid April 1998 to 401 museums. This contained a questionnaire, a covering letter and a stamped, self addressed envelope for return (see Appendix 1). Both the mail-out envelope and the return envelope were white ‘to avoid the connotations of cheapness and disposability that a brown envelope might have’ (Merriman 1991;148), and both envelopes used computer generated sticky labels: whilst it would have been preferable, in the former instance, to print the addresses directly onto the envelop (Merriman 1991;148), this was not an option that was available. For the mail-out and return envelopes, first class stamps were used; it was hoped that this would indicate the importance of the survey, the desire for a prompt reply, and

69 Dillman suggests that by using the TDM, response rates for specialised populations can be higher than 75% (1978,viii).
70 It should be noted that both Merriman (1991) and Pearce (1998), who also used the TDM, both worked to a different time schedule than the one Dillman advocates and they only sent two reminder mailings, not the three that Dillman suggests.
also help to increase ‘the likelihood of reply because of the ‘guilt factor’ of a first-class stamp being enclosed for the return postage.’ (Merriman 1991; 148).

The mailings were personalised in that they were addressed directly to a named member of staff within the museum, not to a position or the museum itself. The mailings were directed to the curator of a museum where possible, or in the case of larger institutions, curatorial staff that were responsible for collections relevant to the research. Through this, it was hoped that the questionnaire would directly reach the most appropriate member of staff, one with an in-depth knowledge of the museum’s collections, rather than be passed around inappropriate staff. Respondents were encouraged to pass the questionnaire on to other staff whose discipline areas might be of relevance however.

As the ‘appearance and content of the cover letter was vital to the success of the survey’ it was printed on the Museum Studies department’s letter-headed paper, to give the project an official status (Merriman 1991; 148). The department’s name and the fact that it was a survey in support of doctoral research, was also emphasised in the letter to identify the importance of this mailing from other student or research enquiries that the museums may receive. The month, rather than an exact date of the mailing, was indicated on the letter however, as the letters had to be produced in batches and were not posted on the days that they were produced. The letter outlined the purpose of the research, provided clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and indicated how long it would take to complete. After much consideration, a working definition of the term ‘subcultures’ was reached and included to clarify what the thesis and the survey took the term 'subculture' to mean.

Whilst the survey was directed at individual museums, this had to be flexible: where a museum service’s collection was considered as a whole and the contact address given in the Museums Yearbook was a central service one, the service had to be approached as a whole. Similarly, for very large institutions such as the Nationals, in order to ensure all the relevant departments were reached, they were approached individually. As personalisation is an important factor in encouraging a response to mailings, three variations of the covering letter were therefore produced in order to accommodate the aforementioned variations: the wording of the first bullet-pointed instruction was changed to reflect whether an individual museum, a department within a museum or a museum service was
being approached (see Appendix 1). To also emphasise the personalisation factor further, the greeting and signature on each of the letters was done by hand.

The first set of postcard reminders were sent out to non-respondents, correspondingly to the initial letter, between mid March and mid May 1998. In response to this, some museums made contact via post and telephone to request another questionnaire as the original had been discarded or lost. They were sent another copy and the original covering letter. The second reminder was posted out between mid April and early July, with another copy of the questionnaire enclosed with the letter: another postage paid return envelope was not included due to the cost implications. Both reminders emphasised the importance of completing and returning the questionnaire, even if the museum had had no involvement with subcultural material culture or groups. Both reminders were also signed, and the letters were personalised to each non-respondent.

The fourth reminder letter was sent out to all outstanding museums at the beginning of August. This was seen as necessary as a number of museums had made contact, either to request another copy of the questionnaire or to enquire about the definition of 'subculture' used, but had not yet returned their promised responses. Seven major museums/services whose inclusion was regarded as important, but whom had not replied by July, were also contacted by phone in an attempt to elicit a response.  

The sampling frame from which the survey was derived, was taken from an existing list, that of the Museums Association's Museums Yearbook (1997/98). The survey population comprised of all museums listed that had Museums & Galleries Commission (MGC) registration: registered status illustrated that the museums had reached a recognised level of standards, and this also eliminated other 'non-museum' institutions such as discovery centres from the sample.

Given the objectives of the research, all the population (rather than a sample) could have been approached, however given the practical necessity of reducing the list to a

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71 Although contact was made by phone with all seven, and at least three of the museums promised to return their questionnaires, they did not arrive and so unfortunately these museums have not been represented in the survey. (See Appendix 1)

72 Whilst it should be acknowledged that in selecting the sample population from an existing available list, the survey risks being founded on an incomplete enumeration (Dillman 1978:42), the status of the Yearbook within the museums profession is such that it can be taken to be a comprehensive listing of all MGC registered museums in Britain.
manageable size, a representative sample had to be identified. The various common sampling options available (see Fink 1995a) were not taken to be appropriate here, as given the objectives of the research, the survey sample needed to be more than 'a miniature version of the population' (Fink 1995a;1): the meaningful characteristics of units needed to be accounted for, i.e. that certain types of museums and museum collections would be more likely to hold relevant material than others.\footnote{The various methods of non-probability sampling were rejected as they were considered not to be systematic enough, however the various methods of probability sampling were also rejected: only stratified random sampling allowed for a degree of recognition of the meaningful characteristics of a unit, however it was important that \textit{all} the museums that were identified as having relevant characteristics were approached, not a sample of them.}

Given that British museums do generally still organise themselves in relation to discipline divisions that have been constructed in accordance with the great public museums of the Victorian period, it was decided that subcultural material culture could conceivably be found in certain discipline areas, whilst others would invariably be inappropriate. An inclusive rather than exclusive selection criteria was employed, guarding against too rigid assumptions about where subcultural material culture might be found, however certain subjective interpretations regarding the selection criteria did have to be formulated. It was considered that museums with collections relating to costume, local and social history for example, were most likely to hold relevant material, whilst it would be highly unlikely to find relevant material in museums whose collections were devoted to the light and heavy industries, military and maritime history, heritage sites and the natural sciences for example (see Table I).

Art galleries were excluded, as was discussed in the introduction, this thesis is concerned with the material culture of subcultures. After much consideration, ethnographic collections were also excluded because, whilst it may be seen that they might contain material culture from communities that could be considered 'subcultural' in a sense, they are unlikely to originate from subcultural identities and lifestyles that are of concern to this thesis\footnote{Ethnographic collections may also hold material such as tattooing equipment that could relate to contemporary subcultures, and may indeed be of interest to them, but intrinsically such material culture is not of contemporary subcultures as defined by this thesis}. the latter of which are British based, often urban focused and linked to the world of popular culture. Another difficult decision was also taken as regards folk museums: those that were registered and were listed as covering any of the collections in the former
section of Table I, were themselves included, otherwise they were excluded from the survey.

| Sample survey included: | Local museums and Services  
|                         | Children’s museums  
|                         | Local history collections  
|                         | Social history collections  
|                         | Costume collections  
|                         | Appropriate transport collections  
|                         | Film and photography collections  
|                         | Contemporary theatrical/musical collections |

| Excluded from the survey framework were: | Art galleries  
|                                         | Maritime museums  
|                                         | Natural history museums  
|                                         | Ethnographic museums  
|                                         | Regimental museums  
|                                         | Railway museums  
|                                         | Fishery museums  
|                                         | Water mills, castles, working farms |

Table I: indicating the selection criteria for the ‘Subcultural Material Culture in Museums’ survey.

Survey Questionnaire Format:
The survey devised was of a cross-sectional descriptive design (Fink 1995) in order to provide data on what subcultural material existed in museum collections and what initiatives had been undertaken at a fixed point in time, i.e. in 1998. Given that the survey instrument was to be a mailed questionnaire, and that museums do receive constant solicitations of this nature, the format had also to take these factors into account.

Mailed questionnaires more than any other type of questionnaire, require considerable thought regarding their construction, given the absence of the interviewer (Dillman 1978,119). Although Dillman suggests that ‘the maxim of “the shorter the better” may represent an oversimplification or even a myth’ (1978,55), given the context in which the questionnaire was to be answered, it did need to immediately appear simple and easy to complete to hope to persuade already over-stretched museum staff to respond. Rather than cram the questions on to two pages by using small typeface and line-spacing, it was decided that the questions should be spread over four pages of folded A3 paper with ample
spacing between each question: less density it was hoped, would suggest that the questionnaire was uncomplex and brief. The ordering principle of grouping questions of similar content together was particularly followed, and whilst Dillman's ideas about the criterion for ordering questions are acknowledged (1978,123-127), it was decided that general basic questions about the institution should be placed first: to immediately attempt to retrieve detailed information about subcultural material within the museum's collections and exhibitions, was believed to be too abrupt and challenging.

The questionnaire thus started with basic contextual questions, settling the respondent whilst gleaning information about the type of museum responding. The questions then moved on to solicit data on relevant material in the museum's collections, exhibitions/displays and other initiatives undertaken. Questions which enquired whether the museum was planning to address this area, so providing information that could be followed up in future, came next, followed by ones which solicited information about the museums involvement with, commitment to and knowledge of, subcultural groups, their material culture and representations within museums. Question 14 also acted as a means of checking that all initiatives were known of, and finally, Question 15 was included as a means of judging whether the respondent was confident of the accuracy of the response; a means of acknowledging that the interviewer is sympathetic to current documentation challenges that museums currently face and is appreciative of the effort they might have put into answering the questionnaire in detail.

A space was left at the end to allow respondent to fill in their name and address. This helped to identify an appropriate individual within a museum should further contact be necessary. It also helped to establish whether the mailing address used to reach the museum, was correct. The address that the questionnaire should be returned to, was also included at the end, in case it had become separated from the cover letter.

To add to simplicity and encourage responses, the questionnaire was predominately of a standardised format, comprising of closed questions; simple nominal responses of Yes/No and ordinal where an indication of size or amount was necessary. To provide the chance for respondents to elaborate on these responses, and to obtain more specific details, in particular to help inform the decisions on which museums required follow-up interviews,

75 One respondent wrote on a cover-note for example, 'we get about 3 of these a day I'm afraid'.
the majority of the questions had an additional lined space provided below. This design solicited a combination of appropriate data that was quantitative and qualitative in nature. All the normal advice about question types that should be avoided like loaded, biasing words or phrases, and two-edged or negative questions (Fink 1995b), were also considered when devising the questionnaire.

Initial drafts of the questionnaire were examined by the supervisor of the thesis and appropriate changes were made. The final draft was then tested on curatorial staff from Leicestershire Arts, Museums and Records Service at the beginning of January 1998: a few minor changes were identified as necessary and Question 15 was added as a result of this review.

Survey data input:
In total, 403 museums were approached, the details of which were recorded on a Microsoft Works database. This document listed the contact details of the museum and whether a response had been returned. Any changes to the contact details of respondents were noted, in order to direct the follow up fieldwork to the appropriate museum representative (see Appendix 2 for a list of all the museums contacted). 347 museums responded giving a 86% response rate to the survey (Appendix 2 lists all the museums that returned completed questionnaires).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of museums</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approached</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed responses</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>86 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responded but questionnaire</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not completed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-completion due to closure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-responses</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II: Response rates to the 'Subcultural Material Culture within British Museums' survey.

Of the 347 responses, 339 museums returned completed questionnaires (98%); 4 museums responded but did not return a completed questionnaire (1%), and 4 questionnaires were
returned due to the closure of the museum that had been approached (1%) (see Table II for details).

A detailed record of individual responses to the questionnaire was imputed into Microsoft Excel 97: vertical axis recorded the respondent museum and the horizontal axis was divided into a series of columns that collated each of the possible answer options to the total fifteen questions. Affirmative answers were represented by the placing of a ‘1’ in the corresponding cell, for none affirmative answers, the cell was left blank. This enabled the information to be collated together for analysis.

Where it was recognised that a large institution had responded with multiple questionnaires, the data was collected together and imputed under that museum service as a whole. Where a number of respondents had indicated a response that did not feature in the questionnaire’s original format, but whose responses were considered of interest, extra categories were added to the data input table (see Appendix 3).

It became clear that in some cases follow-ups were necessary to clarify responses and check their accuracy, before the data was inputted. Museums were contacted when: they had returned incomplete forms, in order to ascertain their response to all questions; where an affirmative answer was given that seemed inconsistent to the rest of the answers given (for example where respondents had answered affirmative to Question 8 but had replied in the negative for the rest of the questionnaire); where affirmative answers were given but the nature of the material or initiative was unclear and clarification was necessary; where affirmative answers were given to Questions 5(b) or 6, as it was envisaged that it would be highly unlikely for any museum to answer ‘yes’ to these. The results were altered accordingly to the response given after this contact, and any changes made were documented in pencil on the respondent’s questionnaire.76

**Sources of bias and problems:**
The decision to only approach Registered museums may have excluded some museums that might hold relevant material or have represented subcultures. Indeed, potentially relevant museums which may have grown from personal passions and interests, are likely to be ones that are not Registered; they are privately owned and therefore ineligible or for

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76 Appendix 3 notes the various changes that were made at the data input stage.
whom reaching the required standards for Registration is difficult because of shortages in staff or resources (see requirements to meet the UK Museums Association definition of a museum (1995)). Similarly, attractions that may address relevant cultural history but are not defined as museums, The National Centre for Popular in Music in Sheffield for example, are also excluded from this research. This thesis however, is based on an examination of the modernist paradigm of the public museum and therefore focuses its attention on publicly funded museums. Non-registered, privately owned museums often have different characteristics, have different aims and objectives to their publicly funded counter-parts, and therefore whilst the survey may not account for all the museums that have represented or engaged with subcultures, it does attempt to acknowledge all those relevant to the thesis.

Another issue was that because the sample population was taken from an existing list, sampling bias could potentially occur: appropriate registered museums may not have been listed in the *Museums Yearbook* and would therefore have not been included, similarly, the descriptions of museum's collections may not have been accurate and therefore some museums who might have been relevant, may not have met the selection criteria. Unlike mailed surveys that had relied on existing lists such as the electoral register (Merriman 1991; Pearce 1998), population mobility and the length of time the list had been in operation, were not of particular concern here as the details of institutions such as museums rarely alter. A problem encountered however, was that the museum names listed were not always accurate. Similarly, the names of museum staff were not always up-to-date, however the high response rate indicated that this was not a major factor for concern.

Whilst the questionnaire was directed at a particular member of staff who it was considered would be most likely to be aware of any relevant material or initiatives, the questionnaire may not have actually been completed by them; it is difficult to ascertain whether the respondent was actually the most appropriate person to completed the questionnaire. Factors effecting the accuracy of the responses could also include the time that the respondent had, and took to complete the questionnaire, and their knowledge of their museum's collections and past, present and planned initiatives. Some respondents for example, may have assumed their institution had undertaken nothing of relevance and may not have searched their documentation systems. Poor documentation and records however,

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77 The British Tattoo History Museum in Oxford is not registered or even listed in the Yearbook for example.
could have also effect the respondent's ability to accurately record for example, the number of relevant collections and exhibitions held by the museum.78

Whilst it was felt that the questions had been constructed to be clear and concise, a problem was encountered with returns where the questions had not been read properly and thus answers were provided in the wrong places. Some museums for example, in reference to Question 7, did not make the distinction between 7(a)-displays/exhibitions devoted to subcultural material and 7(b), those featuring subcultural material: some museums put the same answers in for both. Similarly, some respondents answering in the affirmative to Question 8 when on following-up, it was established that what they were referring to were any oral history, photographic or video projects that they had undertaken in general, rather than ones directed at subcultural groups or involving subcultural material, as the question had stated.

Attrition was also a problem as all the questions in returned questionnaires were not always completed. Around twenty museums who had returned incomplete questionnaires were contacted. All accounted for their lack of response because it was seen that the subject of the questionnaire was irrelevant to their museum, i.e. that their institution had had no involvement with subcultural groups or material culture. Further in/uncomplete questionnaires were subsequently imputed as negative responses.

The other problem was that a small proportion of museums answered in the affirmative to questions, but when they were quizzed further on their reply through follow-up contact, they admitted to answering incorrectly. Reasons given included they “must have something”, they “did not want to appear negative” or that they “were having a bad day”. Unfortunately there is little a researcher can do to address this problem.

**The second stage - museum interviews.**

In the second stage of field research, both telephone and in person interviews were undertaken. The former provided a cost-effective and efficient means of advancing information given on the initial survey questionnaire; this contact was considered most appropriate to qualify the details of limited initiatives that respondents had mentioned. The

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78 Indeed it should be noted that the time of ten minutes, which it was suggested would take to complete the questionnaire, was probably quite an underestimation for many museums, due to the inadequacies of documentation systems.
in-person interview was reserved for those respondents whose questionnaire indicated that substantial collecting or exhibition initiatives had been undertaken or respondents that illustrated an active commitment to documenting subcultures. This type of interview was most appropriate to elicit more detailed responses as it presented fewer limitations on the types and length of questioning (Frey and Oishi 1995).

The objective behind both types of follow-up interviews therefore, was to obtain more detailed qualitative information to build on the predominantly quantitative data collected in the initial survey.

**Methodology:**

The interview formats needed to be structured enough in order to elicit answers which would help confirm or negate the hypotheses formulated, yet they also needed to be flexible enough to allow for clarification and elaboration on relevant or insightful areas which may have arisen. The format of the semi-structured or semi-standardised interview was chosen as the most appropriate framework to work with, as it provided the scope to probe beyond both the designated questions and answers given; it allows 'people to answer more on their own terms than the standardised interview permits, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over the focused interview' (May 1993,93).

The type of questions asked were generally open-ended in nature as providing quantitative data was not the primary objective: although closed or fixed-response questions would elicit more standardised responses which would facilitate comparative analysis, the aim of this second stage of research was to build on the initial questionnaire which was relatively 'closed' in its format. Thus, in order to encourage communication and obtain more in depth answers, open-ended questions were utilised.

The questions devised, built on those of the survey questionnaire and were again grouped by topic. Generic question scripts were devised that covered basic questions that should be addressed and this list was then customised, questions added or subtracted, to be appropriate to the relevant initiatives that the museum had undertaken (see Appendix 4). The sequence of the telephone interview script basically followed that of the questionnaire, whilst that for the in-person interviews, was based on the key topics, but the questions
were ordered to attain a smooth question sequencing to help facilitate the retrieval of information (Frey and Oishi 1995;93).

The interviewer’s role was one of impartial and professional researcher and no real difficulties or problems as regards the characteristics of the interviewer were encountered, the interviewer and interviewee being relatively matched. The semi-standardised format in which participants have defined and non-overlapping roles (Fowler and Mangione 1990), was also chosen as it was seen to provide a type of interview that would be sufficiently formal to be appropriate for the context in which it would be held.

An attempt was made in the initial contact with respondents, to check that the follow up contact name given on the questionnaire was the most appropriate member of the institution to be interviewed (i.e. that they had knowledge of or had worked on a particular initiative that was to be investigated). Care was also taken as regards some of the more sensitive areas of questioning i.e., in reference to Question 12 on opposition which may have been encountered by individuals or the institution. Lee (1993) gave some guidance on this matter. Attempts were also made where possible, to elicit contextual material such as photographs of exhibitions or press-clippings. Each of the museums contacted for interview, and the details of that interview and the types of information obtained, were recorded on fieldwork sheets (see Appendix 5).

**Interviews by telephone:**

The selection process for identifying appropriate institutions for follow-up interviews by phone, was dependant on the levels of involvement with subcultural material culture that respondents had indicated on their questionnaires. As general follow-up calls were made to clarify unclear affirmative answers, only those museums whose level of engagement could be considered significant needed to actually be interviewed, and a judgement was made as to whether a telephone rather than in-person interview was considered adequate. Significance was judged on whether they had in response to Question 4, indicated 6-10 or above and they had also indicated that they had represented subcultural material in a display or exhibition (i.e. had answered 1-3 or above on Question 7) and/or they had undertaken another sort of initiative (i.e. had answered in the affirmative to question 8). As this thesis is directed at material culture, art and photographic collections and exhibitions were noted but not followed-up by interview, though exhibitions were visited where
possible. Three museums who warranted an in-person interview eventually were also interviewed by telephone because their geographical location mitigated against the former interview type taking place.

Those respondents that did not necessarily have within their collections, anything of relevance but whom had indicated that a particularly interesting exhibition had been undertaken, were also approached. Two clarification follow-up calls also became telephone interviews because the initiatives undertaken by the museums were relevant. Thirteen telephone interviews were carried out in total between June and December 1998. Two follow-up calls were also made in May/June 2000 where museums had indicated that they planned to do an initiative, that was considered of specific interest to the thesis.

As recording open-ended questions requires that answers are written down verbatim, without paraphrasing or summarising (Fowler & Mangione, 1990), however the facilities to tape record conversations are not available to the interviewer, some difficulty as regards recording answers to the telephone interviews was envisaged. A detailed plan was put together to guide the interview: building on the questionnaire, it attempted to solicit a more detailed response to each of the questions to provide an accurate account of what had been undertaken. It soon became apparent that this follow-up questionnaire was too in-depth for respondents, as most could not state exactly what was in their collections, or the specifics of what initiatives had been undertaken. Additional information such as press clippings etc., was requested as appropriate, but few museums had any more information to send.

In- person interviews:
The selection process for identifying appropriate institutions for in-person interviews, was dependant on a number of factors. Those respondents for example, that had indicated on their questionnaires, some level of involvement with subcultural material culture that was of significance enough to warrant an in-depth interview, were interviewed in person. Significance was taken to be where an institution had illustrated a commitment to addressing subcultural material or a high profile exhibition or initiative had been undertaken. This type of fieldwork enabled the researcher to view relevant objects in the collections, and obtain photocopies of object lists, exhibition texts, press-clippings and so forth where available. Where the relevant initiative was a current exhibition, the interview was planned where possible to coincide with the exhibition so the researcher could visit it
and take notes and photographs. Although it had not been covered under the survey’s remit, the decision was also taken to interview one art gallery who had undertaken an exhibition that was high profile and based around material culture.

An aim of the field research was also to explore the conscious and unconscious agendas behind initiatives and the representation of subcultures. The survey had revealed however, that a number of major local authority museums in metropolitan cities that have spawned significant music genres and associated subcultures, but had not undertaken any major initiatives to acknowledge these aspects of their local history. As enquiring why more had not been undertaken could be potentially sensitive in nature and was best approached through in-person interviews (Frey and Oishi 1995:32) it was decided therefore, to also interview a selection of museums within one such city, whose absence of subcultural material of particular local significance, was of interest to this thesis.

The survey had also revealed that a number of museums that could be considered at the forefront of socially inclusive initiatives within the world of museums, that had undertaken little to represent subcultural groups. A selection were also approached to solicit information on why there was an absence in relation to subcultures. In all 26 in-person interviews have been carried out. These were conducted between September 1998 and June 2000. The length of the interviews varied between 45 minutes to an hour and a half.

Though customised interview scripts were created and initially, attempts were made to follow the questions sequentially, as is appropriate to a semi-structured interview, it became apparent after the first few interviews however, that this had a negative effect on the amount, quality and depth of the information gathered. Attempts to ask the pre-set questions, interrupted dialogue rhythm and simply reduced the amount and depth of information received, and so the interviewer used the questions as prompts only when necessary, crossing off pre-planned questions when they were answered, and drawing the discussion back to those that were not answered where needed.

The creation of a more informal context was especially significant when attempting to discuss difficult issues or elicit more information of a sensitive nature. A flexible interview structure was particularly important for example, where museum staff could feel threatened by enquiry into the lack of representation of subcultures within their institution. A informal
atmosphere was much more conducive to the establishment of a relationship between interviewer and interviewee and thus an atmosphere of trust that enabled the latter to express the more challenging reasons behind the absence, than the stock professional answers of lack of staff time, budget and storage space acknowledged. Such an atmosphere also helped to encourage more open answers to queries concerning whether opposition had been encountered to any initiatives. Though it is less difficult for an interviewee to talk about sensitive issues if the interview is conducted in a non-censorious atmosphere (Lee 1993:97), they had to be conducted in the workplace. However, the researcher sensed that when an interview was held in private space, the interviewee was much more likely to talk openly than if it was carried out in an office with colleagues present.

The interviews undertaken in person have all been taped and transcribed verbatim. Given the sometimes sensitive nature of the interviews, the issue of respecting both the interviewees and the institutions confidentiality needed to be given much thought. Each taped interview was given a number and code, and it was decided that each interviewee would be identified by initials that corresponded to their tape’s code, thus maintaining anonymity whilst retaining a link to their details. The fieldwork sheets kept a record of an institution’s details, the person interviewed there and the corresponding tapes number and code. Respecting confidentiality within the transcription itself was problematic however, as reference to a particular exhibition for example would reveal the institution in question. It was decided that details such as exhibition titles would be left in the transcriptions but access to them would be limited to the researcher, the thesis supervisor and internal/external markers. Similarly, in order to preserve anonymity within the main body of the text, where an interviewee could be traced through their comments on a particular exhibition for example, their code has been replaced by symbols.

Other fieldwork.

A number of exhibitions devoted to subcultures and featuring subcultural material that were identified through the survey and by other means, have been visited. A number of talks, lectures and conferences have also been attended and have informed this thesis, although they generally related to issues of social exclusion and young people rather than 79 For this reason a list of the museums interviewed in-person has not been included in this thesis.
addressing subcultures in any direct manner. They were useful however as they provide informative contextual information on how other minorities are currently marginalised within museums. Where the researcher has given papers at conferences and study days, the responses of delegates have also informed this thesis.

Survey findings.

The largest proportion of respondents to the questionnaire were local authority museums, with independent museums coming second (Figure 4).

The responding museums varied in size from large local authority services to small, volunteer run independent museums: just over half could be considered small museums (i.e. they held under 20,000 artefacts within their collections), 14% medium museums (i.e. they held between 20,000 to 40,000 artefacts) and 31% could be considered large museums (i.e. they held more than 40,000 artefacts) (Figure 5).
Regarding the amount of material culture within collections that could be considered subcultural, 80% of respondents indicated that they had nothing (Figure 6).

17% (61 museums) said that they had artefacts (1 to 20+) that could be considered subcultural within their collections. Only 6% (22 museums) said that they had 20 or more artefacts of relevance however. 3% said they did not know whether their collections held such material.

Of those museums who indicated their collections held relevant material, 72% of this material was held within local authority museums, 16% within national museums, 10% in independent museums, and 2% within university museums (Figure 7).

Definite trends can be identified regarding the type of material that had been collected (Figure 8).
The majority of relevant material collected was costume (34%). Ephemera was the next most collected type of material (17%), with photographs as the third most significant (13%).

The material has also been analysed in respect of the traditional discipline areas it is classifiable under, and again certain trends become discernible. The largest proportion of the material can be described as social historical in nature (badges, ephemera, memorabilia) (39%), with costume (35%) and art (including photography) (11%) following respectively (Figure 9).

Though transport would seem an obvious discipline to collect material given that subcultural groups often formulate their identities around transportation, for e.g. Mods and scooters, Rockers and motor bikes, New Age Travellers and buses, caravans and so on, only 4% of the material could possibly be classified as transportation. Similarly, although it could be conceivable that disciplines such as science and industry could collect material,
for example mixing desks or lighting systems, nothing from this discipline area was recorded as having been collected.

The responses to what is held within collections were examined in more detail to ascertain the extent that material may be considered subcultural. Material was recorded as 'subcultural' where respondents had indicated that artefact's related to a specific subcultural group for example “3 items of Punk style clothing/accessories”, or where there was an obvious relevance to subcultural style, for example tattooing or piercing or items such as a “pair of 16 hole cherry red Dr. Marten's boots”. Half the material recorded however has apparent tenuous links to subcultures and cannot obviously be described as 'subcultural' in nature (Figure 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of the material collected</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subcultural</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular cultural</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24% of responses for example, could be described as 'popular cultural' because the material related to a decade, for example “1960s records and clothing”, or to youth culture or popular culture in general, for example memorabilia relating to the chart band East 17. Also, 26% of the material could be described as 'political' in nature rather than subcultural: material identified as relating to groups whose identities are of a political nature, for example the green and environmental, feminist or CND movements. Also, material that has been identified as lesbian and gay, for example the life mask of Joe Orton, can be considered as political rather than subcultural.

Responses also suggested that the collecting of subcultural material is generally undertaken on an ad hoc basis. Of the 55% responses that said that they had active contemporary collecting policies, only 6% indicated that their policies did 'specifically address subcultural material within its remit' (Q.5a). When these museums were contacted to
ascertain what references their policies made, it was discovered that a reference to subcultures was taken to be inferred in such phrases as "to reflect way of life past and present", "museums aim is to collect objects that represent all aspects of society and everyday life" and "anything to do with the area". Where policies were sent, the researcher sought any indication of specific references: one policy listed where its costume, social history, local history and community and personal life collection's strengths and weaknesses lay, but no direct or indirect reference to subcultural material or groups was actually discovered. In other instances references to "peoples such as the Celts and the early Christian settlers of Galloway, as well as phenomena such as the persecution of alleged witches" were taken to be subcultural. One museum responded that its collecting policy specifically addressed subcultural material because they would take "anything that people will donate"!

Of the 19 museums that said their collecting policies were relevant, only 3 had any justification for returning a 'yes' answer to question 5a in that that they made references that could be loosely taken as 'subcultural': an unwritten collecting policy specifically addressed collecting jazz, a policy acknowledging a responsibility to represent lesbian and gay people, and a policy that specifically addressed collecting and documenting the TT Races. It was also revealed that museums do not have any 'separate collecting policy for subcultural material' (Q.6). Only two museums indicated that they had a separate policy; an unwritten collecting policy committed to collecting jazz and an active commitment to collecting "material relating to lesbian and gays in film".

In relation to exhibitions and displays, 94% indicated that they had not undertaken something that had been 'devoted to a subject area that could be considered subcultural' (Q.7). Only 5% (18 museums) said they had done 1-3 displays/exhibitions, and only 1% (2 museums) said they had undertaken over 4 (Figure 11).
Of those positive responses, 75% (15 museums) of the displays/exhibitions could be accepted as being 'subcultural'. 20% (4 museums) however were actually 'political' in nature, i.e. they were associated with lesbian and gay issues or history, rather than subcultures within the lesbian and gay community. Of responses did not specify what had been undertaken. Of the responses the majority were social historical in nature (40%), with the next being art based (31%) which included a number of photographic exhibitions (Figure 12).

The response to the number of exhibitions and displays that had featured subcultural material (Q.7a), was more positive. 13.3% (45 museums) said they had undertaken '1-3 initiatives', 0.3% (1 museum) indicated '4-6', and 0.3% (1 museum) '7+'. 86.1% said they had not undertaken anything of relevance (Figure 13).

It is interesting to note that whilst the research only intended to acknowledge a lesbian and gay presence in museums where it could be described as subcultural, it was felt that because of the absence of initiatives to address this area in general, it was worth acknowledging all initiatives where they were revealed.

The high levels in these responses should be regarded with caution: the museum that indicated 4-6 displays/exhibitions had been undertaken, suggested the following general list as appropriate 'censorship, music, comic, boxer, sport, telling tales' displays/exhibitions (clarification was not made as the museum
A significant proportion (56.5%) of those who responded that they had undertaken a relevant exhibition, could be described as being social history display/exhibitions. The next most common were costume orientated displays/exhibitions (19.6%), followed by art ones (15.2%). Again, only 2.2% (1 display/exhibition) could be described as transport based and none were science and industry orientated (Figure 14).

Of those exhibitions/displays that featured subcultural material, 56% could be described as popular cultural in that they addressed general subjects such as leisure or youth culture in general; ‘Young Ones 1945-1995’ and ‘Juke Box Generation’ exhibitions for example. Included in this category was also a significant proportion of social history exhibitions/displays which focused on specific decades; the exhibition ‘Stamford in the 60s’ for example “devoted a major section to the music and youth scene of the time and wc displays on social groups such as Mods and Rockers”. 6% could be described as political
in that they addressed subjects where subcultural identities may have been represented incidentally, for example an exhibition on homelessness or exhibitions which addressed lesbian and gay issues. 24% could be described as ‘other’ in that subcultural material was featured in relation to general displays on jewellery, fashion, photography and transport.

Regarding what other activities museums had undertaken to represent subcultures, 7% (25 museums) said they had undertaken photographic projects, 6% (21 museums) oral history projects and 3% video recordings (Figure 15). 2% were ‘other’ which included a collection of newspaper articles. Where details had been given about the projects, it was revealed that they were not devoted to a subcultural subject however, but featured something which could be considered subcultural: a photographic project to record shop fronts included a tattoo parlour for example, another of a sea front “may” have included Mods and Rockers, and a couple of projects addressed young people in general.8

![Figure 15. Other initiatives](image)

The section on future initiatives within the questionnaire provided the opportunity to ascertain what initiatives museums may be planning to undertake to address subcultural identities or histories. Only a small number of museums indicated plans to do so however: while 87% said they had no plans to ‘begin actively collecting subcultural material’(Q.9), 6% (20 museums) said ‘yes’ they do have plans and 7% indicated that they may do (Figure 16).

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8 A number of museums did not specify the details of the projects and so it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which they could be considered subcultural in nature.
In relation to possible plans to hold exhibition/displays which will ‘specifically address areas which could be considered subcultural in nature’ (Q.10), 91% said they had no plans, 3% (11 museums) said they have plans and 6% indicated they may do (Figure 17).

Similarly, 84% had no plans to hold displays/exhibitions which feature subcultural material (Q.10a), 7% (23 museums) said that they have plans and 9% said they may do (Figure 18).
In order to account for initiatives that may have been made towards subcultures, but might not have resulted in a specific project, display or collecting, questions 11 and 11a were included. Of the respondents, only 7% said that they had established any relations with subcultural groups, and 5% said that they did have plans to establish relations, and 9% indicated that they may establish relationships (Figure 19).

![Figure 19. Future Initiatives: Plans to instigate relations with subcultural groups](image)

In an effort to ascertain museum attitudes to subcultures, question 13 was included and revealed that only 11% (38 museums) would say that they had an ‘active commitment to addressing subcultural group identities and their material culture’. Of the 11% that said they were committed only 20 museums had responded elsewhere in the questionnaire that they had actually collected relevant material or had held a display/exhibition that was devoted to or featured subcultures.

The questionnaire also gave the opportunity to account for factors that might have mitigated against initiatives being undertaken or accurate responses being given. In response to the question ‘Has the museum or individuals employed by the museum, encountered any opposition to the collection or representation of subcultural material (Q. 12), 4% (12 museums) said ‘yes’ they had encountered opposition, and 5% (17 museums) indicated that they had not done but could encounter opposition if they addressed such a subject (Figure 20). 74% of museums said ‘no’ they had not encountered any opposition, and 18 % indicated that the question did not apply to them.
A more common response to why initiatives had not been undertaken to represent subcultures, was that practical considerations mitigated against efforts to do so. As one museum commented "Small local authority museums do not have the space or resources to collect material representative of sub-cultures." (small local authority museum), or to quote others, "we do not rule out establishing relations or collecting or exhibitions in the future but are unlikely (because of lack of staff & resources) to initiate such measures" (small local authority museum). "We are too busy clinging on to bare survival by our fingernails." (medium local authority museum). The lack of storage space, resources, and staff time were not just given as reasons by local authority museums however, for independent museums also cited limited resources as an issue.

Such pressures meant that contemporary collecting was not always being undertaken by museums, for as one museum commented "The work of trying to maintain some of the basic requirements of a museum is more than we can handle at present. Active collecting, or liaison with any other groups is simply not possible" (small independent museum).

Limited resources also meant that the resources that were available, were directed towards more 'mainstream' areas first (see Chapter Five). Priority in terms of resources is therefore not given to subcultural groups, and indeed some responses suggested that museums do not regard the need to represent subcultures as a fundamental obligation, but rather as an optional extra: "Its not appropriate at the present time as we are trying to maintain and develop the existing 'core' activities. We simply do not have the time to devote to extra targets." (medium independent museum).
An awareness that subcultural material exists to be collected can also be identified as a factor behind the absence of initiatives. Only 20% (69 museums) were aware of initiatives by other museums to collect or display subcultural material (Q.14), and comments such as “It is difficult to conceive what sort of things might exist” (small independent museum), were made. Some indicated that they had never considered this issue before: “From a theoretical point of view, we never thought of it before.” (medium independent museum); “This has simply not arisen as an issue” (medium local authority museum service). A number of museums also suggested that they had not undertaken any initiatives because they believed that subcultural groups did not exist in their locality (see Chapter Five).

The difficulty in identifying such groups was also indicated as a reason for the lack of representation. Museums commented for example that subcultures did not have a high profile: “In this area, which is either rural or small and fairly industrial towns, such groups do not readily identify themselves.” (small local authority museum). The lack of demand to address this subject was also cited as a reason; “I think if there were greater call to do so from greater numbers down here then we would respond.” (medium independent museum). A lack of expertise in the subject area was also cited as a reason for the absence of initiatives.

Some museums also accounted for the lack of initiatives because they did not believe that subcultures should be separated out, treated as different or given special treatment: “-------- -- museum attempts to involve all the people in -- never any specific group. One supposes everyone is in a subcultural group of some sort.” (medium independent museum); “It ‘provides’ for all members of the community who use the museum, and not just those groups which are regarded as ‘p.c.’. The museum is certainly willing to address subcultures but there has been little demand to do so” (small local authority museum); “museum and arts staff are sympathetic to subcultures and would not have any problem with doing work involving ‘subcultural groups’. I would also say that if it did happen it would be as a matter of course not made a special case + presented as a part of non subcultural material unless a specific point were being made.” (medium local authority museum service).

In reference to answering the questionnaire accurately, the adequacy of documentation systems were highlighted as an issue by a number of museums. In response to whether the museums felt that their past documentation and collection methods enabled them to answer
the questions ‘with confidence’ (Q. 15), 69% indicated that they were confident and 10% made no comment, but 21% (72 museums) indicated that they were not confident in their documentation (Figure 21).

Where museums apologised for not completing sections, comments such as “Although we have a well developed computer database we have no data standard that would enable us to extract material which is associated with subcultures as defined by the paragraph in your letter.” (large local authority museum), “It has not been estimated.” (National museum), “No way of knowing.” (small local authority museum), “Very hard to say without considerable research” and “Difficult to say, secondary index fields do not easily lend themselves to identifying such artefacts.” (small local authority museum service) were recorded.

**Fundamental issues raised by the process of this research.**

To attempt to survey what museums have done to represent subcultural identities and histories was a difficult task. As has been explained, a postal survey was chosen as the most appropriate means of gaining comprehensive data using the resources available. This did mean however that respondents needed to be provided with some explanation of what the thesis took ‘subcultural’ to mean given the absence of an interviewer to qualify the term. Setting a definition of ‘subcultural’ to base the survey on was problematic however, for as Chapter Two shows, neither the concept of subculture itself nor the phenomenon it attempts to define, are static and essentialist in nature. Postal questionnaires however
should be as ‘clear, precise and unambiguous’ as possible in order to achieve a substantial response rate (McNeill 1990:27). Thus the survey had to work to a static definition that would inevitably not reflect the complex and contested, fluid and elusive nature of subcultural identities.

It was necessary to reach a compromise: The working definition accompanying the questionnaire attempted to provide a cohesive set of characteristics which the research identified ‘subcultures’ with, whilst not being so prescriptive as to discourage reflexive interpretations of stereotypical conceptions of subcultural formations. The extent to which museum professionals were familiar with the term was overestimated however. A large number of respondents were obviously confused as to exactly what ‘subcultural’ meant, and did not understand the working definition provided. Some respondents indicated that they didn’t know what the term meant at all, while others answered inappropriately, i.e. they suggested groups that did not fit the definition of ‘subcultural’ as used in the survey and thesis: for example 4% answered Question 4, 4% answered Question 7 and 1.2% answered Question 7a inappropriately. Responses such as “Canal/boatman artefacts such as painted canalware, buckets etc”, “Victorian decorative item in frame made from human hair” and “Medals, badges, ribbon & sash of the Ancient Order of Druids” were all suggested. Material relating to the Celts, early Christian settlers of Galloway, Jewish communities, the elderly, mentally handicapped, the unemployed, conscious Second World War objectors, 19th century rioters and marchers, folk dancing, gypsies and suffragettes were all also taken to be ‘subcultural’.

Whilst such examples could arguably be considered as constituting subcultures in the widest application of the term, they did not fit however the more common definition that this research was working to: Even though definitions of the term maybe contested, as Gelder and Thornton have suggested, a ‘notable continuity in the kinds of social network and activity that scholars have labelled or looked at in terms of ‘subculture’’ exists (1997:2). ‘Subculture’ is not a term exclusive to the academic arena however, for it is

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83 A small number of museums did contact the researcher for further clarification of the term, and this did pose a problem in terms of validity. Where possible the working definition was again reiterated, and if necessary, expanded on to a limited extent.
commonly used within the popular media and non-academic publications, though in a stereotypical manner, to refer to the cultural formations that this thesis addresses. Thus, some museum professions illustrated that they are not aware of the shared meanings that ‘subculture’ has traditionally been recognised as denoting within academia and the popular media alike, never mind understanding the subtleties of the phenomenon this clumsy term attempts to denote. Given this, it can be argued that such mistaken responses said much about the focus of museums and their ignorance of youth and popular culture.84

It was also soon realised that even overcoming the challenges presented by the term ‘subculture’, the phenomenon itself would provide barriers. Identifying relevant material was made difficult for example, because whilst the subcultural connections of some material may be easily identified (a band t-shirt for example), material that could be considered subcultural by association, it being used within a subcultural context for example, is not as readily identifiable. The tension of attempting to record identities that can be identified as having postmodern sensibilities and characteristics, through modernist inspired methodology of research, thus became fully apparent as the responses came to be inputted and the complexities of the task understood.

The interpretation of returns, many of which were ambiguous, became problematic as it necessitated the application of subjective decisions concerning what the researcher took to be subcultural and what were considered inappropriate answers.85 For example, although 19 respondents said that they did have an active collecting policy which specifically addressed subcultural material, it was decided only 3 should be recorded as such (see page 172). That “jazz”, “lesbian and gay people”, and “the TT Races” were recorded as ‘subcultural’, was necessitated by the need to be reflexive in the interpretation of responses. In the absence of detailed knowledge about the provenance of the material, these more generically ‘mainstream’ socio-cultural formations were imputed as positive responses as they potentially could have subcultural formations within them: the material could have been used by those that considered themselves as belonging to a subculture, alternatively they may not. There was no way of telling. Thus a reflexive approach was taken to what was recorded as ‘subcultural’. However, in order to reflect the inclusive

84 It is interesting to note that if this same questionnaire, with the same definition of subcultural, had been directed at professionals within the disciplines of sociology or cultural studies for example, arguably little confusion about what the term referred to would have been met. That this confusion occurred, illustrates the lack of awareness that museums have of subcultures, as regards this thesis’s definition of the term, an issue that will be explored further in following chapters.
approach, what was recorded as subcultural has been broken down in places to reveal the ambiguity: Figure 10 for example.

There existed a tension between wanting to measure what had been done by museums whilst attempting to recognise the subjectivity and diversity of subcultural formations and thus remain reflexive in what was recorded. That only one respondent also recognised the challenge of subjecting non-essentialist formations to modernist essentialist based recording technique, is telling: only one respondent acknowledged that it had been difficult to complete the questionnaire as “subcultural groups” has many permutations”.

The ways which museums collect and document material also led to subjective findings, both in terms of what museums thought to record and tell this researcher about. For example, museums often do not record more than the basic provenance information on the material culture they store, and they do not have a classification section which records subcultural status. The survey thus only records material culture that has been identified and recorded as ‘subcultural’ within museum documentation systems or curatorial knowledge: it serves to show what the profession itself believes has been done to represent subcultural identities and their material culture, not what might actually exist within collections.

Conclusion

To summarise the findings then: Of those museums that do address subcultures, local authority museums appear to be those most likely to collect relevant material culture, and social history and costume disciplines are most likely to do the collecting. This collecting seems to be undertaken on an ad hoc basis, and subcultures are not addressed within collecting policies. A small number of displays and exhibitions have been held that have been devoted to subcultural identities, however the majority feature subcultural material as part of a more general theme which is often social history or costume based. A small proportion of museums have plans to address this subject, and only a small proportion of museums would say that they have an active commitment to addressing subcultural identities and material culture. As with other areas such as labour history, the degree to which museums have incorporated subcultural identities and histories into their work

It should be noted that a standardised and accountable approach was taken with recording the responses.
‘depends amongst other things on curators’ enthusiasms and existing collections.’
(Trustram 1993a:75)

Relevant material culture may not have been accounted for in the survey because of poor curatorial knowledge of collections and documentation, but also because the histories of objects are not necessarily recorded on entering the museum; ‘mainstream’ functions are assumed and the ability to make connections between objects within the collections and subcultures (i.e. that certain mass manufactured objects may be interpreted in a subcultural way), becomes lost. Indeed, it has also been difficult to undertake this research because museums are very poor at recording and promoting what initiatives they do undertake. It was difficult to gain information about relevant initiatives held before the 1990s, as records of them were rarely kept; the only records of their existence being the vague recollections of staff that were around at the time. Even for exhibitions that were held just prior to this research, and therefore could not be visited, information such as copies of the interpretation text, lists of objects featured and photographs of the exhibition, was often not available.

The survey also only provides a snap-shot of the period the research was undertaken. It should be noted that this research may have prompted some museums to initiate plans to represent subcultures. To that effect, this data and information may have become out of date. Some relevant initiatives indeed have been carried out after the period that the majority of the primary research was undertake; Skin Deep at the National Maritime Museum and the reopened Brighton Museum and Art Gallery which features subcultural material within its displays, for example. Where possible, these exhibitions have been visited, however it has not been possible to undertake further, more in-depth research into them. Keeping abreast of further developments has been difficult because initiatives do tend to be small scale and are not widely advertised; to this researchers knowledge, no major initiatives have been undertaken however, since the body of primary research was undertaken between 1998-2000.

The difficulties encountered when undertaking the fieldwork highlights some of the fundamental issues that this thesis seeks to address. The need to establish a common definition for example, in order to be able to measure the extent of subcultural
representation within a survey, was similar to that of museums which need to classify and label material in order to catalogue, identify, describe, locate and exhibit their collections. Such definitions are subjective, artificial constructions however, and can be limiting. Many museums did not recognise the term subculture, and the number of inappropriate answers to questions illustrates their confusion as to the term’s meaning. Whilst a small selection did respond flexibly to the definition and some offered their own interpretations, only a few respondents actually noted the limitations of the term subculture itself.

The practical problems and barriers that were identified, both in terms of accessing information about what had been undertaken, or the lack of money, staff time and storage space, which were given as reasons for the lack of initiatives undertaken, eventually led this researcher not only to doubt the possibility of (dis)/proving the original hypothesis, but to begin to question the extent to which the essence of the thesis was located in measuring the marginalisation of subcultures from museums at all. It also revealed inadequacies of the modernist tools that were used. The challenges that the process of primary research revealed was that marginalisation, and the difficulties measuring this, were symptoms of a fundamental cause which lead thesis to develop into an examination of the modernist paradigm.

The research also revealed that representing identities or histories that have been marginalised or ignored can be viewed with suspicion, and the empowerment gained by reclaiming one’s history and sense of past (Hasted 1987-88), is cautiously met. Indeed the number of negative, even hostile, responses to the research that were received (see Appendix 6 for an example), indicates this.

As Gaby Porter has commented, ‘museums have been slow to take up issues such as racism, class bias, and sex discrimination, either as employing institutions, or as a medium which propagates a particular and pervasive brand of history.’ (1988;104). This is in part a result of museums’ anxiety ‘to avoid studies and inferences which they see as political and propagandist: curators regard their own work as factual, non-theoretical, working with the physical, the real’ (Porter 1988;119). The identification of the absences in museums then, is illuminating as it can alert us to the power relations that operate within museums and

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86 Even where in-person interviews were carried out and background information was available, curators could often not locate it or forgot to post on to this researcher, such material.
serves to highlight the systems of value and knowledge that are taken for granted and naturalised. It is towards this that we now turn.
CHAPTER FIVE

Cultures of insignificance: museum structures of power, knowledge and value.

Introduction.

Having established that subcultural identities, histories and associated material culture has been marginalised from British museums, we now move on to examine the possible reasons for this absence.

The primary fieldwork revealed that a lack of resources is a major contributing factor to the marginalisation of subcultures from British museums. However, these practical concerns are only part of the issue: they are the symptoms, but not the cause. This chapter argues that it is the ideological foundations of the modernist museum on which public museums have operated for so long, that cause symptoms that mitigate against the representation of subcultural identities, histories and material culture. The traditions through which contemporary museums have evolved, and the ideologies that they have been based upon, engender little concern for identities and material culture that are postmodern in expression, ‘popular’ in nature and/or contemporary, which subcultural material invariably is.

The chapter explores the structuring practices around which power operates, that serve to create and control knowledge and value within the context of the museum, for just as societies need ‘principals of valuation and a range of values in order to be able to function’ (Pearce 1995,285), so too do museums as institutions. However, it is argued that these values have served to exclude parts of our society and material cultural heritage, including that of subcultural groups.

As the previous chapter established, the exclusion of subcultural material has not been absolute however, and limited initiatives have been undertaken to represent subcultures. Given this, the chapter also moves to consider the extent to which these initiatives confirm or challenge, have been helped or hindered by, the modernist museum paradigm.
So how does a lexicon of power/knowledge/value that was established with the modernist museum, and is still evident in the structures contemporary museums, have a bearing on the marginalisation of subcultural identities and histories from British museums?

Accounting for subcultural marginalisation.

It is suggested here that the traditions on which the modernist museum was based, and the structures of power, knowledge and value that were formulated within the modernist museum paradigm in the nineteenth century, still operate today and serve to exclude subcultural identities and histories on a number of levels. Museums retain the power for example, to decide who is represented and who is excluded, what identities and histories are legitimised and what are not.

Power:

Postmodern critiques such as Foucault's have helped highlight how power is implicit within institutions that seemingly appear neutral and objective. Foucault's conception of power as all pervasive rather than located in any identifiable single oppressive formation, also serves to emphasis that the knowledge and value judgements that institutions perpetuate, are inextricably connected to strategies of power. Such operations of power are recognisable within the history of the formation of modern public museums: If the modernist paradigm established museums as ‘temples of high culture’ and disciplinary agents of civilisation, it is a tradition which remains an underlying force within museum practice and governs ideas about what museums should be, both in the profession and public alike. Although the paternalistic rhetoric may have changed, the role of museums to inform and ‘educate’ is still viewed as fundamental, and research into subcultural representation reveals deep-seated prejudices that remain within museums.

It has been established that subcultural identities have been constructed as ‘other’ in society, labelled as deviant and have served as the repositories of society’s fears and anxieties. Given this, the representation of subcultures within an institution whose traditions are based on a civilising ethic may therefore be seen as antithetical. Museums

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87 Just as high culture within museums was used in the nineteenth century, as an instrument of social management, so to are museums currently being advocated as having a social role, that of agents for social inclusion.
have retained a disciplinary role within society; their perceived and projected function remains to ‘educate’, to reform and improve. If museums serve to encourage responsible and rational individuals, then subcultures stand as ‘other’ to what museums aim to encourage.88

The universalist rhetoric inherited from the nineteenth century modernist museum also serves as another characteristic which can account for the marginalisation of subcultural identities and histories. The unity that was presented in the modernist museum through master narratives that were seen to be universal and encyclopaedic, remains elicit in the attempts many contemporary museums make to appeal to as large an undifferentiated audience as possible. Whilst it may seem that practical imperatives such as performance indicators, income generation and so on, necessitates museums to deliver initiatives with widespread appeal, we shall see that underlying this is an inherited exclusive agenda. This desire for universalist appeal however, is expressed by museums sometimes in contradictory ways.

The fieldwork revealed, for example, that some respondents to the questionnaire felt that their museum did not address subcultures because as a subject it did not have wide enough appeal, it was too specialist. A small independent museum replied for example “This [the questionnaire] is not relevant since our museum is devoted strictly to the general life of the area.” Another wrote “We are a local history museum in its broadest sense & do not specialise on anything – least of all the way-out types you are interested in.” (small local authority museum). Subcultures are therefore being perceived and positioned within society as ‘other’ to the ‘norm’, ‘sub’ of ‘the mainstream’ and thus are not seen to have a place in an institution whose role has been constructed as one to reflect and appeal to a ‘majority’ audience.

A universalist rhetoric is therefore still being used as a pretext for the lack of attention that subcultural identities and histories receive in museums. Behind this assumption that constructs subcultures as different to and separate from mainstream society and culture, is the traditional paradigm of ‘subculture’ established as we have seen, by CCCS. Responding to the questionnaire, a small independent costume museum stated “We deal with mainstream fashion as may have been worn in --------, so I do not think that we have

88 This issue is explored in depth within Chapter Eight.
anything in the collection which is material culture of a subcultural nature.” Implicit in this response is that a division has been constructed between what is assumed to be mainstream fashion and subcultural ‘fashion’/costume. Another small museum, in explaining its lack of commitment to representing subcultures, commented “We have limited space, both display & storage & our remit is local history”; again implicit in this response is that subcultures are taken to be different to or separate from local history. Indeed a number of respondents, a significant proportion of which were rural located or voluntary run museums, indicated they had done nothing to represent subcultures because it was not relevant to their museum or area: “Not applicable to our small village museum” was a common response, as were comments such as “Not seen as appropriate to our role as local museum- no relevant history of sub-cultures (as defined)” (small museum).

Similar responses have also been given to justify the lack of recognition of cultural diversity in reference to ethnic communities. Hajri Shaikh has commented that within meetings on cultural diversity organised by the Museums Association and the Arts Council, it was suggested by some museums that cultural diversity issues were not relevant to them as no ethnic minority peoples lived in their area, or that within the context of a rural white population, working with white farm labourers could be considered cultural diversity work. Shaikh warns that ‘If such apathy and ignorance exists amongst museum workers who profess an interest in this field, what can be the views of those people who are directly opposed to this work?’ (2001;100). Choosing not to address issues of cultural diversity because of the region the museum is located in, Shaikh regards as ‘reprehensible’.

Exclusion on the grounds that identities and histories are not represented or relevant to the local area thus serves to highlight the narrow definitions museums construct of culture. In today’s society even the most rural community is effected by popular culture articulated in the mass media. Thus even where subcultural groups do not exist within a geographical area, the influence they have had on popular culture and cultural representations of them will invariably permeate remote rural areas: although CCCS would have us believe subcultural formations were solely an urban phenomenon, disconnected from the ‘mainstream’, in reality such restrictions cannot be substantiated.

Responses of ‘inappropriateness’ thus highlight the blindness that many museums still have for the need to realise diverse representations. That a number of museums revealed
their modernist conceptualisation of subcultures which is predicated on essentialist identities that are ‘sub’ or separate to ‘mainstream’ society or culture, illustrates ignorance of the challenges that have been made to such orthodoxy’s, and the wealth of postmodernist and post-structuralist inspired subcultural theorisation. Museums thus still draw on exclusive interpretations of culture and outmoded understandings of collective identities such as subcultural formations, to justify their exclusion of such identities. As was explored in Chapter Two, subcultures are complex formations whose identities are constructed as much within mainstream culture as well as against it. Their significance to the cultural history of Britain is thus not simply located within their own sphere of reference but is inextricably tied in with that of wider culture. It is problematic then, to deny representation of subcultures on the grounds that their identities and histories have only a minority significance and interest.

However, the fieldwork revealed how some museums expressed the universalist desires in a different way. Some museums for example, took offence to a perceived suggestion of subcultural difference. A small museum responded “Our museum welcomes all visitors and no one is considered as being a member of a subcultural group.” Another in response to Q13, whether they had an active commitment to subcultures, indicated “no” because “People are people” (small independent museum). A large local authority museum wrote “Day to day work on local culture encompasses anything that may turn up – we do not go actively seeking out anything which may be unusual or selective.” Another wrote “We have never found it acceptable to create any subcultures within our society or community. To do so would be considered discriminatory.” (small independent museum) Here then, subcultures are marginalised through a resistance to recognising and celebrating difference and diversity. A universalising ethic has become so entrenched within notions of what museums should do and be, that through a fear of appearing discriminatory, subcultures become marginalised through a denial of perceived difference.

It can be argued therefore that museums continued desire to appeal to a general widest possible audience is not just the practical result of pressures of visitor targets and income generation. Underlying the responses is a orthodoxy of assumed universalism.
Knowledge:

Power does not operate in isolation (though for the purposes of this exploration, an artificial division has been created). In reality, power and structures of knowledge cannot be separated for ‘Power and knowledge are much the same thing’ (Pearce 1992;231). As we have seen, in the ‘modern state the operation of power is linked with a range of disciplinary and surveillance procedures which draw on knowledge in all its attributes, including the development of the necessary institutions and technologies.’ (Pearce 1992;231) Thus, although some responses to the fieldwork may seem innocuous, they reveal deep seated assumptions and traditions of practice which suggest that museums still exist as institutions of disciplinary apparatus.

Curatorial knowledge, or rather the lack of it in reference to subcultural identities and histories, has served to marginalise subcultures. As Chapter Four introduced, the survey results revealed that a number of curators indicated that a lack of knowledge and experience of subcultures led them to not address subcultural material culture in their collecting and exhibition practices. Some of this absence of knowledge was, it seems, the result of a complete ignorance of subcultural phenomenon. A small independent museum responded for example, “None of our learned members know what ‘subcultural material’ means but we are sure we have none”, and another stated “How the hell does one get into it?”, continuing “We would be wary of the groups and moving into that area” (small local authority museum). Another commented “There are & always have been, many individuals who could be called subculture – But not in recognisable groups – It’s a new one on me!” (small local authority museum). One respondent even stated “Sorry, we don’t seem to be sharing the same planet”! (small independent museum)

Other respondents indicated that subcultures were not represented in their museum as the museum was unaware of their existence within the locality. A small local museum for example, responded that they did not have an active commitment to addressing subcultures, (Q13.) “Because it is very difficult to identify any groups in a rural North Yorkshire setting”. “Subcultural groups hardly evident in our area (small local museum), “Subcultures are not a prominent feature of rural -----” (small local museum), “I have not

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89 The lack of some respondents knowledge on the subject meant that they could not even comprehend the term ‘subculture’ enough to even complete the questionnaire: when approached in an attempt to solicit a response one curator said “I couldn’t get my head round ‘subcultural’. I gave up in despair.” (medium local authority museum).
noticed any marked subcultural activity in the collecting area” (small local authority museum), and “The town does not apparently have a ‘subcultural’ community as young people leave for the city as soon as possible, especially I suspect if they are potentially subcultural” (small rural local authority museum), were given.\(^9\)

Such concerns were also supported within the in-person interviews, where lack of knowledge remained a barrier even though a knowledge of and desire to represent subcultures was present. As one curator indicated for example,

> “the sort of curatorial map of knowledge about this area is another [reason for their lack of representation], I mean, it’s probably the biggest reason why it’s [subcultural material] not collected...not knowing that, say, a particular band exists” (Interviewee DT;7)

Another suggested that the lack of the right connections and therefore knowledge was a problem, “I think its going back to what people are aware of and if we are not aware of it, because we are not working within those circles, we don’t know people within the circles.” (Interviewee FF;12) Another stated the difficulty they had in sourcing subcultural material for an exhibition, “it’s just that we don’t know the people, so the contacts aren’t there as yet to source material” (Interviewee NA; 4)

These examples reveal real inadequacies in the processes by which identities or histories get represented. In some cases curatorial ignorance and unwillingness to explore, leads subcultures to be marginalised, whilst in others the will is there but the knowledge isn’t. That museums have not addressed subcultures because of the lack of curatorial knowledge of the area, suggests however that assumptions are being made that museum practice should be guided by knowledge located within the museum rather than from the outside public. A lack of curatorial knowledge in an area then, still leads subjects and peoples to remain excluded from museums as initiatives are not taken to utilise the knowledge base of communities themselves to inform and facilitate museum representations.

A number of museums also revealed that the problems of lack of knowledge were compounded by the lack of resources to undertake research to gain that knowledge. However, whilst lack of staff time and money may appear causes of marginalisation, what the real problem is are assumptions about who has the power to know. Museums remain

\(^9\) This comment also reveals assumptions about the age of subculturalists, failing to acknowledge that subcultural affiliation can develop in young people still at school, who are forced to stay in the area.
the authoritative producers of knowledge and so must ‘understand’ before any representations can be provided. If knowledge cannot be internalised then subjects go unrecorded and unrepresented.

The work of Paul Martin has highlighted the continued resistance of museum staff to the relinquishment of control over knowledge (1999). His examination of the relationships that museums have with collectors’ clubs illustrated that there has been a tradition of marginalising the knowledge base that these groups hold; their knowledge, and collections, remain unrecognised and under-valued by museums. Similarities can then be drawn between collectors clubs and subcultures. As Sarah Thornton has argued, ‘subcultural capital’ is dependant on informal knowledge, of being ‘in the know’ (1995). Subcultures can have their own underground systems of authenticity located in specific structures of knowledge; of listening to the right music, wearing the right clothes, appearing in the right club, knowing the right dance and argot, and so forth. Given the curatorial profiles of museum staff, it is more likely then that subcultural participants hold more knowledge than museum staff do.91 Shortages in resources thus become a problem because the knowledge based within subcultures themselves is not easily accessible through organised or formal means. The fluidity of subcultural knowledges makes their acquisition time-consuming and costly, however, we should begin to question the traditions which assume that museums need to ‘acquire’ such outsider knowledge before they may be represented.92

Subcultures can remain marginalised therefore because curators fail to recognise knowledge outside of their institutions. Admitting that knowledge is not the sole preserve of museums challenges the museums position as authoritative institution and highlights the imbalance of power structured around knowledge and its control. Knowledge structures within museums are thus political as museums serve to regulate access to knowledge, to its ownership and usage. Issues of the control of knowledge are tied in with the politics of representation; ‘who can represent whom, how, where, and with what’ (Ames 1994;103). Within the modernist museum, the authority of knowledge is firmly located with the

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91 It should be acknowledged that relevant material culture invariably lies within the hands of subculturalists themselves; in the private collections of individuals who have saved their clothes, records and so forth. The material also is accumulated by the small scale entrepreneurial ventures that operate within and around subcultural identities. Whilst museums continue to ignore the wealth of material that exists outside of their institutions, subcultural identities and histories will continue to be marginalised within museums.

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curator, not with the viewers or even donors of objects. Through vehicles of knowledge, the power relationship that museums have with their audiences, is firmly weighted towards the museum. Museum curators act as experts, disavowing the knowledges that visitors may hold. This is as true today as it was within the nineteenth century public museums and maybe identified throughout museum operations,

‘from the way in which reserve collections are only available to those with the correct credentials, to the way in which objects are kept behind glass and must not be touched.’ (Pearce 1992;233)

Thus although the institution of the public museum may seem open to all, in practice it is a mechanism of social distinction and exclusion.

It can also be argued however, that not only have subcultural identities and histories been marginalised because of the lack of curatorial knowledge on the subject, but also that subcultures do not have a place in the grand narratives that museums have traditionally been based around. This will be explored in detail in Chapter Seven, however it is sufficient to point out here that the experiences of subcultures can often have no place within the traditional museum structures of knowing. Indeed, as identities which have been constructed, but also construct themselves, as external or in opposition to values of production and progress. Subcultures may be seen to stand as reminders to the limitations of metanarratives based on rational ideals. The ‘No Future’ and ‘dole queue rock’ of Punk for example, illustrate that the modernist belief in progress, the move towards a improved society, is an illusion; Punk being a celebration of those who fall through the cracks, those that are not benefiting and remain homeless or unemployed.

Given the structures of knowledge that we have identified as traditionally operating within museums, contemporary material also stands to potentially place museums in a challenging position. The maintenance of the museum as an authority and fountain of knowledge, has been constructed on the basis that the past is ‘a foreign country’ to the majority of the population, however with contemporary culture the public too can have knowledge about material culture that can be equal to or greater than that of curators. Contemporary material throws into question the division between the producers and consumers of knowledge, making it more difficult for the museum to keep up the veneer that it is the sole authority and possessor of cultural knowledge.

92 As we shall see in Chapter Six, desire to be the arbiter of knowledge is tied in with notions of truth and authenticity, and fears of subjectivity and fake.
The status of museums is based on the public taking in trust that the information museums proffer is accurate and reliable (see Chapter Six). Once in the realms of the contemporary however, one is within a period relative to people's lived memories and by implication, the public is in possession of knowledge and can call into question the museums position of authority regarding representations of the contemporary. The present is also much more open to subjective interpretation and multiple perspectives in a way that the past is not. It is open to many subject positions of interpretation and thus it is not as easy for museums to offer up knowledge for passive consumption. The division of 'ignorant' visitor : 'expert' curator is not as easily sustained when contemporary material culture is addressed. And in relation to subcultures such a division is even more untenable. Subcultures thus become marginalised through museums fears about not 'getting it right', but also more fundamentally because subcultural histories remain within the area of lived knowledge and the 'experts' are subculturalists themselves not museum professionals.

The current 'crisis of knowledge' (Lyotard 1989) that postmodernity is seen to characterise, has collapsed the metanarratives of modernism. Where 'confidence in epistemic homogeneity and the singularity of truth prevailed, traditional museums could assume general acceptance of their didactic authority' (Hein 2000;67), however now that this has been displaced, the authority of museum knowledge has been weakened. Museums are being forced to recognise alternative sites of knowledge and with that, their power to know has been challenged. However, although concessions to alternative sites of knowledge are being made, this is limited to the most progressive and forward thinking museums (as we shall see in the next section). The embracing of outside knowledges is also often limited to temporary initiatives such as exhibitions, and the fundamental structures of knowledge that museums have traditionally been based upon, have yet to be broken down.

We should question therefore the extent to which postmodernist epistemology has challenged the dominance of modernist structures, for we should not underestimate the 'ideological force of a cultural experience that claims for its truths the status of objective knowledge. To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and its highest values and truths.'(Duncan 1995;8)
Value:
A second fundamental aspect to power as realised in museums, linked closely to the structures of knowledge that operate, are structures of value, for as Pearce argues, ‘all value judgements are to be seen as strategies of power’ (1992;231). Inextricably linked with the notion that the museum was a palace of knowledge, there for ‘education’ and ‘enlightenment’, was the notion that the museum is a place where the ‘great’ and ‘good’ of objects finally come to rest.

It can be argued therefore that a major reason for the absence of subcultural identities and histories from museums has been the lack of value they have been afforded. The absence from museums of material culture of a subcultural nature, reflects the lack of value that society places on subcultural material. This is reflected both in terms of monetary value, as subcultural material culture tends not to have any real market value, and cultural value: such material can remain of value only to the owner of the material or the associated group. Subcultural material can become valuable because of the personal sentimental value associated with it for ‘It is past associations that make the objects into artefacts’ (Crew and Sims 1991;159). If it is only associated with individuals, and not famous people nor with histories that are currently in vogue (for example our heavy industrial past), subcultural material culture associated with subcultures remains ignored.

An indication of the subjective curatorial judgements concerning value that have and still do influence museum representations was highlighted in some of the negative, even hostile responses that the questionnaire received. One respondent from a small transport museum wrote for example, “your research project has about as much value as three men with planks on their heads calling themselves art.” ! (see Appendix 6). Another stated “I doubt if we would recognise it if we saw it, and certainly would not be interested” (small independent museum).

This is a self-perpetuating problematic, for having not been legitimised within institutions such as museums, the public in turn can remain ignorant of the contributions that subcultures have made to British culture. Remaining ignorant of its value, petitions are

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93 To an extent some subcultural material, usually associated with music or fashion, is beginning to command a value in the market place. Christie’s have for example, included a ‘street fashion’ section in their sales catalogue for costume and textiles: Vivienne Westwood Punk t-shirts were auctioned off at over £300 each (2000).
subsequently not made by the public to include representations. Indeed interviews with museums that have approached subcultural participants, indicate surprise as a common response to the museums interest.

NC: ‘Do you get people surprised that you are interested in it?’
FF: “Yes, because they still think museums are still, sort of, trains and planes and bits of old dead metal. So yes there is some surprise.” (6)

Another interviewee stated,

“it was slow building up trust to start with because people just don’t perceive museums as being interested in their, in their particular area of interest and, we’re always struggling against that to some extent.” (Interviewee LT; 10)

This issue is particularly relevant given that a large proportion of museums rely on passive collecting as the only means of acquiring objects. One respondent accounting for the absence of subcultures commented for example, “------- is a small village museum that reflects the history of the area through its donated collection. We have never been offered any subcultural material” And so the problem perpetuates: if collections do not hold subcultural material, museums cannot display it and therefore the public and the subcultures themselves will not realise that museums are places where such material is of interest and value, and therefore material will not be donated. That museums only take the initiative to address an area because of calls to do so, also serves to perpetuate marginalisation: “I think that if there were a greater call to do so from greater numbers down here then we would respond.” (large independent museum); “it’s a question of somebody coming in and asking us [to do an exhibition] rather than us taking the initiative.” (Interviewee DT; 15)

The problems of limited resources that museums face, such as shortages in budgets and staff time for example, are exacerbated by the location of subcultures at the bottom of the value systems operating within museums. Limited resources are directed at the ‘mainstream’ first, targeted towards more ‘deserving’ identities and groups, with the result that subcultures become ignored. One museum responded for example, “This museum is so under resourced that we have not even begun to try to represent mainstream contemporary culture” (medium local authority museum), another stated “We cannot adequately document even the ‘mainstream’ contemporary history of our area, so we have no prospect of addressing more specialised areas.” (small local authority museum) Other such

94 Unlike other marginalised groups for whom their marginal status has become a political issue, subcultures however do not campaign for the recognition of their cultural heritage. The absence of any formal impetus to get their cultural heritage recognised in institutions such as museums, thus means that acquisition of such material relies on active collecting by curators or donations by individuals.
responses included; “With only 1.5FTE + limited budgets we have enough trouble covering mainstream society!” (medium local authority museum), “If we were targeting any particular groups we would start with more mainstream areas which are under represented.” (large local authority museum), “the fact that there are many areas of ‘mainstream’ local life still to be documented” (small local authority museum), “It would be great to focus on a sub-culture but it would be a luxury that is beyond most small museums” (medium local authority museum). Efforts were also more likely to be concentrated on other minorities before subcultures, as one museum indicated, “Our efforts at engaging groups not traditionally represented by the Museum are being concentrated on ethnic minority communities, who make up approximately a third of -----'s population.” (small local authority museum service).  

In particular, subcultural material is marginalised because popular culture, of which subcultures are a part, has itself been marginalised: The pervasive hold that such hierarchies of value have had within the twentieth century is evident in the manner in which popular culture has been excluded from museums until recently. As was suggested in Chapter Three, the recognition of working class culture and folk life was a long time in coming. Working class culture was considered unworthy of preservation and deliberately ignored in great public museums of nineteenth century: defined as ‘subordinate other’ through exclusion (Bennett 1988;73).

Objects connected to significant political and intellectual figures, landowners, and historical events were defined as appropriate for museums to collect and represent: ‘Materials belonging to less notable figures or connected with the lives of ordinary individuals were less likely to end up there because these objects did not have the same historical significance in the eyes of curators or other scholars.’ (Crew and Sims 1991;165)

It was also high culture that was enlisted for governmental purposes and given the task of civilising the populace, for it was believed that exposure to such culture had the capacity to transform the life and behaviour of the public. Museums were constructed as exemplary spaces so that the objects housed within them had to be of exemplary status. In a space that was to stand for the rational, for order and control, ‘The enemy of rational recreation

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95 Again, as has already been mentioned, the modernist inspired conceptualisation of subcultures as essentialist identities such as sub of or separate to a ‘mainstream’, serves to legitimise their marginalisation.
was undisciplined and uncontrollable popular culture' (Hooper-Greenhill 1991;13) Thus the mundane, the ordinary and the popular did not gain access into museums as it was not considered fitting to the agenda of improvement and emulation: in the tradition of the modernist museum, museums were conceived of as places, to paraphrase Bennett, for the people not of the people (1988;64).

Thus, as Kevin Moore observes, the association between museums and popular culture may seem ‘something of a contradiction’ because museums ‘have acted as the institutions which have defined ‘high’ culture, and this has necessitated, to a large extent, the deliberate exclusion of the material culture of popular culture.’(1997;1) Making use of Pearce’s plot of the structure of values that operate within museums, Moore represents how the value that popular culture (and subcultures can be included within this) has traditionally been attributed, has lead to its exclusion. He argues that the plot graphically explains why popular culture has been ignored by museums, for ‘if museums exist simply to reflect high culture, even if this involves bringing this to a mass audience, then broadly speaking popular culture is invalid.’ (Moore 1997;4)

Suggesting that the vertical axis of authentic - non-authentic/spurious can be equated to ‘high culture’ - ‘popular culture’, popular culture is thus firmly located within the non-authentic/spurious section of the bottom half of the plot (figure 22).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 22: ‘Plotting ‘high’ and popular culture (Moore 1997;3)
He also argues that the horizontal axis divides popular culture into two types of material culture; 'spurious masterpieces' and 'spurious artefacts'. This division he suggests, can be equated with the divisions in the theories of popular culture, as the former reflects those who believe that popular culture is a creative cultural expression from below, and the latter, those who regard popular culture as an imposed mass culture (1997;4).

If value is attributed to objects on the basis of their authenticity, either as 'art' or 'history', then popular cultural material culture is inevitably excluded. Such material culture is often mass produced from inexpensive materials and therefore becomes equated with the spurious. As Pearce argues, the nature of the production of mass produced objects and the lack of individuality inherent through this, 'creates a gap between the producer and owner which helps to drain away meaning' (1995;305). Given that the highest cultural value is attributed to objects which can be seen to embody high levels of technical skill and craftsmanship (Pearce 1995;297), then the production processes generally associated with popular cultural objects, serves to condemn them to the category of spurious material culture.

Such plotting of popular culture's position in the structure of value, helps explain why museums have been so slow to recognise the importance of subcultural popular material culture. Whilst museums may no longer operate deliberate policies to exclude popular culture, the value systems which traditionally prevail, has meant that the recognition of popular culture has been gradual. Lacking the authenticity attributed to folk culture or labour history for example, popular culture, with its associations with commerce and mass production, was too spurious to be included outright. Standing as an antithesis to the traditional values established by the modernist paradigm, such material culture thus struggled for recognition.96 One interviewee commented for example, that although the popular music industry is,

"the fourth biggest income earner in the UK...There was some very good private collections [of popular music and associated material] around but none of the institutions [museums and archives] were taking any responsibility and most of them, I guess, because of their age or their particular social interest, wouldn't regard it as important." (Interviewee FF;2-3)

96 It is important to note that the resistance towards popular culture has also come from forces external to the museum. In establishing a tradition which placed value on the authentic, the unique, the spectacular, the modernist museum paradigm has influenced public perceptions about what the museum should represent: the public often expects to see the valuable and the unique in museums, not the mundane or commonplace.
Revealing subcultural material culture to be marginalised within museums should therefore be of no surprise given that such material is located even further down the hierarchy of value than popular culture has been. Subcultural identities are often constructed around the appropriation of quite mundane objects, black plastic bags, babies' dummies, white gloves and so forth. It is the contexts in which objects have been utilised or the personalisation of objects through customisation that can make mundane objects 'interesting', yet these aspects are rarely recognised within museums. As we shall see later in this chapter, where subcultural material culture has been represented within museums, it has been because it has been attributed the status of ‘folk’ culture: considerable efforts have been made to separate such material from the spurious and establish its legitimacy through an emphasis of its value as 'art' or 'history'.

We have seen then that, given the structures of value that museums have traditionally operated to, the fact that subcultural identities and histories are located within the realm of popular culture, has contributed to the marginalisation of this area. It can also be argued that the association of subcultures with the contemporary rather than the past, has been a further contributing factor to their marginalisation, for value has traditionally been placed on historical rather than contemporary material culture. A small number of museums with local history collections for example, indicated that they do not collect or display contemporary material and therefore had not addressed subcultures. Again, the public is also not aware that museums collect contemporary material:

“people approach us but it's usually with old things, it's not contemporary stuff because people aren't aware that museums collect contemporary stuff, so the contemporary stuff that we collect is, ... is all collected by staff, not as part of any particular concerted programme but because it just occurs to us, we ought to have that thing in the museum” (Interviewee DT; 8)

“a lot of people still think that we are just interested in the past,...the unshiftable stereotype of museums,...however much you do about contemporary life it just doesn't seem to sink in somehow.” (Interviewee IR; 10)

The legacy of the modernist museums value systems then, governs what many museums and the public recognise as appropriate to address, and contributes to the marginalisation of that which does not fit. As Eileen Hooper-Greenhill has argued, 'Many museums up until fairly recently were focused exclusively on the representation of the past. Indeed, even today, many people assume that this is the major function of museums.'(1992,197) As Merriman quotes,
""The word 'museum' is itself a byword for dullness, dust and general decrepitude. The very atmosphere reeks of decay...Our local museums are too frequently tombs of the dead past..."" (1991;88).

The obsession with material culture of the past rather than the present has thus fuelled such myths that characterise the museum as a place for dead things.

The entrenched nature of such assumptions was revealed in a complaint an interviewee received which was particularly telling in its assumptions about what a museum should be and concern itself with. The complainant, (a "good friend" of the former owner of the building in which the museum was housed and one who helped "save" the museum), was unhappy with the contents of the museum;

"[The] former owner of this place...wanted it as a museum foremost, not a community centre. A museum of local history does not present events of the 1950s and 60s and 70s. A large number of older residents are furious that the exhibition items and the [tape illegible] when the exhibition had gone, please replace them. and his family wanted a museum first, exhibition items for the last couple of hundred years, not 60s and 70s exhibits." (complaint letter quoted by Interviewee JL;17)

The message that contemporary material is deemed inappropriate for museums to collect and exhibit, is thus still held strongly by some sections of the public.97

One may argue that a reason why museums have become synonymous with the past is that traditionally the cultural value attributed to objects has been relative to their age and/or historical associations; ‘We privilege ‘age’ against ‘newness’ in objects, counting something which has been around for some time as of more significance than something newly made.’ (Pearce 1995;355) Or to quote Baudrillard, ‘There is a status attached to regression in time’, a ladder of established values that is often associated with past (1997;150).

The modernist museum paradigm was based on the assertion that the past is uplifting and enlarging and could be enlisted to improve the present, and thus the role of museums became deeply embedded in collecting and preserving the nations past for posterity.98 As Hooper-Greenhill argues, ‘The endless debates over ‘twentieth-century collecting’ or

97 It is also telling that this complainant has taken issue with the award winning work into social inclusion that the museum had achieved, drawing a distinction between a “museum” and a “community centre”.

98 It should be noted that in locating value within the past, the modernist museum is in discord with the later, high Modernist ideology of the twentieth century, which looked forward to the future rather than the past.
‘contemporary collecting’...show the difficulty that some museums have in conceptualising their ‘functions’ as other than in relation to the past.’ (1992;22)

Indeed, it was not until the 1980s that any real attention was given to collecting contemporary material culture (Bott 1985-86; Davies 1985; Mayo 1982; Mayo 1989; Miller 1985; Schlereth 1984), stimulated by the realisation that the nature of our disposable culture meant that much material culture would be discarded before museums would have chance to collect it. Resources and collecting initiatives therefore, have traditionally been directed at the past, leaving little room for focus on the contemporary. Even where the need to address this area has been recognised, contemporary collecting has often been seen as too difficult, too problematic (see Clayton 1994 in relation to costume for example). Thus the primary research revealed for example the near absence on exhibitions and representations which address contemporary subcultural expressions and experiences.

Similarly, the association of subcultures with youth can give subcultures less value. As Chapter Three indicated, museums have marginalised youth in terms of appealing to young people and representing their culture. Subcultures are not taken seriously for they are seen as ephemeral, part of young people’s experimentation and lacking any real commitment; “a lot of young people just flirt with these things don’t they? And so it doesn’t go very deep” (Interviewee MI; 13)

The implications for subcultural identities and their histories, that such systems of value traditionally sustained by museums have had, can therefore be identified as hardly conducive to the fostering of a climate where subcultural material culture could be included, even welcomed. If material collected by museums ‘has emerged through the system of value-making to be given the status of aesthetic or intellectual touchstone’ (Pearce 1995;389), museums have become shrines in which traditionally, popular culture has not had a place. If museums are as Pearce has argued, an ‘overarching community manifestation of the sacred set-aside’ (1995;390), if they are conceived ‘as home of the muses, as glorious embodiment of the moral excellence of the state, and as monuments which created a communal history by showing the present as the proper heir to the past’ (Pearce 1995;388), then subcultural material is associated with all that is profane and therefore has traditionally been hardly appropriate for inclusion in the temples of high culture. Subcultures, by the very nature of the term of reference for the phenomenon, have
been positioned as anti-establishment, not part of overall communal history, but sub (or constructed as sub) of wider culture (see Chapter Eight).

Towards a modernist representation.

Within this chapter then, we have begun to establish some of the reasons why subcultures may be marginalised from museums and the link that this has with the structures of power, knowledge and value that have been established within the modernist museum paradigm. In Chapter Four however, it was revealed that although somewhat limited in number, there have been initiatives undertaken to address subcultures within the British museum context. It is now appropriate to move on to consider the extent to which the modernist paradigm has structured the systems that effect the representation of subcultural identities and to a lesser extent, histories, when they are engaged with. Are the structures of power, knowledge and value still identifiable when subcultures receive attention within the museum context? Evidence does suggest that museums do structure representations both in terms of collecting and exhibitions, even where challenges to the modernist paradigm have begun to be made.

Whilst it should be acknowledged that disciplinary power does still regulate museum representations of subcultures, this issue will be addressed in depth in Chapter Eight. Let us move on then to examine in more depth how power operating through structures of knowledge and value, effects representations. For whilst the legacy of the modernist museum, being inextricably linked with governmental systems which attempted to civilise the population, can be identified, museums can also be conceived of as agents within civil society which help, through hegemony, to naturalise dominant value systems and structures of power, and maintain status quo of societal relations. Drawing on Gramsci and his concept of ‘civil society’, Karp and Levine argue for example that museums serve to articulate the social ideas, the value systems and assumptions of civil society, and make those social ideas understandable. Museum collections and activities are for example, ‘intimately tied to ideas about art, science, taste, and heritage...they are bound up with assertions about what is central or peripheral, valued or useless, known or to be discovered, essential to identity or marginal.’ (Karp, Kraemer, and Lavine 1992;7)
The knowledge selected for display, the objects that are deemed valuable for collection, are all thus ‘enacted’ within a power system.

'The sources of power are derived from the capacity of cultural institutions to classify and define peoples and societies. This is the power to represent: to reproduce structures of belief and experience through which differences are understood.' (Karp and Lavine 1991;1)

Museums are understood then, as sites of legitimisation. The power of museums to legitimate culture or not, through inclusion/exclusion: ‘a power that manifests itself precisely through its ability to exclude everything which, through its exclusion, is defined as other and subordinate.’ (Bennett 1988;73)

As Hooper-Greenhill has argued however, museums’ relationship with their audiences is beginning to be re-negotiated and ‘significant’ moves have been made to involve audiences within museum practice (2000a). The turning towards such democratic relationships are identifiable within the major subcultural exhibitions. The Streetstyle exhibition for example, would not have happened without significant input from subcultural participants themselves. The V&A had to begin to relinquish its authority over knowledge and to recognise that of the participants themselves, indeed the exhibitions’ success relied on the transfer of knowledge from the subcultural participants to the museum: groups were brought together to discuss what should be represented and ‘specialist advisers’ were brought on board to produce ‘style sheets’ to suggest what should be addressed (Interviewee XT). Comments from the subculturalists themselves about their outfits were then used within the Streetstyle exhibition.

The extent to which the power over knowledge was truly relinquished by the museum, can be questioned however. Whilst it should be recognised that the attempts made to draw from and listen to subculturalists themselves does represent a significant move by this major national museum, it should also be recognised that ultimately the control of that knowledge, passed over to and remained within the hands of curatorial staff and the museum itself. The acquired knowledges were made to fit existing knowledge structures: the representation of the subcultural knowledge was ultimately regulated by established curatorial and discipline knowledges, i.e. traditions of museum display (chronological layout, outfits displayed on mannequins), of interpretation (short, typed information panels relating to each outfit on display; including donors/loaner name and classification number), and so forth (see Chapter Seven).
Although the anonymous authoritative voice of the curator was punctuated with that of subculturalists themselves, the former was still present to structure the exhibition overall: the personal only broke through in the controlled instances of some museum interpretation texts that contained statements from participants. Museum staff ultimately decided what subcultures were important and which ones they represented. They decided what outfits to display and what to neglect. They decided who was given the right to speak and who remained silent.

The modernist museum thus reflects prevailing ways of knowing, but also helps to structure and legitimise them. Indeed, museums have been guilty of masking the mechanisms that serve to invest in their own legitimacy and that of dominant social codes, by presenting ‘knowledge’ as natural and given, and by controlling access to it (Pearce 1992;233). In functioning as an instrument of disciplinary society, the modern public museum controls the production and dissemination of knowledge. One means by which this was, and still is, achieved is by legitimising a distinction between the producers and consumers of knowledge. This division is realised spatially; the ‘hidden spaces of the museum, where knowledge was produced and organized in camera, and its public spaces, where knowledge was offered for passive consumption’(Bennett 1997).

In constructing a division between the space where knowledge is produced and that where knowledge consumed, a monolithic discourse dominated by an authoritative voice of the museum, is created (Bennett 1997;103). The museum thus makes claims to the status of knowledge from which the general public is excluded by;

‘palming off curatorial knowledge as legitimate and authoritative...by mystifying the source of knowledge, by failing to admit that knowledge is a social construct, offering it rather as ‘natural’ or ‘divine’, as something which is discovered rather than produced’ (Pearce 1992;235).

Thus even in an exhibition such as Streetstyle where participant knowledges informed the representation, no means were made available to recognise and incorporate the knowledges of the diverse audience that the exhibition attracted; many of which would have described themselves as ‘subculturalists’ and will have had personal knowledge and experience of the ‘street styles’ on show.

99 See Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge for a historical account of the ways museums have shaped and been shaped by ways of knowing in their contemporary contexts (Hooper-Greenhill 1992).
Located within the wider institutional context, control over the knowledge that formed the *Streetstyle* exhibition ultimately remained, visibly and intellectually, within the realm of the V&A: the relationship between participant knowledges, which are subjective, and the museums' wider claims to objectivity, remains a problematical one. As we shall examine in more detail in the next chapter, subcultural knowledges based on complex structures of authenticity and subcultural 'capital' (Muggleton 2000; Thornton 1995), were attributed the status of objective knowledge when represented within the context of the V&A.

Information about each subcultural style exhibited, in the first half of *Streetstyle*, was based on knowledge imparted by individuals. However, alternative or even conflicting perspectives to these 'versions' were not provided. Ultimately then, subjective knowledges were transformed into apparently objective knowledge by their presentation in an authoritarian manner within what remained invariably a traditional costume display.

The problem of representing subjective knowledge as authoritatively objective, is further exacerbated by the fact that curators generally do not supplement participant knowledge with theoretical research. In writing about the *Streetstyle* exhibition for example, Amy de la Haye only references *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* yet as we have seen, much of Hebdige's and the CCCS paradigm have been challenged as outdated. The curator of another exhibition which addressed subcultural identities also stated,

"I didn't go about reading text books. What I did do was I bought magazines which were sort of related to certain musical tastes or lifestyle or whatever and just sort of - I gained a bit of insight through them, really. Erm, but no, I didn't consult any academic works or go to any of the universities or colleges asking for their, appraisal of the current scenes or cultures or anything like that." (Interviewee LT; 22)

Thus unlike other discipline areas where exhibitions would be grounded in secondary and primary research, those that address subcultural subjects do not always engage in both. Museums have thus entered into a turbulent relationship with subjective knowledges where the latter is neither fully embraced and claims to authoritative knowledge fully relinquished by the museum, nor is it fully rejected and superseded by academic knowledge. This is particularly a problem when subjective knowledge is represented within the context of the museum as objective knowledge: given that such subjects are

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100 It should be noted that so far only one example of a museum curator actually contributing to academic knowledge on subcultures has been found: Linda Ballard of Ulster Folk and Transport Museum has researched and published work on Outlaw motor cycle clubs in Ireland (1997).
outside the boundaries of curatorial knowledge, the inevitable bias of subjective participant knowledges remains un-moderated.\(^{101}\)

We can see then that within major subcultural exhibitions, a problematic dialogue has been entered into with knowledge external to the museums. Within exhibitions that feature subcultural identities however, participants are often not consulted at all, yet the problematic of subjective knowledge guiding supposedly 'objective' representations still can be revealed. Often when subcultures are represented, it is because an individual member of staff has some existing knowledge, and therefore feels comfortable addressing this area. Interviewee LT indicated for example that they were able to undertake research and subsequently an exhibition, around indie subcultures in the locality because,

“\textit{I've always been fairly aware of what sort of lifestyles are attached to music so I've been able to draw on my own personal experiences and knowledge, I suppose...I knew something of some of them already because of my own sort of experience...It's, something I personally felt confident enough to go and start on straight away.}” (9 and 22)

Who and what gets represented can also depend on who staff know: Interviewee MI stated for example, “\textit{When it came to choosing people [outfits], I think that really depended on, sadly, who people knew.}” (6)

Given that material culture of a subcultural nature does not often reside within museum collections, when subcultural identities are included within exhibitions, the objects have had to be newly acquired. Often time and resources mitigate against such acquisitions being informed by primary research and curatorial staff formulate a characterisation of the identity they wish to represent, which they then actively acquire. The simplest way this is achieved is often through purchasing material. Though the guidance of shop assistants may be sought, invariably what is represented is an outsiders 'version' of a subcultural identity.

Subcultural identities have also been represented within museums on occasion, by other 'outsiders'. In the \textit{I love the 70s: I luv 2001} exhibition at New Walk Museum in Leicester, images of ‘Punk’ and ‘Hippy’ were depicted. Put together as part of a community project, by young people who were born long after these subcultures emerged, a stereotypical

\(^{101}\) This is not to say that subjective knowledge has no place within the context of museums, indeed it is this authors belief that museums must embrace subjective knowledge. However, presenting subjective knowledge
portrayal of these identities has been presented (Plate 1). Whilst the importance of this project for the young people must be acknowledged, it should also be recognised that individuals outside of the subcultures, have been given the opportunity to represent subcultures. Given that to my knowledge, Leicester City Museum Service has not represented subcultural identities before this instance, it is not insignificant to highlight the problematic of this; that the first acknowledgement of subcultural identities within this Service, has been undertaken by others who are alien to the subcultures themselves.

The authoritative claims that museums make through representation, can also be ‘wrong’, particularly where that representation has occurred without input from participants themselves. The Museum of London for example, in the Peopling London exhibition, under the heading ‘Is London a confident city?’, displayed two London tourist postcards. Described a ‘Postcards from London, 1980s and 1996’ the accompanying text stated ‘Punks first appeared on postcards in the early 1980s, joining red buses, guardsmen and black taxis as sights peculiar to London.’ (Plate 2). The identities of the individuals on the second postcard however, are actually Psychobilly, a distinct subculture in itself (although derived from Punk). Like the photographer of the postcard image, the museum had repeated a common misconception which identifies any elaborate sartorial subcultural style as ‘Punk’. Whilst this error has been regarded as insignificant (the museum itself has not altered the label though this researcher has informed it of the misattribution, and at conferences some professionals have questioned the pertinence of this instance of misattribution), it serves to highlight the lack of knowledge that museums have regarding the nuances of subcultural identifications. It also highlights the lack of significance that museums place on the views of subculturalists themselves: would the museum have been as ready to ignore the mistake if it had involved a misrepresentation of an ethnic or religious community for example?

If we move on now to consider the influence of prevailing structures of value, we can also identify that the modernist paradigm influences the representation of subcultures. We have seen how there has been a growth in the recognition of collecting and displaying popular culture as legitimate, and this has lead to the recognition of subcultural identities; Streetstyle for example lead the way for the discipline of costume to embrace subcultural dress. As Moore has argued however, the inclusion of popular culture is still not without
Plate 1: *I love the 70s: I luv the 2001* exhibition leaflet, New Walk Museum, Leicester
provisos, for ‘even social historians have tended to regard many aspects of popular culture as still too ‘spurious’ to feature prominently in their work.’ (1997;4).

Modernist values still structure representations as ‘art value’ ‘historical value’ and ‘age value’ are drawn upon as criteria to legitimate representation (Pearce 1992;194). As was revealed in Chapter Four, the majority of exhibitions devoted to subcultures were art based: Sound and Fury: the Art and Imagery of Heavy Metal, Bike Art, Art of the Harley, Brother’s Under the Skin (photographic), Spray-art (on graffiti art), Tattooing: Art, Soul, Skin (photographic). Alternatively they were based around subcultural styling, which again is dominated by the visual, Streetstyle for example.

Inclusion is thus justified by directing the focus of representation on the visual aspects of subcultural identities or the attribution of artistic merit. The above mentioned exhibitions all lay emphasis on the creativity and artistic merit of the subcultures addressed. Indeed Moore has made reference to the Bike Art exhibition’s publicity to illustrate how it recourses to ‘art’ as justification for inclusion:

“Bike Art presents the most outstanding examples of custom motorcycles. Bikes that feature exquisite paintwork, engraving and leatherwork. Works of art on two wheels…. We find examples of delicate crafts, so beautifully and lovingly created they wouldn’t look out of place in an art gallery.” (1997;79)

He quotes further, “It is in our view that the aesthetic quality of what is on show in this exhibition is of a very high order.”(Moore 1997;79). Even where the subject of tattooing was addressed, an attempt was made to stress tattooing as a respectable art form “a modern tattooist is a highly skilled artist, working under strictest conditions of hygiene and safety, producing stunning visual artwork of exquisite quality.”(Moore 1997;80). The tone of the piece and the repetition of words such as “exquisite”, and of “delicate” for example, assert the museums’ authority and assure that the subject is defined as ‘Art’. It ensures that the subject is legitimised as worthy of inclusion within the hallowed space of the museum. Moore however, argues that it should not be necessary to treat such subjects so reverentially by eluding to Art, as it should be recognised as a valid subject in its own
The *Streetstyle* exhibition similarly turned subcultural dress from spurious masterpieces into authentic masterpieces, through the interpretation of the subject from a decorative arts perspective. *Streetstyle* was not dedicated solely to subcultural identities, but rather was promoted as an examination of the manner in which subcultural styles have influenced high fashion. The inclusion of ‘streetstyle’ within the bastion of culture that is the V&A, was legitimised through an association with high fashion. Whilst this is not to ignore the significance of this inclusion and the positive move that the V&A took to be more representative within its collections, it does serve to highlight how modernist systems of value still regulate representations within museums.

Other museums also acknowledge the importance that is placed on visual and aesthetic attractiveness, if not artistic expression. Grampian Transport Museum for example, indicated that what gets represented within the museum depends on what the museum feels is visually inspiring and would capture the public’s imagination: thus a popular display on Mods and Rockers is included in the museum but it was felt that it would be unlikely that New Age Travellers would be addressed, as this area would not meet the aforementioned criteria (pers. com.).

In relation to structures of value it can also be identified that age is called upon to help legitimise inclusion. Though subcultural histories remain marginalised within museums, subcultural identities that can be located as historical, receive most attention. Research revealed that museums tend to address subcultural identities only once a period of ten years or so has passed. To an extent this can be accounted for on practical grounds; museums mainly passively collect subcultural material and so there is a time lag between when objects are used and when they are then discarded. However, this is also likened to the

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102 It is also worth noting that it misleading to describe all modern tattoo artists per se as ‘highly skilled’ for although it important to recognise that some tattooists are indeed artists and do produce stunning visual and original art work, a flick through any tattoo magazine or a visit to any local tattooist can equally reveal that there is a lot of unskilled and dire ‘art’ produced.

103 It is interesting to note that the high fashion garments were often displayed literally on a higher pedestal than the surrounding ‘street styles’.

104 It is telling to note however, that a curator of the exhibition has commented how they would have liked to have displayed the ‘street style’ behind glass, as is common practice for the rest of the museum, because of the amount of visitors that touched the garments. This was not carried out however because it would have been too expensive (Draper 1995; 10). Would expense have been an issue if it had been eighteenth century court dress or Dior on display?
value that is placed on age (even if in this instance it is a matter of decades rather than centuries).

Museum representations of subcultures thus tend to be focused on historically established subcultures, not emerging contemporary ones; as Chapter Four revealed, it is the ‘traditional’ subcultures, the Teds, Mods, Skinheads and Punks that get represented, not contemporary or dance based sub/clubcultures. The Great City! exhibition at Discovery Museum, Tyne & Wear for example, Mod and Hippy are represented in the 1960s section, and Punk is represented in the 1970s, but nothing subcultural is displayed after that, although the exhibition went up to the present day. Again, this can relate back to a lack of curatorial knowledge: a curator commented that their museums’ display, which addressed youth subcultures, but did not acknowledge contemporary sub/clubcultures, was because “I think it’s something that we probably don’t have enough knowledge of, to be honest with you.” (Interviewee CM;7)

Finally, with the modernist museum the tradition of picturing significant members of society was also established. The pedagogic role, particularly of portraits, was not only to recognise the achievements of certain individuals or groups, but also to provide concrete examples that could be admired and emulated (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). This practice is still identifiable today, even if those that are acknowledged as the good and worthy, are not the same as would have been recognised in the Victorian period. Music, media and sport ‘stars’ have become the new heroes of the postmodern era and they too have become canonised within museums. Individuals or musicians associated with subcultures, that have ‘made it big’, have also been recognised as their status legitimises their inclusion.

In Lifetimes at Croydon for example, the Punk graphic artist Jamie Reid and the ‘Punk’ musician Captain Sensible, have been recognised. Coventry Museum also has featured a small display on the Two Tone band The Specials. Celebrated within the mainstream, such individuals or groups are represented as their associated status legitimates inclusion. Examples of local people ‘made good’, they serve a pedagogic role for the local context.
Conclusion.

The structures of value and knowledge that serve to marginalise subcultures from being represented or ultimately shape representations when they do occur, ‘are informed by dominant codes of significance’ and the processes by which value and meanings are ascribed are hidden from the public gaze. As West argues then, ‘there is more than a suggestion of a lack of democracy’ in this. (1988;50)

Museums, in continuing to perpetuate a distinction between high and popular culture, legitimising their claims to authority and status, have been revealed as artificial constructions, institutions that serve to perpetuate dominance and inequalities. Indeed, museums remain ‘sites in which seductive totalizing mythologies of nation-state and Enlightenment rationality struggle against alternative classifications, and in which ‘high culture’ and ‘popular culture’ battle for legitimacy.’ (Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; 14)

Movements are being made towards redefining the definition of the canon of ‘high’ culture, and towards a recognition of ‘the need to redefine the subject matter of the museum to include the lives of the mass of the population, to reflect the ordinary as well as the extraordinary, popular culture alongside high culture.’ (Moore 1997;1) Where subcultures are represented however, this inclusion, often recourses to the systems of value established by the modernist paradigm. Museums remain tied in with claims to privilege: To collect the spurious, societies’ rubbish, would open museums up to a questioning of their worth.

Contemporary museums therefore, like their nineteenth century predecessors, continue to maintain their position of power by creating and maintaining the systems of value of the dominant elite. Museums have the ‘power of representation’ for the ‘public display of the collected objects naturalises the underpinning values and assumptions and gives them the character of inevitability and common sense.’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000a;12) Museum culture is not simply reflective but is productive: it emphasises particular ways of seeing the world, it defines possibilities and closes or opens up alternative perspectives.
CHAPTER SIX

The politics and pursuit of authenticity: who’s fooling who?

'As communication systems become more capable of manipulation, and simulation opens up possibilities of mass deception, so people will seek hard evidence and authority they can trust - and where will they find that authenticity? In museums.' (Spalding 1993)

Introduction.

The previous chapter examined the structures of power, knowledge and value that the modernist museum paradigm established. Here it was identified that structures of value in particular, are firmly located around a structuring axis of 'authenticity' and it was revealed that subcultural identities and histories have been marginalised because the authenticity of their value had been under question; taken as popular culture, they are disregarded as 'authentic' culture. Pearce and others have identified how objects come to be included in museum collections because they can be located within the authentic masterpiece / authentic artefact upper quadrants, but are denied access if they are considered spuriously inauthentic (Figure 22; 200). This interpretation of authentic is based on discourses such as Art History, where value is located in the unique, the aesthetic. Issues of authenticity contribute to the marginalisation of subcultures however, even if the cultural value of the subcultures is acknowledged. The modernist paradigm has thus served to establish a fundamental characteristic of museums as institutions: they deal in the 'authentic', the 'genuine', the 'real', not the 'fake' or 'spurious'.

As we have seen, in order for the museum to be an effective instrument in the production of a citizenry, in order for it to be a place for instruction and a civilising agent, it was essential that the museum functioned as an elevated cultural institution. This status was based on the acceptance that what was being shown was 'real': that the objects that the masses were exposed to, which would help reform and elevate their behaviour, were authentic, genuine, trustworthy and reliable and thus embodied objective knowledge that could be soaked up.
New technologies are forcing museums to reconsider their relationship with objects however. As the public becomes increasingly familiar with high quality graphic reproduction of images and virtual worlds new technologies have been seen by some as a threat to museums, in that they compete for the publics' leisure time and raise expectations by which the public judges the quality of reproductions that museums themselves produce. However, often such expectations have actually led to a strengthening in the belief that the role of museums is to collect, care for and display 'real' objects, and this has increasingly become regarded as a fundamental characteristic that makes museums unique. As Spaldings' quote suggests, when the institution of the museum itself is threatened, it is 'real' objects that are called upon to save the day.

That the 'authentic', the 'real' exists and that it is the preserve of museums, is often accepted without question by museum professionals and the general public alike. Postmodernist and post-structuralist theories have begun however, to challenge such central tenants of modernism. There has been a crisis in the validity of the concepts of authenticity and 'truth': if indeed we are, as Baudrillard has claimed, in a world of simulation and simulacra, can 'the real', 'the authentic' be still said to exist at all? Thus concerns about the threats posed by new technologies often fail to recognise that such issues are simply symptoms of a much more fundamental and problematic cause.

This chapter then, examines the sustainability of the premise of authenticity, so essential to the modernist paradigm. What exactly does the 'real' constitute? Can the apparent objectivity of museum decisions about authentic/inauthentic be questioned? In doing so it seeks to explore how the significance that museums place on the 'real' and the 'authentic' has served to marginalise subcultural identities and histories from museums. Indeed, subcultures can again serve to highlight flaws in the modernist museum paradigm: although subculturalists do indeed place much primacy on authenticity, and define their own identities and allegiance through construction of 'inauthentic others', what constitutes authentic identity is very much open to subjective interpretation.

As Chapter 2 revealed, recent subcultural theory has begun to question the extent to which stable, essentialist authentic identities can actually be said to exist for any given subcultural identity. This chapter then, explores the challenges presented to the modernist paradigm of museums if account is taken of recent subcultural theory which reveals that subcultural
affiliation is based on subjective, complex and sometimes contradictory conceptualisations of authenticity.

**Authenticity and value.**

An examination of the term ‘authentic’ reveals that it is a politically loaded term. In the dictionary sense it refers to something which is ‘genuine’, something that has an undisputed origin. Associated meanings also include ‘reliable’ and ‘trustworthy’. The term ‘authentic’ has been given a more specific and value laden meaning within the disciplines of Art, Art History and Museology; here traditionally associated with the unique, the skilled, the aesthetic. However, it is often used a third way, as a synonym for ‘real’. It is used to refer to an objects materiality for example, so that an objects material existence is evidence of its’ ‘authenticity’. The latter two definitions thus pervert the meaning of ‘authenticity’ in its truest sense which implies a statement of knowledge, a claim. Museums are thus deeply embroiled in the politics of ‘authenticity’, and play their part in establishing and perpetuating value judgements through its usage. Indeed, the modernist museum has based its legitimacy on claims to this word – a word closely linked etymologically to ‘author(ship)’ and ‘authority’, further serves to reinforce its political sense.

It is possible to draw a parallel between the acceptance of subcultures by academia and by museums, in relation to notions of authenticity. The representation of subcultures within the academic and museum worlds required, in both areas, challenges to traditional notions of what constituted ‘culture’. In both, the emergence of an acknowledgement of subcultures was tied into wider efforts to legitimate popular culture as an acceptable subject; though arguably acceptance came earlier in academia, the nineteen seventies, than it did to museums, nineteen eighties. Authenticity played a fundamental part in this battle for legitimacy. To justify subcultures as a worthy topic for consideration in academia and museums, claims to cultural authenticity needed substantiating, and as we saw in the last chapter, notions of authenticity were based on a definition of ‘authenticity’ loaded with value judgements. Representations of subcultures in museums, as was the case in the work of CCCS, are inherently embedded in modernist value systems.
Let us consider a little further this definition of cultural authenticity. As we examined in the last chapter, when subcultures have been represented their inclusion has often been justified by their authentication as embodying genuine artistic merit or their genuineness as historical objects of social history. Drawing on Pearce, Kevin Moore plots the possible movements of a black plastic rubbish bag for example (Figure 23).

Illustrating how an object becomes worthy of inclusion within a museum when it can be interpreted as ‘authentic masterpiece’ or ‘authentic artefact’, as ‘art’ or ‘history’, he reveals the grounds on which subcultural material culture often gains entry into museums. Such a mass produced object is accepted if customised by a Punk in the seventies: saved as a souvenir, it could then be displayed as an ‘authentic masterpiece’ in for example, an exhibition such as *Streetstyle* at the V&A, where the creativity expressed in the Punk’s customisation of the rubbish bag becomes of primary significance to its inclusion in a decorative arts museum. It could also be represented in a social history display on youth culture, however here its authenticity would lie in establishing that it was an original artefact worn by a Punk.

![Diagram](Figure 23. (Moore 1997;74))
Moore takes issue with the fact that popular cultural objects often have to move into the top half of the structural plot of value before their inclusion in a museum is regarded as justifiable;

'The main problem with both social history and art displays is that they do not take the material culture on its own terms: it has to be authenticated in some way to justify bringing it into the gallery, to bring it above the horizontal axis of the plot.' (1997;82)

We thus see the dominance of the modernist paradigm operating here, for even when changes are made to traditional structures of value, their dominance is never fully relinquished. Though it may appear that popular culture had been accepted within the hallowed grounds of the museum, it enters with provisos.

Subcultural identities and the associated material can also be in conflict with the modernist paradigm's conventions around value and representation that support the museum's role as disciplinary apparatus. The Victorian public was taught basic principles of citizenry through the creation of clean, ordered spaces. This tradition for an ordered display of artefacts that are complete, clean and aesthetically pleasing, continues today. Objects are acquired and exhibited in their best state, and every attempt is made to halt the ageing process of artefacts. Indeed, with increasing storage space shortages, objects are only taken in if they are of suitable condition to be displayed. Thus with the majority of museum artefacts, signs of wear and tear do not contribute to an object's authenticity: the patina is cleaned off, cracks are filled in and tears mended.

With material culture of a subcultural nature, often the opposite is true however. Signs of the objects previous life are taken to be important signifiers of authenticity, for example sweat and dirt, bike oil, festival mud, all authenticate the object as 'the real thing' (Plate 3). Museum stores however, are sterile clean places designed to keep objects in permanent stasis and thus clothes covered in petrol, oil, sweat and so forth, pose a potential conservation nightmare. A paradoxical problem can lead to subcultural material being marginalised from permanent collections; the very signs of its authenticity preclude its long term protection. It can also be seen as a reason that subcultural material is excluded from museum representations; that the very signs which are taken to be evidence of subcultural authenticity preclude inclusion as they sit uncomfortably amongst the more ordered and uncontaminated material evidence. As Interviewee LT commented;
“quite a lot of the things that are immediately identifiable with personal lifestyle are consumables, you know, they're throw away, or they're worn to destruction...that would pose us problems if somebody came with an absolutely knackered pair of DMs, you know, would we accept them because they're in such a bad state?...there's all sorts of curatorial issues that could come into play at that point” (13)

It is also interesting and revealing to examine how some museums, like CCCS theorists, construct a value laden polarity between subcultural authenticity and inauthentic mass market and culture. In Chapter Two, an explanation of the CCCS’s presumptions revealed that in academia this approach could be seen as stemming from amongst other things, the academic legacy of the Frankfurt School’s Marxist vision of mass society that conceived of ‘authentic’ culture devalued by the process of capitalist commodification: embodying an ‘underlying contempt for ‘mass culture’(Clarke, 1981;90). Subcultural theorists were committed to revealing the ‘authenticity’ of the subjects under their study - Teds, Mods, Rockers, Skinheads and so forth, were all examples of authentic subcultures whereas styles that were of little interest were those that were deemed to be ‘manufactured’, for example, Glamrock. The origins of subcultures were thus romanticised and divorced from the world of the market, created as ‘folk’ expressions from the street rather than the results of commercial exploitation.

Museums themselves have also undertaken a denial of their position within the capitalist system. Phillips argues in relation to art museums, but it is of relevance to museums in general, that although museums purport to only validate the spiritual dimensions of artefacts, ignoring if possible the previous associations with money and the market place that an artefact may have had in its life, museums are not ‘exchange-free zones’ and are often ‘intimately involved in setting market values’. Taboo of association of museum with market and money, has lead to notions of authenticity being constructed as higher than the sordid concerns of the market and consumption. Displays have thus been constructed as ‘exchange-free zones, for the re-presentation of the authentic and the pure’. (Phillips 1997;7)

If we examine the major exhibitions that have addressed subcultures, we see that they all define subcultural authenticity through a separation of subcultures from the market place; from the everyday, mass produced and mundane commodities. As Hebdige has argued, subcultural consumption is regarded as consumption at its most discriminating because it is
lifted above the market by the activities of bricolage and customisation. Thus although for example, *The Art of the Harley* exhibition was based on a mass produced product, the Harley Davidson motorbike, the bikes on show were legitimated as authentic culture, and thus worthy of representation in the Barbican, because in terms of Pearce’s graph of value, they moved from being spuriously inauthentic to authentic culture by subcultural creative intervention, i.e. through the act of customisation. As the cover of the exhibition’s gallery guide states; “A stock Harley-Davidson is a motorcycle waiting to be turned into a two-wheeled, rolling work of art.” Their status as ‘Art’ was also reinforced through the manner in which they were displayed (see Plate 4).

Moore also suggests how both the *Streetstyle* and *Bike Art* exhibitions defined popular culture as something created rather than imposed, and thus inherently as expressions divorced from the market place. The former exhibition emphasised the impact of street fashion on high fashion, of the creativity of authentic subcultural influence on the commodity world of the fashion industry. This was represented as a one way process however, for the exhibition did not address in any detail for example, the fashion industries’ commercialisation of ‘streetstyle’ to sell to the mass market, nor did it examine the manner in which styles appropriated by the mainstream then inform and get reincorporated back into subcultures. *Bike Art* similarly defined the customisation of bikes and tattooing, as expressions of individual creativity, rather than something whose choices are structured by the examples set in the media and market place; for example, how they were influenced by images in glossy magazines or limited to the range of mass produced goods available to be customised.

Thus like CCCS, museums have placed great emphasis ‘on the “relative autonomy” of youth from the market in order to stress the creativity, “art” and “culture” of the subcultures evident in their ability to borrow and transform “everyday objects” or “objects of fashion” into a coded style.’ (Clarke,1981;5). Museums have not explored the way subcultures are invariably created by and through the market and the media. They attempt to represent a pure, authentic subculture but as Muggleton has argued;

‘The all-encompassing power of the contemporary mass media has ensured that there can no longer be a sanctuary for the original, ‘pure’, creative moment of subcultural innovation which preceded the onset of the contaminating processes of commercialization, commodification and diffusion.’ (1997;196)
Streetstyle is inextricably associated with Britain and while the V&A’s streetstyle collection has some international features, the focus is inevitably upon Britain and its cultural diversity. The Museum’s policy for acquiring twentieth-century dress has always emphasized design that leads. This has traditionally been haute couture; however, in recognition of its significance, Textiles and Dress Collection is now actively collecting streetstyle.

The Collection of Prints, Drawings and Paintings has been collecting images that portray this subject. In addition to these obvious artistic merits, photographs, drawings, posters, record covers and other ephemera provide crucial contextual information about streetstyle.

Twentieth-century fashion is displayed in the Dress Collection on the ground floor of the Museum in Room 40. Photographs can be seen in the Print Room on Level 5 of the Henry Cole Wing.

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Plate 3: Mud left on a New Age Traveller’s boots serving to authenticate their subcultural status
Plate 4: The Barbican displays the 'Art' of the Harley
The major exhibitions that focus on subcultures, thus often perpetuate the myth of subcultural creativity as separate from 'the mainstream' rather than recognising that identities are created through negotiation with it.

This myth is also perpetuated through the continued recourse to the CCCS paradigm which located subcultures firmly within the context of 'the street'. As Peter York has argued,

'The notion of "the street", with all its associations of authenticity, is deeply attractive to middle-class people of a certain type with a certain kind of education, but rather less interesting both to the people who are there and don't want to be, and to large groups of ordinary, self-accepting middle-class youth.' (1994)

The *Streetstyle* exhibition is the most obvious utilisation of the concept, where a museum locates 'grass-roots' subcultural authenticity through the metaphor of 'the street'.

To further disassociate themselves from the market, we see that such major exhibitions also attempt to create authenticity in their representation of subcultures by placing emphasis on the acquisition of authentic objects from the subcultural participants themselves: 'real clothes' worn by 'real people' (Haye and Dingwall 1996:1). Much effort is put into sourcing such authentic artefacts from participants rather than purchasing objects from shops. What is represented stands as authentic masterpiece or authentic artefact as it is not some historyless commodity, but rather it has a life history of subcultural involvement: it was actually worn or used by a subculturalist.

That museums locate subcultural authenticity as something separate to 'the mainstream' does not just emanate from the modernist paradigm's established systems of value. It also is created from the value systems that the subculturalists themselves create and perpetuate. McRobbie notes for example, that the subcultures themselves are often at pains to disavow the role money played in commodity exchange within subcultures (1980:36). Participants have a vested interest in perpetuating the myth of subcultural style as a 'collective creative impulse'. Thus when museums draw on subcultural participation to create their representations, their assumptions about subcultural authenticity are supported by subcultures themselves.

Smaller initiatives however, have been less likely to locate subcultural authenticity in the former's distinction between mainstream and market place. Here subcultures are often featured as part of a more permanent and general social history display on popular culture.
in which mass produced commodities have gained more of an acceptance. Here subcultures are more likely to be represented as part of general youth culture rather than expressions distinct from it. The manner in which such displays are also created reflects this, as objects are more likely to be bought by a curator from a shop than acquired from the participants themselves. For example,

NC: “And how would you go about making connections and sourcing material?”
MI: “Well I think I would just walk into the shops as a starting point.” (Interviewee MI;8)

As we have seen for example, most of the subcultural material on display in Breaking Away exhibition was bought, and what got represented was partly due to “what was available” (Interviewee ++ ;13).

This more limited concern for the authentic located in used artefacts, thus stems in part from practical limitations (staff time to do research, locate possible donors etc.) as resorting to purchasing material enables representations that would otherwise not occur. It also reflects an attitude which does not locate subcultural authenticity within a creative distance from the market and ‘the mainstream: That the lack of authentic provenance, i.e. an object that has actually been utilised within a subculture, is seen as unproblematic illustrates the belief in the existence of essentialist identities. Thus it is acceptable that a curator can be advised on what a Punk, Mod, Skinhead would wear, by an ‘informed’ source (i.e. a shop assistant) because both they, and the source, believe that an essentialist identity exists to be recreated. Here notions of authenticity are particularly paradoxical: authenticity is located here within the genuineness of an item to its adherence to a stereotypical or essentialist subcultural identity not in its genuineness as an object used by a subculturalist. An ambiguity in relation to how museums conceive and realise subcultural authenticity within representations is thus identifiable.

**Authenticity located in material culture.**

The modernist museum as we have seen, relied on objects to impart the knowledge and meanings that were believed to be embodied within them. Traditional approaches to exhibitions have therefore put the artefact at the centre of the presentation, and the historical validity of an exhibition is considered undermined if the core of authentic
artefacts is not extensive (Crew and Sims 1991,168). Object-driven exhibitions are therefore controlled by the artefacts available; a particular subject or issue will only be represented if suitable objects are available as support. Museums thus have traditionally placed the display of objects over other means of representation, and exhibitions have been object rather than experience or ideas lead.

This has meant that where material does not (appear) to exist, identities and histories go ignored. Such a reason can be identified behind the lack of representation of subcultures within museums. Although when presenting this research at conferences, a positive response of agreement that more should be done to document subcultures was generally received, even in such sympathetic climates, two responses were commonly made by curators to account for the continuing marginalisation of such histories and identities within museums: that relevant material culture did not exist to be collected and that the material evidence did not exist within museum collections, and thus representations could not be made.

These attitudes were also borne out in responses to the questionnaire. Respondents who had not represented subcultures indicated lack of material evidence as a reason: “Collecting policy for social history concentrates on Northeast dominant lifestyles. The groups you are interested in have, in this area, so far left little artefactual evidence.” (medium local authority museum); “Small country areas such as this have little evident subcultural structure to provide material for collection.” (small independent museum); “We have never been offered any subcultural material” (small local authority museum).

In a tradition where the availability of authentic artefacts has governed what and how histories are represented (Crew and Sims 1991), and objects remain the primary source of authority, subcultural identities and histories, like other groups such as women (Porter 1988), are marginalised because of this lack of relevant readily available material culture.

The lack of material evidence as a reason for marginalisation, becomes a self-perpetuating problematic for museums. Material relating to subcultures is often ephemeral in nature and, given as we established in the last chapter, museums do not have an existing knowledge base about this area, collecting material invariably requires initial research and is a lengthy process; the research and collecting of objects for the Streetstyle exhibition took around
three years to complete, and this was undertaken by two staff from the costume department working on the project part-time, with the help of over six ‘specialist advisers’. Responses such as “We are not averse to collecting in this area. What precludes is lack of time collecting in these somewhat hidden groups.” (small local authority museum), indicate the presence of such problems even where the need to address subcultures is recognised.

Investment in such research and the acquisition of material generally often only occurs then, when a requisite pool of suitable authentic artefacts is required for an exhibition.\textsuperscript{105} The acquisition of material culture relating to subcultures thus often only occurs when a museum has the resources to undertake an exhibition. Interviewee KC indicated that their museum was not strong on systematic collecting and that one of the only ways that subjects were addressed was through an exhibition; “the .... exhibition would kind of force you to go out and find what’s there, which is not ideal. I mean obviously you miss a lot in the meanwhile.” (15)

The emphasis on representation through material evidence also assumes that this is the main medium through which identity and culture are expressed. This approach however offers a very limited understanding of the means through which subcultural identities are constructed. It should also be recognised that some subcultures do not construct their identities through material culture at all; the virtual subcultures that Bassett has described for example (1997). For others, such as the Riot Girrl subculture, a sense of ‘community’ is constructed not through tangible sartorial signifiers: participants do not necessarily ever meet in a collective space but the geographically dispersed Riot Girrl ‘network’ is maintained, in material terms through fanzines, but equally, in virtual terms, through the internet (Leonard 1998). Within the research for this thesis not one representation of Riot Girrl was discovered within a British museum. Similarly, less visible subcultures/clubcultur ed such as those orientated around dance music, are not addressed within museums: their sartorial signifiers of subcultural status being more subtle.

An object centred approach within museums not only makes huge assumptions about the means through which identities are formed, and contributes to the marginalisation of subcultures, but also governs, and limits, the representation of subcultures when they do

\textsuperscript{105} And in such collecting through exhibition initiatives, subcultures often have a low priority: “Collecting usually reflects the nature of the exhibitions which tend to pursue mainstream issues” (pers.com. Interviewee NA).
occur. Where small scale representations have been made, invariably what is presented are subcultural identities reduced down to essentialist characteristics that are codified through a recourse to, what become, the same signifying objects. Stereotyped associations between subcultures and objects are made, and an object or limited selection of objects are taken to 'stand for' a subcultural identity. General text in the Fashion Works exhibition for example, stated; “Punk started way back in 1976. Ripped clothes, dyed spiked hair, tattoos, and safety pins in clothes and flesh all signal the most outrageous tribe on the streets.” Costume is a particular popular means through which subcultural identities are represented; an item of clothing becomes a signifier of a whole identity, so that the drape jacket has become a symbol of the Teddy Boy for example, the fish-tail parka coat symbolic of Mod, bleached jeans of Skinhead and the studded leather jacket of Punk.

This approach is particularly identifiable where representation of subcultural identities is part of a wider, general exhibition on a particular decade for example. In the Rock Around the Clock: A Nostalgic Look at the 50s exhibition at the Museum of Somerset, a Teddy Boy costume was included in the section on teenagers. Similarly in the same museum's 1970s: The Decade that Bridged Flower Power and Thatcherism, a ‘flower power’ and a punk costume were included: the former was included to represent the Hippy movement and the latter to represent “issues of resistance and rebellion” (pers.com). A particular outfit or costume then, becomes symbolic of a whole subculture; its identity, history, ideology and so forth.

Similarly, in exhibitions that address general subjects such as body adornment, the diversity of people who are pierced and tattooed can get reduced to a selection of tangible objects. In the National Portrait Galleries’ exhibition The Pursuit of Beauty for example, the current popularity for tattooing and piercing was represented by the display of a tattoo gun and piercing jewellery. Absent was an exploration or real acknowledgement of the diversity of the people that choose to get tattooed or pierced, the different motivations behind them getting tattooed/pierced, the different levels of commitment they have, the diversity of decoration or modification that they have done and so forth. In being reduced to an object, the tattooing, piercing and body modification subcultures (see Vale and Juno 1989), often remain invisible as neither their lifestyles, identities and histories are recognised, nor are the differences and similarities between these subcultures and the
general members of the public who may have a tattoo or body piercing but never affiliate themselves with those subcultures.

As limited space is generally afforded subcultures within exhibitions, real insight into subcultural identities and histories therefore remains unexplored. Within a whole fashion gallery for example, the representation of subcultural identities can be reduced to one or two outfits (see for example the Tribes! case at Fashion Works)\textsuperscript{106}. Further more, the associated interpretation is often limited and does not account for the diversity and complexity of the identities on show, nor acknowledge the myriad of subcultural identities that could have been chosen.

Where an exhibition is devoted to a subcultural identity, the greater space available allows a more in-depth exploration to be represented. \textit{Sound & Fury} for example, had sections on: the history and iconography of Heavy Metal imagery, the influences on which the imagery draws, on guitars, performance and fans, bike culture, tattoos, jewellery and piercing, the media, and a social and moral context. As has already been discussed however, there is a tendency for these more major exhibitions to emphasise the visual and aesthetic aspects of subcultural identities. Such exhibitions still reduce subcultures therefore to the tangible evidence of their identities- the clothes, the record covers, the posters, the customised bikes and so forth- and perpetuate the belief that museums can represent ‘authentic’ culture through the representation of material evidence.

Stuart Hall rejects the possibility of identifying subcultures simply by their objects and possessions. He argues that it is not simply objects that make a subculture, but rather the activity of stylisation (Hall and Jefferson 1996;54). He takes issue with, for example, common journalistic usage where ‘instant stereotyped association’ is made between objects and subcultural groups, arguing that visibility through objects does not make a style. It is the ‘activity of stylisation’ that is important; it is ‘the active organisation of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce an organised group-identity’. (Hall and Jefferson 1996;54)

\textsuperscript{106} Even here where the display title ‘Tribes!’ would indicate subcultural representation, only two of the four outfits on display could be considered subcultural i.e. the Crustie and the Goth; also included was a young male ‘Asian’ outfit and a ‘Byker Grove’ outfit.
Exhibitions such as Sound & Fury have begun to address this and have begun to present a more complete picture of the subcultural identities they address. However, for the majority of representations of subcultures, subcultural identities remain understood in terms of an amalgamation of objects; that subcultural authenticities and expressions are formulated and negotiated through inner feelings, musical tastes, performance, argot and so forth, remains invisible. Indeed Moore, in examining Bike Art and Streetstyle, concluded that these attempts to address subcultures resulted in 'slightly soulless' exhibitions. He suggests that within these exhibitions the creators and consumers of the material culture on display, were silent. Although Bike Art claimed to address lifestyle, 'we learnt nothing of the lifestyle of each subculture, the motivation for participating or even how the clothes related to other aspects, such as the music and the drugs.'(Moore 1997;81) In the authenticity-as-art approach concentration is on the objects which become divorced from the living culture that produced them (Moore 1997;79). That the material culture is brought to life through personal stories has been acknowledged to a very limited extent in relation to subcultural identities and histories. As one interviewee recognised,

"It's usually more interesting to get them talking about the stuff, because often the stuff itself means very little, but to have them talk about their relationship with it and how it was created and what a particular blood stain means. Is far more important, because the collections are about people. That's often missed. (Interviewee FF;4)

Sims and Crew argue that museum exhibitions should be ideas-lead not object-lead and that it is acceptable to use substitutes when an object of exact provenance is not available: the object thus stands as a representative type (Crew and Sims 1991;171). Whilst this approach is obviously appealing because of its convenience, it does become potentially problematic when dealing with subcultures because subcultural authenticity is so subjective: there exists a fine line between the stereotype and representativeness of certain styles and tastes.

Whilst within the next chapter we shall explore in more detail how the representational practices established within the modernist paradigm, serve to restrict a more fuller representation of subcultural identities, it is sufficient to state here then, that subcultural authenticity conceived of in material cultural terms, has been represented in a limited manner within the context of museums. It may appear that it is practicalities that impose limitations and govern representations, so for example, it has been difficult for museums to
use sound because the openness of spaces can mean that sounds bleed from one gallery into another. At Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood this led to the sound being turned off on a video showing of subcultural activity. However, what fundamentally constricts museum representations are the inherited representational practices themselves that are perpetuated without question.

**Authenticity defined by essentialist identities.**

We have seen how an inherited preoccupation with material culture, and representational practices that locate authenticity in the presentation of ‘real’ objects, has led to the marginalisation of subcultures through the absence of readily available relevant material. It leads us to question what is meant by ‘authentic artefacts’? Are curators justified in their claims that the lack of readily available appropriate material has mitigated against subcultural representation? Or is it that in their search for ‘authenticity’, they have been blinded to the possibilities and potential wealth within existing collections and outside of them?

The research revealed that marginalisation is in part due to the failure of museums to have recognised that there exists an infinite amount of material culture that can be interpreted from a subcultural perspective (see Appendix 7) and their inability to have identified relevant material existing *within* collections. This is in turn, in part due to curatorial preconceptions about subcultural authenticity.

Research revealed that where the absence of relevant material was given as a reason for marginalisation, curators sometimes had set ideas of what subcultural authenticity consisted of, and this invariably revealed an essentialist understanding of identity. For example, a curator of an important costume collection whilst showing Punk outfits from the collection to this researcher, stated that the items would probably never go on show in the museum as they were not considered to be examples of “real Punk” (Interviewee EJ). The outfits were actually very good examples of the early wave of Punk which embraced a DIY ethic and defaced everyday objects such as school uniforms (Plates 5 & 6). Throughout the research for this thesis, the author found similar evidence of early Punk to be limited within museum collections, yet their relevance was not recognised by the
curator. Because the outfits did not fit the stereotype of a mohawked, leather jacket wearing, second generation Punk that has become iconic of ‘Punk’ per se (see Plate7), the authenticity of the collected material was thus questioned, its validity doubted and its exhibition unlikely to ever occur.\textsuperscript{107}

Thus where limited curatorial knowledge of the subject prevails, authenticity can be based on prevailing stereotypical assumptions of essentialist identities. A narrow definition of subcultural authenticity leads therefore to subcultural marginalisation as everything that does not fit that narrow perception of authenticity, is ignored.

Although museum representations have not necessarily been informed directly by CCCS theories, their essentialist assumptions do reflect those of CCCS characterisation of subcultures. Subcultural representations when they do occur in museums rarely make any significant moves to challenge the paradigm of subcultures as white, male, working class, heterosexual, spectacular, defined as youth and based in leisure. Similarly to CCCS, who confidently reported the sartorial signifiers of subcultural identities, museums also often provide what are essentially definitive accounts of what subcultures look like. The ‘Tribes!’ display case in the \textit{Fashion Works} exhibition for example (Plate 8), stated;

“Goth outfit, 1980s.
Goths are influenced by classic horror writers such as Bram Stoker and Mary Shelly, and the music by bands such as Bauhaus and The Sisters of Mercy. The occult and death fascinate them, and influences their style and colour of clothes. Their clothes and fabrics reflect an earlier age – the mediaeval or the eighteenth century” (exhibition text)

Similarly for the other subcultural outfit on display here, generalising statements such as “German ex-paratrooper’s boots are standard wear for Crusties, and New Age Travellers” were written (exhibition text).

This can occur even where involvement of the participants themselves has occurred, stemming from a willingness of some subculturalists to define themselves in an iconic sense. See for example the ‘Iconographic encyclopaedia’ text panel of \textit{Sound ‘n’ Fury} exhibition which provides an alphabetical guide to key icons in the Heavy Metal subculture; “Bike - frequently celebrated as the iron steed of the urban warrior” or “Skull

\textsuperscript{107} The curators doubt towards the outfits authenticities was particularly perplexing given that they were accompanied by contextual evidence: comments from the local girls to which they belonged and photographs of them wearing the outfits.
- ubiquitous symbol of death. Hard to find a heavy metal album cover without one.” (Plate 9) This exhibition however, is notable, for whilst it does explore the symbols around which this particular subcultural identity is based, it does not reduce that subculture to stereotypical icons. Text such as “It is worth noting that the breakaway heavy metal movements – Thrash, Grunge and so on – distance themselves from ‘traditional’ heavy metal by deliberately rejecting the conventions of heavy metal art.”, recognises this.

In assuming the existence of essentialist identities, museums often fail to explore the complexities of subcultural authenticity. They fail to address the hierarchies that operate within subcultures. They can also fail to recognise and thus acknowledge, the different levels of commitment that can exist with any given identity. Interpretation rarely indicates for example, whether the identity on show can be considered associated with those participants that would consider themselves ‘hardcore’ members, or those that have a ‘weekend’ affiliation. Interpretation such as “worn by Paula Smart as a ‘Saturday Goth’-someone who just dresses-up for going out to gigs or clubs.” (exhibition text), is an exception rather than the rule.

Museum representations also confer with, rather than challenge other essentialist assumptions of the CCCS subcultural model. Whilst the representation of gender is more balanced than CCCS and female involvement in subcultures has been represented in museums, there is a tendency to still define subculture in terms of youthful rebellion, and therefore perpetuate gender assumptions through representations. The majority of the major exhibitions which have focused on subcultures, have been instigated by male curators, and focus on what have traditionally been categorised as masculine areas: bikes, tattooing, rock music.

Museums however, to a much lesser degree have challenged assumptions that present subcultures as white and heterosexual. With the exception of the Streetstyle exhibition, research has revealed hardly any evidence that Black and Asian based subcultures are represented within museums. Examples that have been discovered include Rasta clothes within the ‘Movements’ case in the Breaking Away section at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, an exhibition on Pirate Radio at Bruce Castle, Haringay, and a rap workshop held at the Museum of London. Where are however, the representations of the diverse range of Black, and Asian, music orientated subcultures such as Hip-Hop, Rap, Jungle,
Ragga and Bangra? The rich music-cultural heritage of British Black and Asian subcultures generally remains invisible, and inaudible.

That Black culture in particular has had a significant influence on traditional British subcultures often also goes unacknowledged. Even where one finds representation, interpretation is not always provided. At Stoke on Trent’s Potteries Museum for example, ‘the ‘70s and ‘80s’ section of You’re History: The Look of a Lifetime, contains a photograph of a black Skinhead. Hardly visible on the back wall of a case (Plate 10), no information is readily available to acknowledge who this person is, what it meant to be a black skinhead at that period, and so forth.

Also in reference to sexuality, the inherent implication behind representations is that the subcultures are heterosexual. Defined as icons of youthful rebellion, museums like subcultural theorists, fail to explore how sexuality is negotiated within and through subcultural identities. To my knowledge, only the Streetstyle exhibition has acknowledged the existence of gay Skinheads for example.

Moore has also drawn attention to the issue of regional variations of subcultural expression with any given identity. He suggests that a weakness of the Streetstyle exhibition was that it did not explore the regional specificity’s in subcultures (1997;81). This has been the general trend in subcultural representation where subcultures have been included as part of an exhibition on a decade for example. The V&A may be somewhat excused, for it is a national museum, however where subcultural identities are represented in a local context, the effort is not always made to identify the extent to which that identity was locally negotiated. Exceptions are made when a museum addresses subcultures because they recognise them as significant to the local area: Reading Museum Service has documented the Reading Festival for example.

Particularly within smaller initiatives then, often when subcultures get represented it is a generic idea of subcultures that is given. Certain periods of subcultural history are commonly focused on and represented in a stereotypical manner. As subcultures are commonly associated with rebellion for example, this tends to get pared down to symbolic but vague events or associations; in particular, fighting or rivalry between subcultures is popular. So for example, museums far away from such events, as in the following case –
Plate 5: 1970s Punk shirt (front)

Plate 6: 1970s Punk shirt (back)
Plate 7: Examples of iconic 1980s Punk styling
Plate 8: 'Tribes!' display in the *Fashion Works* exhibition,
The Discovery Museum, Newcastle
ICONOGRAPHIC ENCYCLOPAEDIA

Plate 9: ‘Iconographic encyclopaedia’ text panel from the Sound & Fury exhibition
Plate 10: Photograph of a black Skinhead just visible within the ‘70s and ‘80s section of You’re History: The Look of a Lifetime, Stoke on Trent’s Potteries Museum
the North of England, will state for example “we had a very hard time getting evidence of...the fights you used to get down in Brighton between the punks and the skinheads” (Interviewee NA; 4).

Similarly, clichéd associations have been perpetuated between subcultures, so for example Mods have become perpetually linked to their supposed arch rivals, Rockers, as the following responses show: “Several items relating to Mods & Rockers” (large local authority museum), “[artefacts from] the ‘Mods + Rockers’ period” (small independent transport museum) and “we would dearly have loved to have something Mods and Rockers” (Interviewee CM; 13) Whilst it should not be denied that Mods and Rockers do have an interconnected history and that fights between them did happen at south-coast resorts, this should not be the only part of their long and diverse histories to get represented. One should also question their relevance to local history displays geographically distant from such events and lacking in evidence of local participation in them.

Whose truth? The challenges of subjective authenticities.

Museums are not the universal and impartial institutions that the profession would like to believe them to be. The information imparted within museum representations for example, is the result of numerous decision making processes, however the absence of a curatorial voice, hides this fact; hides that until recently, who was allowed to speak was tightly controlled. Though museums are opening up to other voices, the anonymous authority of the museum still does dominate, governing moves towards a democratisation of the power to tell.

In all the exhibitions which represented subcultures that this researcher identified, the actual voices of subculturalists themselves were rarely heard. The anonymous authority of museums imparted information about identities and cultures, of which museums are not a part, to others. Similarly, whilst subculturalists were consulted in relation to most of the major subcultural exhibitions, it was the museums who decided ultimately what went on show and how those subcultures were portrayed. For the majority of the smaller exhibitions and displays that subcultures were featured within however, what was
represented was decided by what were essentially subjective authenticities that curators themselves created.

Research for this thesis revealed that when museums engage in initiatives to represent subcultures, what gets represented is most often not the result of systematic and selective collecting initiatives, nor the result of any systematic research of theoretical resources. Though curatorial profiles may not be conducive to collecting and representing subcultures, a tendency exists for curators to draw from their own limited knowledge base (normally constructed through the media) or those of colleagues or friends. Representations are often informed therefore by ad hoc personal contacts or assumed knowledges: sometimes staff who 'once were' subcultural, have been relied upon for example, to donate items or advise on their acquisition. Thus, where systematic consultation of participants has not taken place, museum representations of subcultures become ultimately dependant upon subjective decisions by 'outsiders'.

Interviewee ** indicated the ad hoc manner behind the section of identities to be included in a display case 'Tribes!' for example; they have a 'Crusty' outfit on display because "we put [it] together, because I had a museum assistant who had been a Crusty at one stage so she said, oh yes I'll do this." (1) The interviewee also continued elsewhere in the interview, "When it came to choosing people [for the Tribes! case], I think that really it depended on, sadly, who people knew" (6). It seems that a systematic effort to collect subcultural material, and for that material to be acquired from individuals participating in subcultures, only occurs as part of a major exhibition, as was the case for the Streetstyle and Sound & Fury exhibitions for example. Smaller initiatives rely on obtaining material that is easily accessible.

An inevitable bias of representation occurs therefore, as often what gets represented is the results of chance and subjective decisions rather than any focused effort. This can result in stereotypical representations of subcultural identities and subcultural authenticity, for as it has been discussed above, representations unsubstantiated by systematic research often get defined in terms of essentialist understandings of identity, being pared down to stereotypical cultural icons. Here, the only authenticity that can be identified is that of the curator, of what they perceived subcultures to be about- not necessarily of any authenticity which has basis in what participants really wear, believe in and so on.

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Thus what often gets represented within museums is an individual’s interpretation of a subcultural identity (a curator’s, an individual who ‘once was a...’) that is presented as a generic identity. Even when items have been obtained from sources closer to subcultures themselves, such as from shops, and museums solicit advice on what would be ‘representative’, a subjective view is invariably given. Although the Rasta material on display in the Museum of Childhood for example, was bought from a local stall-holder who was “particularly anxious that...we had a range of stuff and he got all sorts of stuff out to show us...” (Interviewee ++;20), how far did the museum check the extent of this informant’s knowledge base? What other agendas could he have had that will have influenced and informed the acquisition? How far was he willing to challenge or accept preconceptions the curators may have had about what they wanted, given that he earns his living from sales?

Thus, material which is acquired without systematic research, but that is constructed from bought sources or from individuals who had some loose connection to subcultures, remains subjective in its authenticity. This is fine if this is acknowledged, however as the above case illustrates, what often happens is that subjectively constructed identities are given within the museum context as ‘representative’ or ‘typical’ of a particular subcultural identity. What are essentially subjective interpretations of identity are often taken to stand for an essentialist identity. Whilst subjective interpretations of authenticity are valid, when presented within the context of the museum where this subjectivity is not acknowledged (that it is a version of authenticity), they become objective ‘authentic’ representations of subcultural identities, the authenticity of a given identity, which are questionable.

To reveal the problematics of authenticity based on outsider curatorial knowledge or knowledge gained from those on the fringes of subcultures, or those that ‘once were’, does not necessarily lead one however to accept the authenticities presented by subculturalists themselves as being more objective and ‘true’. Although an examination of the construction of authenticity within subcultures can reveal a correlation between systems of value operating within the modernist museum paradigm and subcultures themselves -both structure notions of authenticity around indices such as age, uniqueness, commitment and so forth- they are not necessarily compatible. Whereas museum authenticity works to a wider culturally agreed system of values and accepted notions of authenticity, subcultural
systems of value may be different, not only between different subcultures but between subculturalists of the same subculture.

As we have seen in Chapter One, postmodernist theorists have challenged the idea that authentic essentialist identities and histories exist. Jameson has argued for example, that electronic and digital technologies have come to mediate society’s understanding of identity, and identity has been destabilised (McGuigan 1999:80). Maffesoli’s concept of the neo-tribe also accounts for the manner in which identifications are temporary and shifting. It is understood that identities are not determined by class, ethnicity, gender or sexuality but are fluid and transformable.

Such postmodernist re-conceptualisations of identity, have in turn led to changes in subcultural theory, as Chapter 2 revealed. Muggleton (2000) has argued for example, that subcultural identifications are full of paradoxes and subcultural authenticity is a subjective matter. What is deemed significant to an identity will be collectively formulated and agreed to an extent, but identities are individually negotiated and interpreted. Where participants are consulted therefore, what authenticities are passed on to the museum will very much depend on who the museum consults. Whose voices are heard, and whose subjective interpretations are recorded, will depend on whoever was comfortable and interested enough to respond to museums interested in their identity. That participants may have different, even contradictory perceptions of authenticity relating to a particular style and identity, is generally not recognised and acknowledged by museums however.

In utilising subcultural knowledge, what museums are invariably doing then is representing ‘facts’ according to those particular participants that were consulted. Again, what can only ever be represented are subjective authenticities which are reflections of a particular individual’s tastes, associations and agendas that relate to any given subcultural identity.

Faking it.

The inadequacies of the modernist paradigm become revealed when confronted with identities such as subcultures, which can be defined as subjective and constantly negotiated. This is because modern museums are still predicated on claims to tell ‘the’
truth, to be providers of incontrovertible ‘facts’: that history can be presented in an objective and authoritative manner.

This in part remains unchallenged because museums have acted as one of many ‘disembedding mechanisms’ that removed social relations from local experience and people’s daily lives (Walsh 1992:27). A fundamental experience of modernity was ‘distancing’: the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation distanced people from the local and required that they take on trust, the services that were now provided for them by unknown professionals and institutions. Such mechanisms ‘invite, or rather, impose, a need for ‘trust’ on the part of the public’ as the expert is removed from public access and the public is required to have faith in the professionals ability to provide a quality of service.

The perceived expertise and knowledge of the museum then, ‘is knowledge based on trust’, it is an expertise that has to be taken for granted, naturalised and established within a relationship which demands that the expert is beyond criticism: a trust in systems that “takes the form of faceless commitments, in which faith is sustained in the workings of knowledge of which the lay person is largely ignorant” (Walsh 1992:27). This trust also insists on the acceptance of the anonymous truths of the discourses of modernity. Disciplines formulated ‘procedures of concept formation, evidence, verification, etc.’ so that the name of the author was no longer necessary to guarantee a texts’ authority: ‘Truth became anonymous’ (Rabinow 1991:24). The authenticity of the knowledges that museums impart, are thus founded on this tradition of anonymity: the authority of knowledge is enough secured within the museum’s objective interpretation as to not require authorship.

That museums are still required by the public and the profession itself, to speak ‘the truth’, to impart knowledge or ‘facts’ which are verifiable and authentic, can as we have seen, be difficult to live up to. As the last chapter identified, tensions between museums as authoritative producers of knowledge and the need to present ‘authentic’ representations, are revealed when then knowledge base about an identity, culture, history, lies outside the museum’s own structures of knowledge. In relation to identities and cultures such as subcultures where no essentialist authentic identities can actually be said to exist, the prevalence of essential truths becomes problematic. Such an approach assumes one
authenticity is possible, and leaves no space for the recognition of multiple, even conflicting authenticities.

The following quote is quite telling in terms of the curatorial concerns it reveals around this issue:

“Alright, we're still setting yourself up for being given the wrong information but you have to take that risk, I think...just sometimes there must be a bit irresistible, you know, if people are trying to document my, my culture, what do they know about it? I wouldn’t blame anybody for actually taking the mick!” (Interviewee CM;20)

In representing subjective knowledges or relying on outsider knowledge bases to form their apparently objective and anonymous ‘facts’, museums can be setting themselves up to be given deliberately false information. That participants’ knowledge and authenticities constitute a potential “risk” however, is created by the museum’s own claims to anonymous objective ‘truths’. If various and differing subjective authenticities were accepted and presented through the voices of participants themselves, then the “risk” of presenting “wrong information” would become much less of a concern.

Curatorial nervousness about how to recreate subcultural authenticity within a museum context, has also mitigated against subcultural representations. The following quote reveals the concerns of one curator for example;

“how do you represent it? What kind of objects do you put in there? How do you animate them or do you just kind of stick them on display stands, a costume that you’ve bought or borrowed from someone who goes clubbing on a Friday night, whatever? How well does that represent the scene? (Interviewee KC;12)

Thus, the fear of not getting it ‘right’, which was expressed as a reason that can lead to subcultures being marginalised, is created and perpetuated by accepted operational structures. Even where the characteristics of the modernist paradigm is beginning to be challenged, the “measure of the museum is taken by the intensity of the experience it commands and the degree to which that experience “feels real.”” (Hein 2000;xi). So although some may argue that museums are moving away from being object centred towards a concern for presenting experiences (Hein 2000), such shifts remain embedded in modernist paradigm ways of knowing and operating: Although the importance of

108 The extent to which British museums are moving away from the primary focus on objects can be questioned however.
representing ‘experience’ is becoming recognised, objective authority and authenticity is still a requisite of representations.

Given that many public museums are still housed within buildings which were built to embody civic pride and as such they elude to the grandeur of the classical past, and modern laws of heritage protection mean that radical changes to listed buildings cannot be made, museum spaces have been regarded as difficult places to fabricate ‘authentic’ subcultural experiences. A curator of a significant costume museum for example stated that club-wear would not be addressed within their museum as the exhibitions team felt that it would be "inappropriate" to exhibit this within the historical context of the museum. One individual on the team was “outraged” by the suggestion as they thought it would be “terribly naff”. It was felt that the experience of clubculture could just not be represented within the Georgian building that housed the museum (pers.com. Interviewee EJ).

Traditional modes of delivery based on static models of representation rarely engage the various senses, for in attempting to establish museums as rational, authoritarian places, the modernist paradigm rejected the chaotic and magical from representational structures. This loss is particularly pertinent to subcultures: it is difficult to replicate lived culture and experience such as a gig, a club, a rally, within a museum context. Although the Potteries Museum has held a gig (it hosted local bands in association with the 200 Decibels exhibition), and the Barbican had a bike rally start at the museum in association with the Art of the Harley exhibition, no museum has attempted to recreate such a context within a display itself. Therefore, what museums represent of subcultures will always be a (re)presentation; attempts to present lived experience will be confined to video and music. For as museum authenticity remains based around presenting tangible objects, how can they represent subcultural authenticity is negotiated in ways that are not tangible? How can museums represent subcultural ‘experiences’; the feelings of nervousness and anticipation before having a tattoo, the physical pain of it, and the relief and pleasure felt afterwards.

That museums continue to focus on the materiality of subcultures, because this approach dominates what is conceived to be possible, perpetuates the modernist notion that material artefacts embody reality, and have stable meanings. Subcultural theorists have been criticised for the synchronic approach they take, for concentrating on ‘end product’ that can be read, rather than the daily lived realities or how subcultural artefacts are made, for example (McRobbie;1994). So too can museums be criticised. However unlike the CCCS
theorists, and in particular Hebdige, museums do not tend to make significant attempts to ‘decode’ subcultural identities. Given the problematic of ‘authenticity’ when applied to meanings, this is probably fortunate. As Hein suggests ‘Controversial as the expression “authentic” may have been when applied to material works of art and artefacts, it is yet more obscure when the authenticity of meanings is at issue.’(2000;15) Thus it is challenging for the meanings of material to be decoded and explained by museums.

Indeed if one examines how the material representations of subcultures are informed and sourced, cracks in the veneer of truth and objectivity are revealed even without the complication of subjective participant authenticities. The Dr. Marten boots in the ‘Rebellion’ case in the Breaking Away exhibition for example (Plate 11), “came from a guy who was totally, you know, never been a skinhead in his life...totally un-rebellious as far as I can discover.” (Interviewee ++;14) The small children’s flight jacket that was also included, had been donated by Tesco having never been worn. Here ambiguity surrounds the authenticity of such an object; donated by a major supermarket chain, how far is this object evidence of subcultural ‘rebellion’? As the curator commented however,

“I think one of our biggest problems, actually, is assembling whole outfits or whole contexts of a particular thing and that we certainly struggled with” (Interviewee ++;15)

“what you end up doing is stitching a display together from all sorts of disparate bits.” (Interviewee ++; 15)

The dominance of modernist narrative frameworks therefore, as we shall explore in the next chapter, which are predicated on essentialist understanding led museums to construct representations out of ‘disparate bits’ that in the reality outside of the museum context, did not exist in the way they have been presented. Thus, once one reveals the provenance behind the objects on display in the ‘Rebellion’ case, and the means through which they were chosen and collected, one has to question the ‘authenticity’ of this display on rebellion. 109 What ‘truths’ are being presented here?

In depth examinations thus reveal that when subcultures are acknowledged within the context of the museum, often what is presented are fictitious realities. The Grampian Transport Museum has a popular display on Mods and Rockers, for example, in the 1960s

109 Similarly, subcultural clothing is often displayed on fashion mannequins which again can effect the authenticity of representations: the Crustie outfit on display in Tribes! case for example, was displayed on a fashionable mannequin and although attempts were made to contextualise the outfit by including a dreadlocked wig and facial piercing, the clean white skin, the elegant, elongated form is not expressive of your average person.
Plate 11: ‘Rebellion’ case, Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood
section of the museum. A 1960s styled café has been constructed in one corner of the
gallery. Within it is a late fifties jukebox, period furniture and outside are four to five
motorbikes and scooters. Also included in the display is a “typical rocker...and a Mod in
his tackle” (pers.com; 17/12/98). This museum also has a large collection of costume
which includes “all the things you’d expect”, parkas, leather jackets and so forth. They
have been collected as associated materials to “flesh out the displays”. The whole
exhibition is an amalgamation of artefacts that have been put together by the museum.
Thus what the museum represents as an ‘authentic’ café and associated subcultures, in
reality never existed altogether; what in fact is represented is the museum’s idea of a
‘typical’ café scene. It is a simulacra of a multitude of cafes that both existed in reality and
in people’s imaginations.

For as we have discussed earlier in this chapter, postmodernist theorists have begun to
question meanings as knowable, challenging the existence of stable structures to anchor
meanings or claims to the real: if meanings float-free and are as indeterminate as the
‘stability’ of a referent that they are tied to, meaning disappears. We have also seen how
such ideas have been applied to subcultural theorisation’s. Muggleton’s idea of the post-
subculturalist for example, suggests that subcultural styles have become simulacra, copies
with no originals: in a hyper-real setting dominated by sign value, space for originality has
vanished, and referents are displaced as the ‘real’ is reduced to a play of surfaces where
signifiers infinitely signify more signifiers. No originality therefore confers no authenticity.

If it is recognised that essentialist identities do not exist and that notions of authenticity are
subjectively negotiated, the representations of subcultures that museums present can be
questioned. Thus for example, ‘if postmodern theory is taken at face value, there no longer
exists outside of the media any province of the real for subcultural styles to be a cultural
response to’ (Muggleton 1997;196). Subcultural styles have become simulacra according
to the logic of Baudrillard. Indeed Redhead draws on Baudrillard’s concept of ‘implosion’
of meaning to explore the way in which pop music culture is increasingly ‘becoming an

If subcultural identities are thus in constant flux, as they are constructed around referents
that are never stable, and as identities they are constantly being subjectively negotiated,
how can museums claim to represent ‘real’ subcultures in their displays? Museum
representations of subcultural styles that are constructed from objects bought from a shop for example, may or may not be ‘authentic’ depending on how one interprets ‘authentic’. They may not be considered ‘authentic’ representations of subcultures as no essentialist identities can be said to exist, but they can be considered authentic simulacra: they can be realer than real because they embody the stereotype of what subcultural styles are, rather than (if the objects were acquired from participants themselves) depict the subjective negotiations of styles.

It is possible therefore to locate the modernist museum within Baudrillard’s second order of simulacrum: the masking of the absence of a profound reality. The modernist museum functioned as a sign which masked the fact that the knowable reality that they claimed to (re)present, was not the profound reality at all, merely an idea of it. The representations that modernist museums presented were not counterfeits of an original but rather signs of signs of a reality i.e. the discourses of the emerging scientific disciplines. Museums thus created a false consciousness which attempted to lay claims to knowledge and control of the material world, masking other potential realities (stories, histories) in order to do so with seeming legitimacy. Their rational claims to represent reality actually masked the fact that the ‘reality’ represented was one which the discourses on which they were based, had themselves created.

According to Baudrillard however, the second order was characteristic of the nineteenth century. As we have seen in Chapter One, he argues that from the twentieth century society has been in the grip of a third order of simulacrum, where signs bear no relation to reality whatsoever. Here it is no longer possible to claim authenticity as the real has disappeared. Simulations now constitute reality itself and the reality of simulations have become the criterion of the real: the real has returned but only as a simulation, no longer the real but more realer than real - the hyper-real.

If the modernist museum of the nineteenth century can be located within the second order, where is the contemporary museum placed given that, as it is argued here, a modernist paradigm still dominates? It can be argued that a tension exists within museums, because the material culture and society that museums attempt to represent, such as subcultural identities, can be placed within Baudrillard’s third order, but the structures of operation
and knowledge of the museum itself still operate in relation to the second order. Representations such as the 1960s café, which are made up of disparate bits and present essentialist subcultural identities, are not counterfeits of an original but rather signs of signs of a reality.

The recourse towards the emphasises of the museum’s ability to represent ‘the real’, can thus be interpreted in Baudrillardian terms as a response to the loss of the real. Compensatory attempts are made to manufacture a real that no longer exists, as the hyper-real produces a ‘panic-stricken production of the real and the referential’ (Baudrillard 1994;13). When threatened by simulacrum, myths of authenticity are resurrected as society requires a visible past, for ‘[it]...collapses if we cannot stockpile the past in plain view’ (Baudrillard 1994;10). The museum is placed as a key player in this created past.

Museums, in emphasising the real, are therefore safeguarding the reality principle, on which they depend, by masking the fact that the real is hyper-real: like the Philippine government who attempt to ‘protect’ the Tasaday tribespeople (Baudrillard 1994;7-8), so too do museums attempt to preserve signs of the real by their self assumed role of preserving reality through authentic material culture. By perpetuating the myth that ‘facts’, ‘truth’ and more importantly ‘real’ things exist to be presented in objective ways, museums in an exercise of self-legitimisation, mask that a representation of the ‘authentic’, the ‘real’ is no longer possible. A fundamental premise on which museums have been founded, that they collect, preserve and display real material culture and represent reality, is ultimately misguided and an impossibility as no reality exists anymore to be represented. The museums role is now one of manufacturing the real.

Thus the challenge that Baudrillard’s ideas present to the validity of the concept of authenticity do not just relate to a breakdown of traditional conceptions of authenticity associated with terms such as the unique, skilled, aesthetic, genuine. That modern society is dominated by material culture which is mass produced is only part of the question for Baudrillard, for whom the breakdown of authenticity goes deeper than mere value

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110 Some ‘museums’, or more accurately what have been termed heritage centres, have gone into the third order where the sign ‘bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum’ (Baudrillard 1994;10). The Viking settlement at Jorvik is hyper-real, as it attempts to simulate a total experience through the use of sound, smells and replicas. However, that experience ‘never becomes more than a simulation’ (Silver 1988): indeed its’ appeal was located in the excavation finds being ‘displayed as a three-dimensional, multi-sensory simulacrum of what it was like to be there, in Jorvik, on the 25th October AD948 at 5.30pm’!(Kemp 2001;40).
judgements about cultural worth. For Baudrillard, claims of authenticity are no longer possible because referents always refer to other referents, thus no longer to any original. Museum claims to safeguard real, authentic objects for posterity is therefore not possible in the age of the simulacrum. As we have seen, analysis of the problematics of representing subcultures within the context of the museum, helps identify this.

This can be explored further in relation to museum claims to represent real and authentic identities. Though a museum for example, may make a claim that they are exhibiting a costume worn by the singer Madonna that is ‘real’ and ‘authentic’, what they are actually presenting only refers to another sign, i.e. the ‘pop star’ Madonna. No ‘real’ Madonna exists and it is the costume of a public persona that is presented, a persona that constantly changes and refuses to be ‘fixed’, positioned or determined (see Pribram 1993) Thus if no authentic ‘real’ Madonna exists, and all that is left are appearances, then the ‘real’ Madonna that museums claim to represent is in fact a simulacrum.

**Conclusion.**

We have seen then, that the modernist museum paradigm still dominates museum practices, as the significance it placed on authenticity and the presentation of ‘the real’ still prevails. Though museum displays are becoming arguably less object rich, and museums attempt to engage with new technologies (Macdonald and Silverstone 1990), objects are paradoxically being called upon to save the day when the institution is threatened by these same technologies. Some argue that rather than issuing a threat, the emergence of new technologies has strengthened the position of museums;

‘paradoxically, the very explosion of reproductions (postcards, posters, advertising, television programmes) has reinforced the aura of authenticity surrounding the original, and hence the particular value attached to seeing it in person.’(Lumley 1988,15)

Museums however have been accused of perpetuating the ‘mystique of authenticity’ (Phillips 1997;25) for their own ends. Museums purport to offer a special kind of experience, and this is predicated on the notion and importance of ‘the real thing’.

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111 Pribram suggests for example that ‘Madonna, this chameleon of appearances who refuses all fixed meanings, may be viewed as simulation in the context of Baudrillard’s theories... there is no definitive “real”, no authentic Madonna, beyond the person(a) we already know through her various incarnations, guises, and forms.’ (1993;202)
However it has been questioned whether authentic can really be said to exist or whether such an idea is merely a social construct. Museums indeed police the very structures of authenticity they create and serve to ignore postmodernist and post-structuralist theories that have begun to question the existence of a stable reality and the possibility of representing ‘reality’ in an objective manner.

Our ability to know and to represent ‘reality’ is now questioned as it is recognised that ‘Since ‘reality’ does not exist in itself, we create it - with the result that each society and each age has different versions of what that ‘reality’ might be.’(Horne 1984;1) Museums however, still attempt to play a role in constructing and confirming such realities through claims to represent ‘this is how it really was’.

That museums often choose to ignore the challenges that are being presented to ideas of authenticity and the real elsewhere, is borne out both within their marginalisation and representation of subcultural identities. Museums continue to place faith in the existence of authentic material culture that can embody realities, and indeed as we have seen, subcultures have been marginalised in exhibitions because authentic objects have not existed within collections. We have also seen that when an exhibition is planned a lot of time and resources are spent on searching out authentic artefacts i.e. objects that have direct relationship with subcultural participants. Where resources are limited museums tend to recourse to purchasing material. There is a danger that such efforts can be tokenistic however, for as one respondent stated, “its tempting to acquire a couple of objects and feel one has ‘done’ Punk” (medium local authority museum).

Objects are seen as ‘authentic’ by virtue of their being real. They are revered because they are the very dress worn by Queen Victoria or a real piece of rock from the moon. Horne suggests however that the overriding concern given to objects merely because of their authenticity, can be debilitating for museums (1984). He argues that museums fail to tell histories as reverence of individual objects take over. In particular, with the major initiatives to acknowledge subcultures, authenticity becomes located in ‘real’, ‘authentic’ material culture of subcultures. However, what can be considered as ‘real’, ‘authentic’ subcultural identity? Such identities are open to subjective interpretation and negotiation, and cannot be said to exist in any essentialist terms.
Subcultural theory, has rejected essentialist identities arguing that coherent subcultures no longer exist, if they ever really did, and such formations are ‘better understood as a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships.’ (Bennett 1999;600). Museums however, have not made such conceptual shifts.

What museums present therefore, often conforms to an essentialist understanding of identity. Generic subcultural identities are represented as the subjectivity of identity construction goes unacknowledged. Even where participants are consulted, there is often a lack of recognition that subculturalists themselves may perpetrate myths of authenticity, and they actually present museums with subjective knowledges and authenticities. Given that museums do not engage in multiple stories (as we shall explore in the next chapter), they invariably fit subcultural subjectivity’s into their structures of fact and produce subcultural authenticities as objective realities.

This leads one to question what is being represented as the ‘truth’. That subjective authenticities are actually being presented as objective realities by museums, and that they insist on the importance of essentialist identities, illustrates how museums continue to perpetuate the modernist paradigm’s belief in the rational and in the existence of truth and objective facts.

This paradigm has led museums to ignore subcultures that cannot be fitted into such structures. But also by ignoring the subjectivity of identity museums fail to celebrate the diversity of such identities as the contradictions and disagreements, the negotiation and fluctuation of subcultural identities, remain marginalised. Thus community involvement does not necessarily result in the breaking down of modernist paradigm structures of knowledge and value, but rather can perpetuate a continued working within them.

Questions of authenticity then, still remain central to everything that museums do: ‘It is what draws our visitors. It is what drives our quest for provenance and conservation, informing the selections we make for exhibition.’ (Thomas and Mintz 1998;7) The authenticity of representations within the museum are still founded on their being objective, rational, and balanced, and the status of the museum remains based on trust. However, if museum representations are to be taken by the public as signs for reality, then
the stories and histories that museums re-present are sustainable only if that which is re-presented appears to remain inalienably authentic. Claims of authenticity thus help to legitimise museum practice, and it can be argued that museums play a role in policing notions of authenticity: 'Curators seem merely to assess evidence, but in practice are deeply involved in setting the values that they police.' (Phillips 1997;6). The standing of the museum as an institution of education and knowledge is grounded in the premise that knowledge is contained in objects which can be authenticated. This is a self-legitimising process, for this legitimacy is based on rules/values that museums have themselves established as important.

As we shall see later, if one brings in to question notions such as that of 'authenticity', the 'sure' foundations on which the modernist museum was based soon begin to crack. Donato has argued for example that,

' 'The set of objects the Museum displays is sustained only by the fiction that they somehow constitute a coherent representational universe....Should the fiction disappear, there is noting left of the Museum but ('bric-a-brac'), a heap of meaningless and valueless fragments of objects'' (Macdonald and Silverstone 1990)

Thus it is the authority that the museum as an institution commands, that ensures that the authenticity of the representation of culture remains unchallenged. As Crew and Sims argue,

'Authenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority. Objects have no authority; people do. It is people on the exhibition team who must make a judgement about how to tell about the past. Authenticity -authority- enforces the social contract between the audience and the museum, a socially agreed-upon reality that exists only as long as confidence in the voice of the exhibition holds.' (1991;163)

As we have seen, the term 'authenticity' is highly charged and value laden, being associated with high culture and that of artistic, cultural or scientific merit. Thus although it is now evident for example, 'that artefacts are as easily altered as chronicles, public faith in their veracity endures; a tangible relic seems ipso facto real.'(Crew and Sims 1991;162) Museums rarely do anything to challenge such misconceptions. They make claims to authenticate and in doing so they also validate both what they represent and themselves as institutions.
If museums maintain that their value to society and essential unique character as an institution, is based primarily on claims to care for and display 'the real thing', then museums are implicated in the value judgements which help to perpetuate the notion that the fake is inferior to the 'real thing', and the assumption that it is possible to provide authentic representations of reality. 'The illusion is of a transparent representation of a truth outside the museum, yet the selection and conventions are as much a revelation of ourselves as of the subject' on show (Phillips 1997:202). These selections and conventions it is argued here, still remain based on the modernist paradigm. Indeed, if authenticity is seen as the 'special magic' of museums, and the status of museums is predicated on their ability to present objective realities, then questioning notions of 'authenticity' and the 'real', presents fundamental and uncomfortable challenges to museums' power and legitimacy.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Attempting to order the world: classification systems and their limitations.

Introduction.

The last chapter examined issues of authenticity and how the institution of the museum presents history through 'authentic' material culture. The revered status of museums is predicated on the public's trusting that what they are being presented with is 'real' rather than 'fake'.

This chapter explores another characteristic of the modernist paradigm of the museum, by addressing the operating structures through which sense is made of the world. In particular, the imposition of order through systems of classification is addressed. Although, as Eileen Hooper-Greenhill illustrates (1992), the need to classify and order the world was prevalent long before the modern period, it was with the modernist museum that the world was structured in a particular way, to particular rules and ideas, that still prevail today.

This chapter then, explores how the modernist paradigm has led to specific ways of presenting history and to certain operating structures of collecting, documenting, storing and displaying material culture. It is argued that these operating structures help to mitigate against the representation of the diversity and complexity of our society and thus marginalise subcultural identities and histories. We shall see how postmodernist theories, such as those of Lyotard and Jameson, which recognise the fragmented diversity and plurality of cultural formations and expression, have not been recognised and accounted for at a structural level within museums. Indeed, the modernist paradigm's organisational structures, based on Enlightenment metanarratives and a linear approach to history, still limit attempts to embrace postmodern diversity. The validity of the institution of the museum becomes unstable therefore, if it can no longer be supported by the metanarratives of modernity.

This chapter then, continues to examine the challenges presented to the notion of essentialist identity that was introduced in the last. The final part of the chapter offers a case study of the V&A's Streetstyle exhibition which, although recognising the positive
A need to make sense of the world.

We all attempt to make sense of the world through ordering systems, to avoid chaos and to ‘tame the wild profusion of existing things’ (Foucault 1997:xv). We structure the things we possess through organisational structures, arranging our record collections for example, according to our preferred classification principles (alphabetically, chronologically, by genre). We also make sense of who we meet by applying labels and classification from the sartorial clues we are presented with. Indeed it is recognised that ideas of classification and sequence have a powerful hold over our intellectual imaginations (Pearce 1992:87).

This classificatory impulse is realised in a collective sense in museums. As Hein suggests, what museums have done is to elevate ‘to a science the common classificatory compulsion to identify’. She continues,

'[this] taxonomic impulse, sometimes pushed to pathological extremes, not only rescues billions of objects...from temporal oblivion but also bestows meaning and value on them and assigns them a place in a quasi-objective order.' (2000:14)

Indeed, as collections are regarded as central and essential to the institution of ‘museum’, it is assumed that museums ‘consist of material objects that can be identified and classified in light of their accrued taxonomic or aesthetic or historical significance.’ (Hein 2000:4) 112

Like the individual, museums organise the world through the creation of sets or categories that enable the creation of systems of meaning and significance. Museums require the imposition of systems of order to make sense of the world that they profess to save and represent: the collections of material culture need to be ordered in a rational manner to enable research, access for exhibition and for daily collections management. As Pearce has argued, it is

‘the function of the museum to provide objects and specimens with names through the interrelated process of classification and research, and to express this process in the formal procedures of documentation...and collection management.’(1992:123)

104 Though Hein does argue that the traditional taxonomic and preservation impetus is being replaced by a perceived primary responsibility to people and their values, rather than the values of objects (2000:67), this change in sense of responsibility is not comprehensive and it can be argued that the majority of museums still define themselves and the culture they present, through objects not experiences.
Indeed, one of the criteria for Registration is a well managed and documented collection. Classification is a political act however, that can close down possibilities as much as it can open them up.

As Chapter 3 began to reveal, the manner in which material things have been arranged and classified has differed over time, according to prevailing epistemological thought. Foucault reveals the constructed nature of the apparent rational manner in which we order the world, in the preface to *The Order of Things*. He quotes Borges quote of a passage from a ‘certain Chinese encyclopaedia’ in which it is written that:

‘animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies’. (Foucault 1997:xv)

The taxonomy used here is absurd to our present ways of knowing, and Foucault uses this fable to illustrate the limitations of our own systems of thought; ‘the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.’ (1997:xv)

Drawing on the three major epistemes identified by Foucault, that shaped the basis of knowledge, Bennett has considered how the ordering principles of the Modern episteme were different to those that had gone before: The Renaissance episteme ‘read beneath the surface of things to discover hidden connections of meaning and significance’ whereas the Classical episteme that followed, based its system of classification on new principles of scientific taxonomy, that stressed ‘the observable differences between things rather than their hidden resemblances’ (Bennett 1997; 95,96). With the Modern episteme, ‘things ceased to be arranged as parts of taxonomic tables and came, instead, in being inserted within the flow of time, to be differentiated in terms of the positions accorded them within evolutionary series.’(Bennett 1997;96) Within the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries then, a radical reordering took place as a shift from the classical to modern episteme occurred.

As was also discussed in Chapter 3, the principles of classification that emerged in the early nineteenth century and that became embedded in the modernist museum paradigm, were founded on the philosophy of the Enlightenment; that power and authority of reason, exercised in intellectual as well as daily life, could lead to scientific and social progress,
was the underlying principle behind the Modern episteme. Through the accumulation and ordering of material things, it was seen as possible to know, make sense of and thus control the world. Representational practices came to embody the meta-narratives of modernity and western time, providing a historicised framework for the arrangement of objects in singular linear narratives.

Museums have been established as ‘exercises in classification’ (Jordanova 1989, 23), however the ordering systems that contemporary museums work to, are structured from an epistemological context quite different to our own. Indeed Foucault locates contemporary museums within the tradition of nineteenth century western culture where attempts are made ‘to collect and enclose all times and all their products within one place, as one type of heteropia’ (Murray 2001). Thus we can see that the organisational structures that museums operate have developed from particular epistemological foundations. Certain representational practices were created therefore, by the modernist museum that have been naturalised as the only way museums can operate, ‘the ways things are done’, which actually serve to marginalise other potential ways of operating. The systems of classification that are still utilised today, are not therefore, random or innocent. Coxall recognises for example that ‘certain current practices of documentation and classification can have limiting effects on the nature of stories told about museum objects.’ (1999) Hein also comments;

‘If “collection” stands for deliberative organizational device rather than a physical aggregation of objects demarcated in reality, then the museum’s accumulative role is subjectivized and its absolute authority is put into question. The museum’s presumed dedication to the “real thing”- the authentic object that is prized and studied - acquires a new and politicized significance when objects cease to be taken as ontological givens and become simply occasions for privatized experience or constellations of assigned meanings.’ (2000:7)

Before we examine the implication of this in regards to the representation of subcultural histories and identities, let us first consider further how the modernist paradigm based on Enlightenment ideas and values, has been challenged, namely within postmodernist, post-structuralist and new historicist writings.
Postmodern diversity: the noise of difference.

The inadequacies of, and the power relations that work within, the modernist museums' attempts to order the world through the classification of material culture, have begun to be revealed. Postmodernist theory however, presents a particular challenge to the modernist paradigm and threatens to destroy the very foundations upon which the modernist museum is based.

If we return to Chapter One we see how modernist meta-narratives, their claims to universality and homogenising effect, have been challenged by postmodernist writers. Lyotard for example, attacking Enlightenment values, challenged modernist totalising and universalising discourse. He championed difference, plurality and heterogeneity, defining postmodernism as an 'incredulity towards metanarratives', and argued that meta-narratives had lost their credibility and had collapsed as a legitimising and unifying force. Lyotard also recognised and celebrated incommensurable difference, and argued that humanity is not united but rather is fragmented into different groups and competing interests.

Formulated in relation to the meta-narratives of modernism, the very operational structures of the modernist museum paradigm then, are being fundamentally challenged by ideas such as Lyotard's. Enlightenment ideals of progress are exposed in the chronological classification and exhibition techniques and the classification systems through which material culture is collected, documented, ordered and understood, become unstable. Discipline divisions become revealed as constructed and forced, and the universalising narratives perpetuated by them, exposed as exclusive and homogenising.

Lyotard's abandonment of centralising narratives exposes further the inadequacies of their use within museums as it becomes recognised that within society 'multiple, incompatible language-games flourish alongside each other' (1989). Lyotard's suggestion 'that it is not worth attempting to create a conversation or consensus between them, since 'such consensus does violence to the heterogeneity of language games'” (Connor 1989;34), leads us to question the attempts museums make to engender unity; for example, work undertaken to celebrate cultural diversity, which often lays emphasis on sameness, thus can fail to recognise heterogeneity and difference on its own terms.
Narratives of the collective past thus become questionable and subjective, as their bias is exposed. The manner in which museums attempt to present history as unified, ordered and complete, becomes revealed as false if difference and heterogeneity are recognised. Again structures of power/knowledge are revealed, for as Lyotard suggests, meta-narratives play a role in sustaining power through performativity:

'The reduction in complexity is required to maintain the system's power capability. If all messages could circulate freely among all individuals, the quality of the information that would have to be taken into account before making the correct choice would delay decisions considerably, thereby lowering performativity. Speed, in effect, is a power component of the system.' (1989:61)

As Rose suggests, Lyotard saw that 'while the modern age might be seen as an age in which the human subject saw itself as mastering matter, the post-modern was that which questioned this mastery and redefined it as a question of the interaction of man and matter, rather than of control'(1991:65) Within this context then, the constructed nature of museum usage of single, linear narratives is revealed; which enables them to get their messages across easier, ultimately increasing the performativity of them as disciplinary apparatus.

If we return to Baudrillard also, we can further see the challenges that postmodernism poses for modernist meta-narratives. As Walsh argues for example, 'For Baudrillard there can be no totality, no reality, no society, and definitely no history.'(1992:59) For Baudrillard the 'Total order', the ordering principle of Nature, where objects are consumed, has given way to the 'intelligent technician of communications' who 'dominates, controls and orders' objects: technological society is a constructed world where 'the world' is 'no longer given but instead produced – mastered, manipulated, inventoried, controlled' (Baudrillard 1997:29)

In *The System of Objects* he compares the world of objects with that of flora and fauna. He argues that man has successfully inventoried 'countless natural species' yet there exists a lack of vocabulary to name the 'ever-accelerating procession of generations of products, appliances and gadgets of everyday objects'. He concludes therefore;

'How can we hope to classify a world of objects that changes before our eyes and arrive at an adequate system of description? There are almost as many criteria of classification as there are objects themselves' (Baudrillard 1997:3)

The attempts of the modernist museum to order and classify the postmodern world, thus become revealed as nonsensical if the diversity, the plurality and the heterogeneity of that
world is realised. Absolutist forms of explanation and totalising knowledge are thus inadequate within the postmodern context.

The last chapter began to explore the breakdown of essentialist notions of authenticity as modernist understandings of identity as stable and essentialist have been challenged. Theorists such as Maffesoli have argued that identity and collective formations are fluid and multiple, they shift and definite boundaries cannot be established around them. The modern museum however, attempts 'to represent processes and experiences which are recognised as transient through static and objectifying displays' (Walsh 1992; 18). The prevalence of meta-narratives where everything is allotted its place, thus mitigates against the recognition of reflexive and multifaceted social formations.

As we also explored in the last chapter, postmodernist theories such as Baudrillard's have denied the existence of any 'essential' reality, even that any proximate truth about reality is possible. As Hein argues, there has been a 'widespread decline of faith in singularity of reality and the uniformity of truth' and consistent with this has been 'the promotion of multivalent plurality.' (Hein 2000; x) Post-structuralist writing has questioned 'the foundations of Western metaphysics, and its perceived aim of defining, naming, and knowing the world' (Walsh 1992; 55) and new historicism based on Foucault, has rejected the historical meta-narrative, the 'traditional historicist notions of continuity, progress and underlying historical unity' and has departed from history which is based on continuity and a unified subject (Brooker 1999; 153). Postmodernism in history denies the fixity of the past, it refuses to recognise 'the reality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to make of it, and thus of any objective truth about the past.' (Himmelfarb 1995; 133)

The modernist museums' presentation of history as objective and knowable through the re-presentation of contemporary evidence, i.e. material culture, and its goal of achieving a reconstruction of the past as near to how it really was, is thus revealed as unrealisable. The self-legitimating practises of the modernist museum which created visual narratives that 'appear harmonious, unified and complete', narratives that appeared natural, and given the status of truth, of fact (Hooper-Greenhill 2000b; 2), is now challenged. The presumption of postmodernism is that 'all of history is fatally flawed' and no absolute, total truth exists to be discovered or re-presented (Himmelfarb 1995; 135). As Walsh suggests, '[w]e can only
hope for hazy glimpses of a past that has never really existed.' (1992;57) Indeed, traditional narrative histories concepts of causality, chronology and collectivity are seen as 'tyrannical' as the authoritarian ideology of modernist history is exposed as hegemonic, privileged and patriarchal in nature (Himmelfarb 1995;137-138). The presumption then, that the logical, orderly structuring of material evidence can correspond to the reality of the past, and therefore communicate a truth about the past, is thus under threat.

**Modernist organisational structures and their limitations.**

Now let us move on to consider in detail how Enlightenment principles realised within the modernist museum paradigm, are still apparent in the organisational structures that museums operate to today, and the implications this has regards the representation of subcultural identities and histories.

As has been argued elsewhere, the epistemes through which the material and social worlds have been ordered, has changed through time, and are specific to each time and culture, and as Hides argues '[t]his affects not merely the interpretation of evidence... but the very fabric of our understanding.' (1997). Though a postmodernist episteme now dominates, modernist ways of knowing still exist and as this thesis argues, form museum organisational structures. As David Fleming has commented for example, 'we continue to follow the Victorian tradition of classifying and pigeon-holing human experience' (1993;28) although museums now exist in a very different world from that in which the operating structures were formed.

The rational presentation of the world has been a fundamental function of the modernist museum, and its realisation through systems of classification has permeated all aspects of museum structures of organisation. Jordanova has identified three 'principle levels of classification' that museums operate to. The first means are the categories that entire institutions are placed within, the second level operates within the museum, structuring how collections are organised, and the last level, relates to the systems of classification that operate at the level of individual objects. (1989;24)
Museums thus have a typology under which they can be classified which is frequently derived from the nature of a museum's collections (fine art, social history, geology and so forth). As Bennett has argued, the 'birth of the museum is coincident with, and supplied a primary institutional condition for, the emergence of a new set of knowledges - geology, biology, archaeology, anthropology, history and art history - '(1997;96). These knowledges became the principle categories that the material culture collected by museums, has been fitted into, and formed the basis for the disciplines that museum collections have been ordered in. Similarly, their distinct modes of assembling objects are still adhered to by museums. The life sciences for example, working to a taxonomic system, map out the natural world in a web of collected specimens that are 'typical' or are departures from the 'norm' (Pearce 1992). Archaeology, the arts, history and anthropology, follow typological systems; collections are ordered according to major periods, schools, countries, or functions of artefacts for example.

The taxonomic systems that museums have been organised to not only reflect 'a prior intellectual choice but also determines pragmatic decisions regarding a museum's internal organization, acquisition policy, exhibition style, public outreach, and programming.' (Hein 2000;18) Thus different classificatory systems that disciplines work to, effect everything that a museum does. Addressing the representation of subcultures within museums however, reveals the strength of the classificatory impulse that museums embody: initiatives such as 'Tattoo: A Day of Record' at the V&A where the museum invited people to come and have their tattoos photographed for inclusion in the museum's archive (Plate 12), and exhibitions like Streetstyle, are exercises in the cataloguing of culture.

Let us now examine in more detail the fundamental structuring practices of the modernist paradigm and explore their limitations: their preoccupation with evolutionary narratives that impose representational frameworks, restricting ways of knowing and working; the rigid classification systems used to order collections that require static and essentialist interpretations of culture; the rigid discipline divisions that hinder inclusive practices. Together they mitigate against the recognition of the heterogeneity of the communities that make up British society and the non-essentiality of 'the past' and serve to marginalise subcultures, and control representation when it does occur.
COME TO THE V&A AND HAVE YOUR TATTOOS PHOTOGRAPHED FOR INCLUSION IN THE MUSEUM ARCHIVE. YOU WILL BE GRANTED FREE ENTRY BY SHOWING YOUR TATTOOS AT THE EXHIBITION ROAD ENTRANCE.

Plate 12: ‘Tattoo: A Day of Record’ flyer
The prevalence of evolutionary narratives:

As we have seen, the modernist meta-narratives that have informed the operational structures of museums, engendered the naming of things and their allocation of a position within a linear framework of historical progress. Singular evolutionary narratives dominated the presentation of history and the continued prevalence of this has contributed to the marginalisation of subcultural identities and histories from museums.

History collections for example, follow the decorative arts mode of collecting where objects are placed in a linear progress of ownership (Crew and Sims 1991). Costume collections have traditionally been organised in a chronological way: many museums store their costume collections according to date (and type) and traditionally costume museums have displayed costume in a sequential manner tracing the history of the evolution of fashion from one silhouette to the next, (see for example the V&A’s dress court, and the permanent exhibition spaces at The Museum of Costume, Bath and the Gallery of Costume, Manchester).

This historicist approach however has served to marginalise subcultures, for until recently it was not considered that subcultures had a place within this grand evolutionary narrative of fashion history. Collecting and exhibition strategies were firmly preoccupied with the history of high fashion and the great couturiers and designers, and it was not until the nineteen-nineties that the national costume collection at the V&A, recognised subcultural dress. Defined as ‘anti-fashion’, subcultures went un-represented as their sartorial styles were excluded from the established narrative. Only did recognition occur when they could be allotted a position within this grand narrative, i.e., that their styles have an influence on 'mainstream' fashion.113

Representational frameworks adhering to single evolutionary paradigms, thus focus attention on the narrative of the dominant ‘mainstream’ culture and history, however such an approach leaves no room for minority cultures and histories. Coxall argues that ‘Many museum curators claim, with some justification, that the amount of information they have room for limits the scope of the choices they are able to make and this is what is responsible for closing down access to alternative narratives.’ However, if the ‘available

113 Even now however, subcultural dress remains a sub-narrative: the ‘streetstyle’ collected at the V&A for example is stored as a separate collection within the main 20th century dress store and ‘subcultural’ dress still remains absent from the chronology of fashion within the dress court.
space for interpretive information is to be limited, it is even more vital that the selected
gaps do not result in an exclusive seamless historical account that validates a single
evolutionary narrative'.(Coxall 1999)

The need to present a narrative which is focused around order and a clear intellectual
rational, requires a selection procedure that ignores or rejects that which does not fit into
the chosen narrative. Ultimately this means that ‘The inconsistent, the incomplete, the
awkward, the idiosyncratic - these are left on their shelves, while attention concentrates
upon those which can project social coherence, a sensible story.’(Pearce 1992;240-241)

When museum staff choose which versions of history to relate, the result is that other
versions are ‘publicly rendered mute’(Coxall 1999). The dominance of the single narrative
is often so strong that when no artefacts are available, museum staff recourse to replicas to
fill the gaps. The Streetstyle exhibition for example, after failing through extensive national
appeals to locate an authentic zoot-suit and a pair of northern soul trousers, had replicas
made. The desire for a complete narrative thus overrode issues of authenticity such as
those addressed in the last chapter.

This ‘completist approach’ can also serve to marginalise subcultures as collection
management practices ‘based on the presumption that completing a set is not only
possible, but also highly desirable’ (Wallace 2001;86), can favour a minority of scholars
and specialist groups and diverts resources away from the recognition of the diversity and
plurality of society.

The modernist museum established on fundamental belief that objects were sources of
knowledge in themselves; a ‘realist epistemology proposed that knowledge could be based
on objects which were understood as parts of the real world that had fixed and finite
meanings which could be both discovered, once and for all, and then taught through being
put on show.’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000a;21) Indeed, as we have argued, in a world where
meaning has become unstable and dislocated, museums have become ‘sanctuaries of
meaning’ (Hein 2000;13). Museums subject all considerations to the presentation of a
logical narrative; they have traditionally told one story. However, the reality of objects is
that they hold more than one voice.

‘‘Objects have not a single past but an unbroken sequence of past times leading
backward from the present moment. Moreover, there is no ideal spot on the
temporal continuum that inherently deserves emphasis...In elevating or admiring one piece of the past, we tend to ignore and devalue others. One reality lives at the expense of countless others.' (Crew and Sims 1991)

Objects are accompanied by a single label that places them only within one interpretation. This ignores therefore the polysematic nature of objects and the multiplicity of history. For multiple meanings are embedded in objects;

'Socially objectified things are imbued with meaning, layer upon layer, within sanctioned structures of reference. As collectors with normative power, museums have the option of attending to only the most prominent meaning strata of objects or of exploring the deeper layers of complexity.'(Hein 2000;64)

For museums to explore the 'deeper layers of complexity' however, is constricted whilst modernist organisational and representational structures still dominate. Exhibitions therefore, should be multi-vocal, however working practices do not allow for flexibility, as we shall explore further, below.

It is worth acknowledging that new technologies have been utilised in an attempt to provide a plurality of narratives. Lifetimes at Croydon and My Brighton at Brighton Museum and Art Gallery both use CD ROM technology to do this. Lifetimes gives people's interpretations of the local area, not the museums objective historical narrative. They however encounter other problems of inflexibly. Croydon for example have been delayed over a number of years in putting lesbian and gay material into the Lifetimes display because in order to include new objects the CD ROM has to be updated: encountering delays through problems with the supplying company, has meant that actually in the long term, changing objects has been more easier than changing the technology.

It should also be recognised that challenges are being made to the traditional linear approach to representation, as increasingly displays are becoming thematic and more theatrical 'as museums shift their emphasis from preservation and study to dramatic delivery.'(Hein 2000;5) However, even within a thematic exhibition, some logical order, schema or narrative that visitors move through, is required and again histories and identities can be made to fit single, evolutionary narrative. We can see that where subcultures have been the theme for an exhibition, the urge to trace histories, to identify chronologies of development, can structure the representation as the paradigm established by CCCS becomes mirrored within the museum context. The most notable example of this
has been the *Streetstyle* exhibition which represented ‘Streetstyle from 1940 up to the present day’.

Museums continue to perpetuate the traditional assumptions that subcultural styles ‘unfolded’ in a linear fashion. They fail to engage with more recent theorisation’s of subcultures which have recognised the cyclical elements in subcultural styling. Redhead for example has identified how subcultures are increasingly turning in on themselves and recycling older styles, as an emphasis on quoting the near past accelerates to a greater extent: ‘‘Post’ gurus like Jean Baudrillard have already told us that the ‘end of the century’ party is already here, a decade early. Acid house shows us that it is not so much a case of back to the future, as forward to the past.’ (Redhead 1997;60) Indeed, in relation to the end of subcultures that was heralded as happening in the nineteen eighties, Redhead argued,

‘I don’t know if it’s a question of an ‘end’. The word is probably meaningless in any case, because we’re no longer so sure that there is such a thing as linearity...History has stopped meaning, referring to anything - whether you call it social space or the real. We have passed into a kind of hyper-real where things are being replayed *ad infinitum.*’ (1990;23)

Museums like other orthodoxy’s then, have failed to recognise the cyclical nature embedded in the genealogy of subcultural histories. If museums did recognise this cyclical nature, to address it they would have to abandon the modernist linear framework in which they still operate.

**Rigid systems of classification:**

The imposition of rigid frameworks on collecting and display practices by the acceptance of the didactic, linear narrative approach has also lead to the marginalisation of subcultures because reductionist systems of classification are required in order to achieve a cohesive narrative. The imposition of boundaries of classification and categorisation is required, in order to allot things a position within a rational scheme that displays a logical progression of historical development. This then, can further account for why subcultural identities have often been conceived in essentialist terms within museums.

If the classification systems on which museums order the world rely on the ability to slot things into place, normative principles are utilised which suggest that ‘typical assemblages of traits can be defined, and recognized as characteristic of particular individual specimens which then act as standards for their type.’ (Pearce 1992,129). Though devised in relation
to the life sciences, this approach can be detected behind the organisational structures for
documenting and representing communities. Hooper-Greenhill for example, takes issue
with exhibition strategies that use the term ‘Indian’ to refer to a diverse range of peoples
that include the ‘Cree, Chippewa, Haida, Kwakuitl, Dakota, Blood and Comanche’. By
using a generic oversimplified term to label these diverse communities under, is ‘to gloss
over and in effect deny their specific histories, cultures and identities.’(2000a,17). Diverse
identities therefore are reduced to a single generic, essentialist identity by being subject to
the reductionist narratives museums impose.

This same argument can be applied in relation to subcultural identities: ‘Punk’ as we have
seen, is often used as a generic term, and applied to any subculture whose sartorial styling
consists of coloured, shaved and shaped hairstyles, boots, jeans, leather jackets, and so
forth. What may actually be represented are the many Punk derivatives; New Wave, Oi!,
Psychobilly, Straightedge, Skatepunk. As the last chapter argued, essentialist subcultural
identities do not exist. Indeed, as Chapter Two also argued, subcultures must be understood
to be examples of ‘late modern lifestyles in which notions of identity are ‘constructed’
rather than ‘given’, and ‘fluid’ rather than ‘fixed’. (Bennett 1999;599) Thornton comments
for example,

‘In the course of these four years ethnographic research, I was unable to find a
crowd I could comfortably identify as typical, average, ordinary, majority or
mainstream.’(1995;106)

Similarly, Greg Wahl, in attempting to trace a ‘punk aesthetic’, suggests that even in early
Punk, it is difficult to locate a solid ideological core (1995). DJ Taylor for example,
identified the problems of providing a taxonomy of modern music. He charts the move
within the field of ‘pop’ from around five types of music (pop, rock, disco, northern soul
and rockabilly), these categorisations then widened out into sub-genres, for example
‘progressive rock’ and ‘pub rock’ so that by the nineties he argues, there is such a range of
styles and sub-classifications that ‘Linnaeus himself would have balked’. (2000). Oversimplified terms such as ‘Punk’, ‘Mod’ and so forth, used to label subcultural
identities in order to position them within a classificatory framework, thus fail to recognise
the heterogeneity and complexity of subcultural formations and genealogy. As one curator
acknowledged for example,

“I think the conventional, systematic ways of collecting...are not going to collect
what is, by its nature, not systematic and it’s very oppositional to that kind of
system.” (Interviewee KC;4)
Indeed it can be argued, that if an individual cannot be allotted a label, a place within the structure, then they are either marginalised, or a label is made up (the latter shall be explored further in the *Streetstyle* case study below). As Pearce argues, ‘All museum objects have names...and those pieces that lack names exist in a kind of limbo.’ (1992;122) Participants themselves however, do not always recognise labels or refuse to label themselves, or have labels applied to them. The couple in Plate 13 for example, do not identify with any particular subculture: they do not consider themselves to be ‘travellers’, ‘crusties’ or ‘ punks’, though their appearance may elude to all three subcultures. Museums however, find it difficult to recognise and account for, the paradoxical nature of such subcultural affiliation: although individuals may appear to sartorially identify with a particular subcultural formation, that they refuse to be labelled under any one subcultural identity, poses a challenge for museums.

The classification and labelling systems which museums impose on the world then, mitigate against the recognition of the diversity and fluidity of subcultural formations and affiliation. Thus we can see that,

‘a scheme of classification is elaborated for storing or displaying the object so that the reality of the collection itself, its coherent order, overrides specific histories of the object’s production and appropriation’ (Stocking 1985;239)

As Pearce has argued, the application of linguistic names in order to communicate is often ‘a very clumsy way of conveying information about physical material’ (1992;123). The importance placed by the modernist paradigm on the recording of rational ‘facts’ in relation to material culture, limits the knowledges that get represented within the histories that museums make, for what is deemed important is not for example, the emotions or feelings associated with objects:

‘its much simpler and more straightforward to label a plough according to its maker’s name, type and date than to deal with such pertinent social facts as who used it, how they felt about it, and what had to be sacrificed to buy it in the first place.’ (Kavanagh 1994b)

The rigid classifications that objects are documented under, are based on facts that have little scope for recording emotions, value systems, associated meanings of the material culture collected.

The ‘act of classification, which museum workers often call ‘identification’, is not as simple or transparent as it might at first sight appear’ (Pearce 1992;123) as any ‘method of classification inevitably has the potential to impose limits on the interpretation of objects’
Plate 13: Subculturalists who refuse to be labelled can remain absent from museum representations.
and can render identities invisible. Within the SHIC system of classification for example, objects should only be attributed one classification, i.e. classified under one of the following headings: community life, domestic and family life, personal life and working life. That these categories fail to recognise community identities, led Christine Johnson to introduce a series of subcategories to SHIC: African-Caribbean, European, Jewish, Indian Subcontinent, Other Asian, Women, Lesbian, Gay and Attitudes. As Coxall has commented, ‘Such subcategories permit sections of society rendered invisible by the SHIC classification system to become visible by moving away from a purely object-based approach to a people-based approach to recording history.’ (1999)

‘Section 5’, under which these subdivisions became grouped, does not however, have a separate section that recognises subcultural material or identities. Indeed research for this thesis revealed that information on the subcultural material within collections was not easily retrievable as there was no standard way of documenting it. As IR commented,

“it’s a bit hit and miss because if somebody doesn’t put on the word that you [want]...so you [have] to really think of all possible key words and then eventually you got what you wanted.” (6)

21% (72 museums) responding to the survey, indicated that they did not feel that their past documentation and collection methods meant that they could answer the questionnaire with confidence. Some respondents indicated that they did not know how many relevant artefacts could be in their collections (Q.4) because, as one commented, “This information is not available and it could not be gleaned from the documentation system without first going through every object!” (small independent museum) Some museums still did not have their documentation computerised so that, as Interviewee QU commented, “we all rely on our own knowledge of what’s there” (12). Many of the positive responses were also vague about the material that they did hold. It was not easy for museums to track down what their collections held and it was suggested by a number of museums that it would be impossible to reconsider what their collections hold in relation to subcultural material retrospectively.

Paradoxically then, whilst the associated material culture of diverse identities are attributed generic subcultural labels within exhibitions, within museum systems of documentation, these labels often remain hidden as subcultural material gets documented according to other criteria, under type of material for example. For even with computerised
documentation systems like Multi Mimsy, which have the facility to record, and search, numerous descriptive terms, only the barest of descriptions are often given: as one Interviewee commented, “The problem is that documentation is [only] as good as the person who enters it” (interviewee QU;11). The capacity to reflect fluid identities in such layered documentation systems therefore, is invariably never taken advantage of. Thus, within the current systems of classification and documentation, the complexity, fluidity and heterogeneity of subcultural identities cannot be accounted for, and indeed subcultures get ‘lost’ as their identities have no place within these systems. This serves to keep identities, and histories hidden, and fails to recognise that subculturalists might want to trace their own subcultural heritage: documentation therefore ‘can present one of the biggest barriers to inclusive practice’ (Wallace 2001;86).

A balance therefore, needs to be struck between the recognition of identities without ghettoising them or assuming essentialism. This can become a sensitive issue in reference to subcultures that are particularly discriminated against within wider society. Subcultures defined through sexual identification for example, can be particularly problematic, as is the issue of recording lesbian and gay men’s histories in general. Placed in a distinct category for gay and lesbian material or identities, there is a danger that they can become ghettoised, and reduced simply to their sexuality. However, in not labelling sexuality, histories get hidden, remain invisible.

Vanegas’ research has revealed that museums know they have lesbian and gay related material in their collections, however it is not catalogued as such (2002). Thus knowledge of relevant material is ‘likely to disappear with the current curator’ and where contextual information is missing ‘the lesbian and gay contributions remain invisible and might just as well not be there.’ (Vanegas 2002;99) Such problems became apparent when the Museum of London was searching for material for the Pride and Prejudice exhibition: the curators knew the collections contained relevant material but because its status was not documented, they could not use it. Material is assumed to have a heterosexual or ‘mainstream’ use unless explicitly otherwise, for example Gay Pride badges. Meanings associated with objects are therefore lost, as the history of objects go unrecorded.114

114 Note that Lifetimes at Croydon has attempted to recognise the various facets to the lives of individual lesbians and gays, whilst still recognising their lesbian and gay identities: to recognise that they are not only defined by their sexuality (Vanegas, 2002; see also Interview 25).
Static monumentality:

Modernist evolutionary narratives and classification systems thus govern how museums operate. This has led the modern museum to attempt to represent transient processes and experiences through static and objectifying classification systems and displays (Walsh 1992;18), imposing practical limitations on what museums collect and show, and as we have argued already, limiting ideologically what can be represented.

There exists a certain idea of ‘static monumentality’ behind the museums accumulation of collections of objects (Hein 2000;8). Invested as a means to establish the museum institution’s permanence and importance, what has traditionally been collected and displayed does not reflect the whim, fad or fashion but more nobler, universal and timeless notions of beauty, art, craftsmanship and so forth. The organisational structures as we have seen then, that have been put in place reflect this and are not responsive nor reflexive.

This has meant that it is difficult to respond to the ever changing flux of identities; impossible to capture the fluidity of identification. To record the permutations and evolution of new identities. Collecting and exhibition strategies mean that museums cannot necessarily make quick responses to the short term changes and trends on a micro level of subcultural identities. They only represent the general and the historic.

Classification systems and static displays force museums to represent identities as static, stable, as definable and frozen. Subcultures are taken to be homogeneous and timeless and museums do not acknowledge that they have developed, grown, changed, mutated, hybridised. Recording contemporary cultural expression and identities is thus impossible for museums, for as Polhemus argues,

‘Club culture in our fragmented post-modern times has become such a complex and ever-changing feast that no one can keep up with it. Listing magazines do their best but that really isn’t good enough because all those splintered little micro-scenes defy categorisation. Or, to put it another way, by the time a magazine can come up with a suitable label, the in-crowd has moved on.’(1996a;72)

Dance culture definitions have proliferated at ‘breakneck speed’ as the following list cited by Redhead illustrates; ‘house, deep house, electro, garage, techno, ambient, gangsta rap, trip-hop, gabber, hardcore, handbag house, euro pop, trance, jungle, tribal’ (1997,109) Museums utilising the present modernist paradigm, cannot respond to such fast and nuanced changes.
In emphasising evolutionary narratives and presenting this within static displays of material culture, museums freeze the past, freeze time into representable moments. Objects are taken from their contexts and meant to stand for abstract wholes; thus the history of subcultural styles is collapsed into a series of iconic moments, with little account being taken for the changes and developments that have constantly occurred within the identities they address. For example, the various mutations and trends in the sartorial codes of Skinhead: Jamaican inspired 1960s skinhead, Oi! Skinhead of the 1970s, Two Tone of the 1980s, and the revival of 1960s Skinhead ‘fashions’ in the 1990s. What museum exhibitions often present in a stereotypical identity at a frozen moment in time of the subcultures history that is taken to stand for that identity per say. Museums therefore, may present subcultural identities, but they rarely represent subcultural histories.

Museums attempt to mediate objective reality that does not exist. ‘The development of museums in the nineteenth century was governed by the view that it would be possible to achieve ‘by the ordered display of selected artefacts a total representation of human reality and history’…This dream that the rational ordering of things might mirror the real order of things was soon to be revealed as just that.’ (Bennett 1988;83) As Foucault has revealed, it is futile to attempt to search for or capture essential essence of things for this assumes there are definitive meanings to be found. He makes use of the word ‘genealogies’ ‘which he felt permitted the discontinuities of biographies that seamless history-making does not allow.’ He

‘attempts to reveal the multiplicity of factors behind the event and the fragility of historical forms. In this view of history, which Foucault’s writings exemplify, there can be no constants, no essences, no immobile forms of uninterrupted continuities structuring the past.’(Madan Sarup quoted in Coxall 1999)

If we accept the fallacy of the ‘objectivity of objecthood’ then a challenge is posed to the typologies that museums are arranged in, for as Hein argues, the ‘Traditional content-based organization collapses if the meaning of objects museums contain is equivocal. Things that are neither unique nor typical, neither paragons nor specimens of their kind, effectively have no existence at all.’(2000;14) Objects can have a surfeit of simultaneous or sequential meanings and museums need to ‘adapt to an ethos of dislocated meaning’ to survive (Hein 2000;15).
It is becoming recognised that ‘No longer is there a single treasure to be found under the guidance of an expert’ and it is now understood that ‘Meaning is not “put into” a text or object to be “taken away” by someone who “finds” it there, but comes into being through intersubjective participatory experiences.’ (Hein 2000;63)

As Hebdige has argued;

‘Popular culture offers a rich iconography, a set of symbols, objects and artefacts, which can be assembled and reassembled by different groups in a literally limitless number of combinations. The meaning of each selection is transformed as individual objects are taken out of their original, historical and cultural contexts and juxtaposed against other objects and signs from other contexts.’ (1988a;104)

Museums make no account for this however.

**Rigid discipline divisions:**

Museums ‘themselves are classified according to their collections, and the objects in these collections are documented according to a classification of their perceived sphere of use’ (Coxall 1999). As we have explored, documentation and collections management systems are not neutral activities, but can be ‘deeply exclusive’. Wallace argues that,

‘Much of this exclusivity stems from the historical development of museum specialisms, a blinkered and narrow approach to collecting and classification, and the lack of meaningful links between discrete collection areas, all of which are reflected in entrenched systems and working practices.’ (2001;83)

Many collecting policies therefore are structured around ‘distinct collection disciplines rather than encompassing the entire collection with a common aim and purpose’ (Wallace 2001) Thus the distinct modes that disciplines have for assembling, classifying and displaying material culture can have a profound effect on the knowledges that are recreated, and the identities and histories that get privileged, and those that get marginalised. We now move on to consider other characteristics of the modernist paradigm, that have also had significant effects on how, why and what is represented.

That different disciplines have distinct modes of assembling, classifying and displaying material culture, the discipline that an object comes to reside in, and the classificatory system in use within that discipline, will effect the nominator, values and interpretation that are attributed to that object.\(^{115}\) There may indeed be a multitude of material existing in

\(^{115}\) Where objects are positioned within the table of value will structure how that material is known: material culture of the wealthy (for example domestic furniture and eating utensils) becomes classified as ‘decorative
museum collections, that could be interpreted from a subcultural perspective, however, such alternative interpretations often do not get acknowledged. The significance of the Dr. Marten boot to subcultural styling (see Roach 1999) may or may not be recognised within museums for example. What significance this icon is attributed with, is dictated by the discipline it has been collected under: so for example, the significance Dr. Marten boots have within the history of work-wear, or in the technological development of shoe design or advancements in health reform, are just as likely to be acknowledged, as is the boots’ significance as a subcultural sartorial icon.

Within each discipline area also, the systems of classification in use are often rigid. As Gaby Porter comments;

'In museums, we tend to look inwards; we work to classifications which are rigid. In social history, these classifications divide the world into four zones: community; work and industry; domestic and personal. In this system, many people's lived experience is divided up into discrete segments which are not enmeshed in the ways that they are in everyday life.' (1991) \(^{116}\)

Collections and displays can be organised through the reductive divisions of the 'public' and 'private', 'work' and 'home' which Porter argues are no longer appropriate. As we have also seen, Moore has argued that there is a tendency for social history to narrowly interpret popular culture as leisure, to reduce it to 'a handful of stereotypical leisure activities' in particular sport and popular entertainment. Popular culture is thus ghettoised, limited in representation to areas such as music and fashion. A one dimensional picture of subcultural authenticity is thus presented by museums as only the aspects of subcultural identities pertaining to their leisure pursuits are ever explored.

As the results of the survey illustrate, when subcultural identities are represented within museums, it is often within the context of 'leisure', and this has led to predominantly certain types of material culture being collected and certain interpretations of subcultural identities, privileged over others. There is for example, little acknowledgement of how employment can revolve around subcultural identities: the running of alternative bookshops or cafes for example or organising protests and campaigns, or the involvement in the creative industries such as that of musicians, dj’s, tattoo artists, visual artists, dressmakers, jewellery makers, writers and so forth, that subcultures can stimulate and

\(^{116}\) Porter suggests starting from personal and local histories: opens wider range and accounts for 'leaks' across boundaries of classification.
support. The multifaceted nature of subcultural expression is therefore unrealised within museum representations, if subcultures are simply located within the area of leisure.117

Subcultural affiliation therefore, can mean more than simply adopting a particular sartorial style, but rather can effect ones whole lifestyle. Like CCCS, the underlying assumptions behind museum representations are often that participation is just a weekend or leisure activity. Though some subcultures can lead participants to adopt a more alternative lifestyle, than others, even when one does not totally ‘opt out’ of society, subcultural affiliation can have its repercussions: adopting a ‘Punk’ identity (see for example Plate 14), with visible tattoos, piercing, coloured and shaved hairstyle, may effect relations with ones family, ones education, ones career prospects, the city spaces one can and cannot enter into, and one can suffer from verbal and even physical abuse from school or work colleagues, neighbours and even strangers in the street.

Social history displays however, can be in danger of stereotyping subcultures through the focusing of attention onto limited areas. As one curator acknowledged,

“It can be relatively easy to collect and acquire the material culture of subcultural groups simply because it is highly visible and deliberately stands out from the mainstream. Consequently, it becomes important not to focus just on the attractive and appealing material culture of these subcultural groups. What is harder to collect and interpret is the social views and attitudes of the people behind these objects. In addition, all subcultural groups still use the everyday household goods that characterise 20th Century society. So, by merely collecting the decorative and visible elements of subcultural groups we might be returning to the old days of museums when curators collected the decorative and exotic.” (perc.com. Interviewee NA)

Rigid discipline divisions have meant that the types of material that gets collected is limited. As the survey revealed, most material of a subculture that has been collected by museums has been undertaken by the social history or costume disciplines. Other discipline areas could also collect material, however, it is often not seen as appropriate. There is little evidence for example, that science and technology collections are collecting mixing desks, samplers or lighting systems that are so integral to the production of subcultural music and performance. Similarly, club flyers are very rarely collected by art

117 Indeed, this approach reflects that of BCCCS who structured their understanding of subcultures on divisions between the private and public, home and the street, which lead them to favour the latter, and lead to exclusion of female subcultural participation from their accounts.
Plate 14: Subculturalists whose striking and unalterable appearances will inevitably affect their lifestyles.
departments. Thus again, as the survey has revealed, only certain aspects of subcultures are being recorded: in particular the two dimensional, such as photos and ephemera (mostly collected by social history departments), and subcultural dress (collected by costume departments).

Whole subcultural histories can be rendered invisible by such discipline divisions. Manchester for example has had, and still continues to have, thriving subcultural scenes. It also had at least one world famous night-club (the Hacienda) and a very successful independent record label (Factory Records). Much of this important subcultural history, and indeed British cultural history, has gone undocumented by museums in the area however. A major contributing factor to this, has been the absence of an appropriate social history museum to undertake the collecting. Although Platt Hall has acquired a limited amount of costume, and an important archive of Factory Records has, by chance, ended up at the Science & Technology Museum (which was forward thinking and flexible enough to accommodate the material), this history remains undocumented because no social history museum exists to address it: the museum that would be the most relevant to collect material, Pump House/Museum of Labour History, concentrates its attention on working class and political culture and thus subcultural history is considered beyond its remit.

Rigid discipline divisions have also meant that interdisciplinary working is very difficult. Museums have developed a culture that is often departmentally inward looking, for in practical terms, single discipline collecting and exhibiting is the least challenging. When we turn to collecting and representing subcultural identifies, these inadequacies become further apparent as museums arguably do not have the appropriate framework to cope with the practical implications that collecting 'lifestyles' can entail. Often the separation between disciplines is physically realised: collections are divided up into the different discipline areas, and consequently stored often within separate storage spaces, buildings or museums. The collections, looked after by separate subject specialists, are also normally displayed in separate galleries within different exhibition structures. To paraphrase Helen Coxall, any museum which attempts to display lifestyles ‘is likely to come across’ difficulties. Similarly, once material has been collected, is it appropriate for example, that an attempt to

118 Again, that discipline divisions operate to structures of value is revealed: though club flyers, album covers, posters etc, have been considered as ‘art’ (see for example 1996; 1995), they are rarely represented in ‘Art’ collections, rather being collected under the category of ephemera within social history. Similarly, it has been the social history departments that have organised exhibitions such as Sound 'n' Fury: the Art and Imagery of Heavy Metal.
represent a Mods' identity and 'lifestyle', leads to artefacts being disbanded into respective departments, or in the case of larger museum services, individual museums, so that the scooter is placed within the transport section, the parka and suit in the costume collection, the records and record player in social history and so forth? Once divided, never to be united again.

Given that the collection of material that can be interpreted as subcultural in nature is often dependant on the recognition of its importance by an enthusiastic individual, more often only material relating to that individuals discipline area are collected, (e.g. a curator of costume may only be able to collect costume, and material of a social history nature may thus only be collected in an incidental, contextual manner.) Subsequently, the material that comes to be entrusted within the museum, may reflect a bias in the type of material collected. This bias may not be a reflection of the reality of that identity represented, but rather of the strictly defined collecting procedures that had to be adhered to. That the enormous efforts of the V&A to contact subcultural individuals only resulted in the creation of a collection of costume is a telling example: A wealth of material culture could have been solicited from the many contacts that the V&A made for Streetstyle, however this remains a lost opportunity because of discipline divisions.

Given that material is often collected because of the enthusiasm and insight of a particular member of staff, problems can arise where the material is relevant to more than one discipline in the museum but its importance is not recognised by all staff. One interviewee commented for example,

"There was a little opposition and sort of some resentment from some of my territorial colleagues because they don't perceive it as being important as parts of their collection and they are kind of resistant to contemporary collecting anyway. So they had to be brought on board. That's why it's important to make it a collective work effort to get the collection sorted out." (Interviewee FF,15)

For interdisciplinary collecting to work therefore, it must be embraced by not just an individual enthusiastic curator, who wants to collect subcultures, but with the agreement of fellow colleagues also: it may necessitate the agreement of several curators responsible for the various collections, to agree to collect, and find room in their stores, for the various elements that constitute a subcultural identity. 119 At present however, the majority of

119 Interviewee QU noted for example, that it would be difficult for them to persuade the acquisitions committee to accept material that reflected an identity such as 'Mod', "because of the number of objects involved." (12)
museums do not have the organisational infrastructure which enables such cross-disciplinary work. Discipline divisions serve to hinder communication between departments for as Hudson argues, ‘really effective communication cannot be achieved until the traditional academic barriers and compartments are swept away (1987;176).


As the first major exhibition by a National museum to represent subcultures, the Streetstyle exhibition at the V&A set an important and significant precedent. The problems experienced whilst putting the exhibition together, and subsequent criticisms made of it, serve to further highlight however, some of the problems of contemporary museums working to a modernist paradigm.

The exhibition was large, featuring nearly two hundred outfits, and was divided into two sections, displayed over two rooms (see Appendix 8)\(^\text{120}\): the first section provided a chronological examination of subcultural styles from the post-war period, and the second section brought the exhibition up to date, realising two concepts coined by Ted Polhemus - the ‘Gathering of the Tribes’ and the ‘Supermarket of Style’ - terms he coins in his most recent works (1994; 1996b).\(^\text{121}\)

The practical challenges to creating such a major exhibition were substantial, particularly as the V&A had no relevant material within its collections and had to start collecting from scratch. These were compounded however, by the failure of the museum to break with the structures of operation that traditionally have defined and governed museums. Like the ‘modernist museum [which] was intended to be encyclopaedic, to draw together a complete collection, to act as a universal archive’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2001a), the V&A

\(^{120}\) Unfortunately it has been impossible to include detailed images of Streetstyle: the public was not allowed to take photographs and the only record that the V&A has of it are those included in the Appendix.

\(^{121}\) In the concept ‘Gathering of the Tribes’, Polhemus attempts to suggest the ‘extraordinary heterogeneity’ that came to characterise ‘streetstyle’ by the start of the nineties (Polhemus 1994;128): that a fusion has occurred between various, dissimilar existing groups, with ‘GoTT’ serving ‘to create a huge umbrella under which all sorts of previously untenable experiments can be conducted’ (Polhemus 1994; 129) The ‘Supermarket of Style’ is used by Polhemus as a metaphor for the way the world is experienced as heterogeneous where one can ‘pick and mix sartorial identities’ (Evans 1997;106).
attempted to present a comprehensive representation of subcultures from the past fifty years.

That the modernist paradigm structured the exhibition, was revealed in a number of ways: in particular, the different manner in which subcultural styles were dealt with in the first and second parts, was telling. The first section of the exhibition attempted to create an archaeology of subcultural styles, and realised the historical development of 'streetstyle' from 1940 to the present day, in a material way. A look at the plan of the exhibition reveals how the displays were arranged chronologically (Plate 15): a linear timeline was created where each subculture was allotted a place according to where they were first believed to appear. Subcultural identities were grouped on separate plinths, and for some identities, their historical development was shown: the Mod section for example displayed outfits from the 1960s and the Mod revival of the 1980s.

In the second section however, the chronological approach disappeared as the emphasis was directed at representing the multiplicity of looks that were available in 1993/4. Here it appeared that an attempt was being made to acknowledge postmodernist ideas and represent the fragmented plurality of subcultures that simultaneously exist. The ideas of guest curator Ted Polhemus particularly influenced this section of the exhibition, and around twenty outfits were pieced together to fit Polhemus's theories of the 'Gathering of the Tribes' and the 'Supermarket of Style'. The emphasis on representing 'authentic' outfits worn by real people also disappeared; to quote Muggleton, there are no 'worn-by's' in the labels (1995b;7).

The approaches to the two sections therefore, may have seemed strikingly different, however both were part of an agenda which attempted to realise the CCCS modernist inspired tradition of subcultural history, which indeed provided the overarching structure for the whole exhibition. Thus, although the Streetstyle exhibition might appear cutting edge, what it actually realised was the containment of complex and cyclical histories of subcultural styling within a traditional evolutionary modernist narrative. Though it did recognise to an extent the development and change of subcultural identities, this was subsumed within the overarching chronological approach. Ultimately then, the modernist idea of progress, of evolution over linear time, was embodied within the exhibition. What was presented was a traditional modernist evolutionary narrative of progression from the
simple to the complex: A one way narrative which moved from early, essentialist identities to more complex and hybridised contemporary ones.

In attempting to engage in a 'comprehensive' survey of subcultural identities since the 1940s, the exhibition also reinforced modernist totalising and universalising practises. The impulse to classify was also particularly revealed through Polhemus's subcultural 'family tree' which labelled styles as distinct categories and traced the direct connections and influences upon them (Plate 16). This however only recognised the connections between subcultures where styles had an affinity: that Rockers in the 1960s were influenced by Rockabilly's and Ton-Up Boys in the 1950s, not that their styling and identities could have also been influenced by what they constructed themselves as opposite to (also identifiable in the 1960s), i.e. Mods and later Hippies.

The museum embarked on an admirable but impossible task, for the subcultural identities that the museum was attempting to represent challenge the principles of 'specialisation and classification' that have been so fundamental to the institution of the museum. They also challenge the modernist museums' tradition of perceiving history as an existing reality which can be represented within overarching narratives. Although within the act of collecting and representing subcultural identities, such inadequacies of the modernist paradigm did become apparent to the curatorial team, because the structures of representation that had been chosen were in fact those of the modernist paradigm, it meant that such challenges could be addressed only with limited effect.

An examination of three significant criticisms that were levied at the exhibition can serve to highlight the fundamental problems of the modernist paradigm; a tradition that places the 'collection, confinement and classification of material things' (Hooper-Greenhill 1992;192) as a central function of the museum.

'I don't wanna be pigeon holed':
As the curatorial team had chosen to present an archaeology of subcultural styles, this necessitated that the styles were classified and positioned within the linear time frame. However, the curators quickly came up against resistance to this when they began researching and compiling the exhibition; the resistance of subcultural members to any categorisation of their style was to cause a significant problem for them. To quote one
Plate 15: Floor plan of the Streetstyle exhibition at the V&A
Plate 16: Ted Polhemus's subcultural 'family tree'
curator, '“Most people would never give me a straight answer, because...they didn’t want
to be categorised.”' (Muggleton 1995b;3). Statements such as ‘I don’t wanna be pigeon
holed’ or ‘“I wear this because I like it not because I’m a member of any group or I want
to be affiliated with anyone or anything like that”’ (Muggleton 1995b;3), were common
responses.

The chosen structure for the exhibition therefore sat uneasily with the actual experiences or
structures of knowledge of the subculturalists themselves. In order to discuss the
subcultures, and to create categories of style, the curators had to apply labels, even if they
weren’t actually recognised by the subculturalists themselves. Labels were made up, to
quote a curator, ‘“just to be able to talk about it. So that we could know what we were
talking about.”’ (Muggleton 1995b;4) The research team often approached individuals
with a category in mind, and although this categorisation was flexible, it was essential that
an individual could be positioned within the subcultural classification system that had been
created, before their outfit could be represented in the exhibition. Individuals were
sometimes put under an ‘umbrella’ category as a compromise when they could not or
would not label themselves.

David Muggleton has suggested that what the exhibition actually did then was to create
‘artificial categories’. (1995b;5). By starting with the aim of providing an archaeology of
subcultural styles and in choosing to display the history of subcultural styling in a
traditional chronological fashion, the curators were forced to create a taxonomy of
subcultural styles that was ultimately fictional. Thus although the curators soon recognised
the complexity of subcultural identities, they were unable however, to escape the reductive
need for categorisation and the necessity of applying labels in order to impose some order
and sense on the exhibition. The exhibition therefore continued the tradition of subcultural
studies which created artificial boundaries around supposedly distinct identities.

Even though the curators admirably attempted to engage the subculturalists themselves and
attempted to be responsive to the subculturalists’ own structures of knowledge, ultimately
it was the curatorial structures of knowledge, and power, that were represented; it was the
museum that ultimately created and attempted to impose its system of classification on
subcultural formations.
‘I didn’t wear that’:

Another related problem that the curatorial team encountered was that;

‘“each one of the people who [had been consulted] had...had a different experience and each person who gave an outfit in the exhibition had a different experience from the next person, every single outfit would be different, the only problem is, that people won’t accept that theirs is anything other than right and everyone else’s is wrong.”’ (Muggleton 1995b;10)

Thus although the curators were also soon to recognise, through their research, the complexities of subcultural affiliation and that essential subcultural identities did not necessarily exist, the proposed structure of the exhibition meant that they were then faced with a problem; how could they attempt to acknowledge the subjective element of subcultural involvement within a finite number of outfits? How to limit the various expressions of a subculture to 5/6 dummies when actually they could have represented 200 styles for each subculture? (Muggleton 1995b).

Their solution was to present personal interpretations of the subcultural styles within the exhibition. To ‘obtain a complete outfit from one person who acknowledged their allegiance to a particular sub-culture’ (Haye 1996a;147) to obtain ‘authentic’ clothing that the wearer believed to be representative, rather than attempt to create ‘typical’ or ‘definitive’ representations of the styles.

This however, paradoxically also lead to a criticism of the exhibition, this time particularly from the public themselves. Amy de la Haye, co-curator on the exhibition, stated that ‘the most frequently overheard comment from visitors at the exhibition’ was ‘I was a Punk (B-Boy, Skater, Beatnik) but I didn’t wear that’ (Haye and Dingwall 1996;conclusion). And to quote Cathie Dingwall, another curator, ‘“That was one of the major problems throughout the whole exhibition...I was coming across people who were saying ‘oh no, that’s wrong I didn’t wear that’’”'(Muggleton 1995b;10)

The exhibition had stated;

‘The outfits on display are not stereotypes of the styles they represent. They were worn by one person at the time, or compiled by individuals with special insight into the style. The stereotypical, in fact is often challenged here.’ (Exhibition label)

however, this obviously did not help to any great extent. As Amy states,
'Some people were disappointed that the clothes shown did not reinforce their own memories, but the plurality of sub-cultural styles and emphasis upon personal interpretations, meant that this was inevitable.' (1996a;150)

'they expect to see stereotypes and that's what we haven’t done'

Thus in attempting, even in a limited manner, to escape the reductiveness of stereotypical representations, and to capture the individual nuances of subcultural identification, the exhibition actually and paradoxically, opened itself up to criticism. One could argue then, that although they attempted to recognise the subjective nature of subcultural sartorial expression, this was lost in the context of an exhibition which attempted in the wider sense, to create a definitive archaeology of subcultural style.122

That there existed a tension between the willingness to engage with subjective interpretations, yet also present a definitive history, was revealed in other ways, and was in part due to Polhemus’ influence on the exhibition. Each mannequin had an accompanying label, which described the outfit, and sometimes included information such as the cost of the outfit or provided a quote from the donor. This interpretation worked therefore on a subjective, personal level. For each subcultural identity however, there was also a larger text panel which provided information about the style, the type of people that wore it, the music they listened to and the ideologies to which they supposedly ascribed. Written by Polhemus, this information was generalising in nature, recoursing to essentialist and homogenising characterisations.

This tension also reveals itself again in the ‘catalogue’ of Streetstyle (Haye and Dingwall 1996). Unlike Polhemus’ associated book (1994), Surfers...does attempt to recognise the subjectivity of subcultural styling, again including quotes by donors for example. It also however, includes a glossary: Though it is acknowledged that many of the phrases it explains ‘were invented by the media in order to categorize and report on specific movements’ (Haye and Dingwall 1996;10), it does ultimately reduce subcultural identities to a couple of lines of generalised description. The Psychobilly subculture, for example, is described as,

122 It may also be argued that the failure of the public to recognise the attempts the V&A made to avoid presentation of the stereotypical, was in part due to expectations: that the museum as authoritative producer of knowledge is so entrenched, has led the public to expect to see generalised and 'typical' representations within museums.
‘PSYCHOBILLY Member of a subgenre of the early 1980s Rockabilly movement. Psychobillies were inspired by the style and sound of the American band, The Cramps. They were identifiable by their quiffs and customized leather and denim clothes.’

As a subculture of which I have much insider knowledge, I can verify that the glossary description of ‘Psychobilly’ is a very limited description. It fails to identify any actual Psychobilly bands and acknowledge the important influence that Punk and 1960s Garage, in addition to Rockabilly, had. It is also confusing: the statement that it is a sub genre of 80s Rockabilly is contradicted by the reference to the influence of the Cramps (the Cramps being at this time identified with Gothic and as far removed from Rockabilly, both sartorially and ideologically, as a subculture could get).

Similarly, though Psychobillies were identifiable by distinctive shaping of hair, the sartorial styles adopted depended on what bands were followed, for influences were diverse and the music wide ranging in sound. The accompanying text to the outfit pictured in the catalogue however, also provides a generalised description rather than an individuals’ interpretation: ‘Sleeves were ripped off t-shirts to reveal elaborately tattooed bodies’ (Haye and Dingwall 1996). Presumably as a style deemed of limited importance, we also only get one version from 1980, and are not shown how it developed. Thus although the outfit which is included in the catalogue, is representative of an individuals’ identification with the subculture, the interpretations provided are of an anonymous and generalising authority.

What about context?:

Another significant and common criticism directed at the exhibition was that the outfits were not located within their cultural context. An effort was made to hint at associated contexts; some photographs, music and a limited amount of props were provided, however Streetstyle was very much an exhibition of clothing. The decision was taken to display outfits on headless mannequins, so no hairstyles or make-up and a limited amount of accessories were provided (Plate 17). Even where interpretation labels did include comments from the donors, the garments were very much stripped from their contexts, isolated literally on a pedestal.

123 Note there is actually a factual error in the description of the outfit, for whilst the influence of Rockabilly on Psychobilly could be detected in the boots that some individuals chose to wear, as the text acknowledges, the ones on show are DM’s and not of the biker kind of boot favoured by Rockabilly’s, but rather are indicative of the Punk influence on this style.
Plate 17: Example of the type of mannequin used for the *Streetstyle* exhibition
The absence of context, cultural or otherwise, was viewed as legitimate because of the context the collection itself was classified within; the costume collection is located within the V&A which is a Decorative Arts museum, thus the focus of collecting and interpretation is on aesthetics. Thus the discipline divisions and their associated modes of operating, that the modernist paradigm has established, structured (and ultimately limited) how the only exhibition to address the history of subcultural identities was realised.

To summarise then: inevitably classification imposed limits on the interpretation of the objects, it limited frames of reference for sorting the subcultural identities (Hooper-Greenhill 1992;205); in the first section of the exhibition, there was no room for any real acknowledgement of interconnectedness of styles, key garments still ‘stood’ for a particular subculture. Displayed on a pedestal ‘the illusion that categories exist[ed] independently of other categories’ was given (Pearce;85).

Neither was there room for styles which fell between the gaps. There was no room to recognise the different levels of subcultural commitment or to explore how or why some individuals move through different subcultures. In the first part of the exhibition then, subcultures were presented as defined, and the common elements or interconnectedness of different subcultures wasn’t accounted for. There was also no room to explore how other indices such as gender, race or sexuality, have been negotiated in and through subcultural styles. The way that the exhibition was ordered therefore, arguably limited the potential ‘endless possibility of rereadings’ that could have occurred (Hooper-Greenhill 1992;215).

The second part of the exhibition however, in an attempt to acknowledge the heterogeneity of subcultural expression, ended up creating outfits from eclectically acquired disparate parts. The knowledgeable voices of the subcultural participants themselves and the curators attempts to listen to them, were lost as the anonymous authority of the museum intervened.

**Conclusion.**

Focusing on the *Streetstyle* initiative in detail then, is a fruitful exercise: It reveals how and to what extent the dominance of the modernist paradigm can persist within a museum, even when it is challenged. It also revealed the inadequacies of this paradigm.
It can be argued that because the modernist paradigm still exerts its influence over museums, it was the orthodox version of subcultural history that ultimately structured the *Streetstyle* exhibition overall. Thus, whilst the exhibition illustrated an attempt to engage with a postmodernist re-reading of subcultural history, to take some account of fragmentation, the pluralism of identities, of fluidity and uncertainty, it still ended up moulding heterogeneous identities into what are ultimately, legitimating modernist structures. However, the *Streetstyle* exhibition demonstrated a shift (within a paradigm, not from one paradigm to another): rather than there being a simple denial of alternative versions, containment was exercised.

In structuring the exhibition in accordance with the modernist CCCS tradition, the museum illustrated that this approach to subcultural history can not be realised materially without significant problems and challenges. The idea that cohesive groups unfolded over time and progressed from simple to complex formations, is revealed as problematic by the fact that the two sections of the exhibition did not sit happily together: one exposed the inadequacies of the other. That the museum curators felt the need to recognise subjective interpretations of subcultural identification, and to a limited extent the histories of subcultures, within the first half of the exhibition, exposes the limited nature of orthodox theorisation of pre-Punk subcultures: they felt it necessary to move towards the recognition of what Muggleton has referred to as a second, alternative version of subcultural history which recognises the individualistic nature of subcultural identification (2000).

The exhibition also revealed how;

> 'the idea of classification and sequence now has so powerful a hold over our intellectual imaginations that we gear a great deal of effort towards the notion of material lattice-works of perceived meaning.’ (Pearce ;86-87)

*Streetstyle* was created by the systematic collection of subcultural styles. Outfits were ‘extracted from their context and put into relationships created by seriality’ with styles being organised through a chronological and typological framework. ‘Gaps’ were filled with replicas or constructed assemblages.

Like the two books that were to accompany ‘Streetstyle’ (Haye and Dingwall 1996; Polhemus 1994), the exhibition attempted to enable visitors, outsiders, to ‘know’ the secret world of the subcultural stylist. However, to paraphrase Helen Coxall, representing is not
the same as experiencing (1999). When museums deal with culture that is within the public's lived memory, the museum's authority is more readily challenged: 'In the museum, the viewer's perception of the object is often constructed through her/his acceptance of the naming/identification of the object by an 'authority' (Walsh 1992:36), this acceptance is challenged when the subject is close to the public's own experiences, and memories.

The Streetstyle exhibition then, just grazed the tip of the iceberg as regards the complexities of subcultural style (never mind the various other aspects such as music etc) and that was without dealing with hairstyling, make-up and accessories! Whilst it marked a significant move for the V&A to address this subject, and it legitimised attention to costume collections for others to follow, the problems that the exhibition caused the institution in terms of even beginning to acknowledge the complexities of subcultural style, illustrate that museums as institutions are not organised to explore difference, layers, movement. In an attempt to make-sense, the V&A chose to recourse to the linear narrative, which in this case was difficult to substantiate and illustrate.

Thus whilst current subcultural theory and literature has begun to examine the heterogeneity of existing contemporary subcultures, and address the breakdown of the supposed subcultural lineage, it is difficult for museums to do so. Identities that are defined as fluid and not essential pose a major problem for museums as they expose the inadequacies of the modernist framework.

The failure of museums to acknowledge the constructed nature of 'truth' and 'knowledge', one can argue, has thus been exposed by subcultures; each participant insisted on their truth and their knowledge as legitimate. Perhaps it is the very medium of representation that is also at fault, to quote Hooper-Greenhill, displays 'seem to us now as...curiously outdated. How can organic relationships, histories, and links to people be shown in display cases?' (1992;204). Museums as factory and production lines need to 'tool up' differently in order to produce exhibitions that do not follow the traditional presentation of objects in a linear, chronological manner.

Haslam's comment on the music papers can also serve as a warning for museums too;

'if you write today's story accurately and well, you're writing tomorrow's history, and that's why I still harbour real anger about plain inaccuracy in music
journalism...you realise that what the NME says is not infallible...[inaccuracy] comes out of...wanting everything in black and white......'(Redhead 1990;37)

Though performativity may be ensured by the use of single linear narratives, misrepresentation can occur as complexities are simplified and contradictions ironed out. Museums need to be flexible to accommodate contemporary social and cultural expressions such as subcultures, not impose systems of rigid order that do not exist in the realities of complex daily life. It can be argued however, that museums do have ideological motivations for maintaining the status quo. We move on to consider this in the next chapter.
CHAPTER EIGHT
Challenging ‘deviant’ identities and histories.

‘Subcultures are generally groups that are perceived to deviate from the normative standards of the dominant culture, as this is variously defined according to age, sexuality, and taste in economic, racial, and gendered terms. Subcultures are often positioned socially and analytically as disenfranchised, subordinate, subaltern, or subterranean. Subcultures, and the academics who study them, often distinguish themselves as being oppositional, alternative, and countercultural, as being defined against others, i.e. “squares” or “the mainstream.”’ (Herzog, Mitchell, and Soccio 1999)

Introduction.

Within this penultimate chapter, our examination of the modernist museum paradigm is concluded as we consider how the label of ‘deviant’ or ‘delinquent’ has contributed to the exclusion of subcultural identities and histories from museums, and has effected representations when they do occur. What challenges are presented by ‘deviant’ subcultural identities and their ‘controversial’ social practices, and what conclusions can this again lead us to draw, about the usefulness of the modernist paradigm of the museum within contemporary society?

As Chapter Two introduced, identities are labelled as ‘deviant’ because they are seen to deviate from societies norms and thus are rejected by or excluded from society. The label ‘deviant’ may be attributed for a number of reasons, for example alternative ways of life or sexual orientation that challenge the constructed ‘norm’. However, the media also helps create moral panics, feeding society’s need for scapegoats and the application of the deviant label on to certain groups.

Kenneth Thompson has argued that ‘this is the age of moral panic’ where ‘the activities of youth’ in particular have often been presented as potentially immoral and a threat to the established way of life’ (1998,1). Successive youth subcultures have been the subjects of such moral panics: Teddy Boys in the 1950s, Mods and Rockers in the early, and Hippies in the late, 1960s, Skinheads and Punks (1970s) and Acid House (1980s). Characterised as evil ‘folk devils’ in the public consciousness, these identities have been constructed as a threat to societal values and interests, and particularly to the ‘main bastion of social order’, 284
the family. Sexual immorality was also allied to the fear of youth subcultures (Thompson 1998;4). Indeed headlines such as,

‘These people are the wreckers of civilisation’ (*The Daily Mail* describing Punk in 1976),

or those which contributed to the moral panic around Rave culture that emerged in the early 1990s,

‘EVIL OF ECSTASY’ (*Sun*, 19 October)
‘BAN THIS KILLER MUSIC’ (*Post*, 24 October)
‘ACID HOUSE HORROR’ (*Sun*, 25 October)
‘DRUG CRAZED ACID HOUSE FANS’ (*Sun*, 28 October) …’
(Redhead 1997;57)

illustrate the manner in which subcultures have been demonised in the popular press and subsequently in the public consciousness.

It can be argued however, that notions of deviancy, being socially constructed, alter through time and place. Moral panics about emerging youth subcultures, which may initially label subcultures as deviant, can change as the passage of time turns the once threatening into tolerated, and even romanticised, youthful rebellion. The apparatus of hegemony appropriates, diffuses and defuses subversion. Identities can thus move in and out of deviant status. Subcultures therefore, have been ‘alternately dismissed, denounced and canonized; treated at different times as threats to public order and as harmless buffoons.’(Hebdige 1988a;2).

As Hebdige has argued, ‘youth’ tends to be constructed across two distinct yet linked discourses, that of ‘trouble’ and of ‘fun’. (Hebdige 1988) Adhering to the former interpretation, it may be argued that museums have marginalised serious representations of subcultural identities and histories on the grounds that they are ‘trouble’. Where representations have occurred however, the latter discourse of ‘fun’ tended to be employed as subcultural identities are utilised to ‘spice up’ a gallery space and ensure a museum’s up-to-date-image.

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124 Though oppositional force of subcultures may wane with time, this does not detract from the subversive power that subcultures may initially hold: Though for as Simon Frith states, to ‘assume that what happens to stars and movements in the long term -co-option- discredits their disruptive impact in the short term is to misunderstand the politics of culture’ (Best 1997).
However, although it can be accepted that 'a politics of cultural difference has helped to create the epistemological, aesthetic, and pedagogical space for representations of histories that have been silenced or ignored by the dominant culture' (Crysler and Kusno 1997;54), the traditions established by the modernist paradigm still make it difficult to represent identities and histories that are currently labelled deviant. However, does deviant status mean that one has no right to be represented within museums? Can oppositional cultures be recognised within the museum without the disciplinary apparatus being brought into force on their representation?

This chapter then, further accounts for the marginalisation of subcultural identities and histories from museums, in relation to the status of deviant, exploring the ways in which the label has mitigated against representation. It also examines the problems and issues raised by deviant status, when subcultures are addressed.

**Palaces of moral guardianship and education: challenges to the civilising agenda.**

The creation of public museums as we have seen, was entangled in issues of power and governance. Museums were seen as an effective means to provide 'rational recreation' for the working classes as it was believed that museums, as well as other recreational places such as parks and libraries, 'could reduce drunkenness, crime and trespass and were therefore a contribution to the national economy.' (Hooper-Greenhill 1991;14) Also, as we have seen, through exposure to civilising influence the masses could be taught to be discriminating consumers of culture and with that, conduct themselves in an acceptable manner.

A social function of the modern public museum was to also be celebratory, for public museums were defined as palaces of civic pride; places to exhibit not only the wealth, culturedness and power of the local area but also of the Nation state itself. Museums served to help construct a positive national identity and celebrate, and legitimise, the dominance of Britain over the globe.

Museums were thus instructed with the duty of making sense of the new systems of governance, for the public at large. As we have seen, part of this was to invest in the
narratives of human achievement and culture, narratives that helped in the construction and maintenance of self-identity, for ‘In telling stories about ourselves, making sense of the past, the present and future possibility, we reflexively produce a more or less coherent sense of self.’ (McGuigan 1999, 100) The rhetoric of the Nation’s greatness was proclaimed through new display techniques that presented collections of national materials ‘as the outcome and culmination of the universal story of civilization’s development’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000).

That museums serve to embody the Nation’s culture has not disappeared, as museums are still used as a means of creating a sense of regional or national identity. The creation of a National Museum of Scotland was for example, an integral part of Scotland’s devolution. Museums continue to be perceived as the appropriate vehicles to present communal identity and illustrate and celebrate its worth.

As Chapter Four introduced, current calls for museums to act as agents of social inclusion for example, illustrates how museums are still perceived as instruments for the education and the improvement of population.125 Museums therefore, still play a role in the disciplinary apparatus of governance, acting as mediums through which values are represented and maintained, and a civil populace created: to celebrate national achievements and cement a national identity. Chapter Five however, also explored how the creation of the public museum as a space for a simultaneously disciplinary and elevating agenda, served to marginalise many groups, favouring high culture to the exclusion of all else. In particular we addressed how the structures of power and value that this paradigm established, served to mitigate against the representation of subcultures within museums. It is important to return to this argument, but to elucidate further reasons behind subcultural absence. For although the status of subcultures as popular culture contributes to their marginalisation, the association of deviancy and subversion with subcultural identities, also contributes to their absence.

The public, and indeed museum professionals themselves, have come to hold certain high expectations about the role of the museum as moral guardian, and as places that are safe,

125 Outreach initiatives with disaffected young people or prison inmates for example, illustrate how museums have become directly involved in the rehabilitation of ‘offenders’. The fundamental difference between the efforts of the nineteenth century and today however, is that the latter is concerned with empowerment as much as control. Museums are also becoming directly involved in encouraging citizenship as this has become part of the National Curriculum (see Ison 2002).
neutral, and improving. Thus identities and histories such as those of subcultures that have been rejected and labelled as deviant and have frequently been the subjects of moral panics, obviously fit uncomfortably within this context. It is clear that although the rhetoric of the Victorian era may have disappeared, a legacy of the perceived role and nature of public museums, remains.

The tradition of edification which, it is argued here, is still strongly identifiable today, not only governs who is granted space within the museum but also what it given space. Debate continues for example, as to whether it is ethical to display human remains, but also certain subjects still remain taboo within museums; childbirth, death, sexuality and crime. It is still regarded as inappropriate that museums should put on show the perverse, the subversive or tasteless. As sacred spaces, palaces of society’s values and repositories of its treasures, museums are therefore, not places for the profane.

As we have already revealed, subcultural material culture is regarded as spurious, however it can also sometimes be consciously deviant in nature, and therefore can present a challenge. Identities such as Punk for example, purposefully shocked society with the manner in which they played with the boundaries of taste and acceptable behaviour. Vivienne Westwood caused outrage through using s/m and fetish iconography in her clothing designs, and she was prosecuted for her ‘Cambridge Rapist’ and ‘Gay Cowboy’ t-shirts. Likewise the Sex Pistols contributed to the moral panic over Punk by their swearing on the popular Bill Grundy television show, with songs such as the anti-monarchist ‘God Save the Queen’, in having their album ‘Never Mind the Bollocks’ banned, and through their use of blasphemous or offensive iconography, such as an upside down Crucifixion or the swastika.

Subcultures therefore, make attempts to subvert accepted codes and values, challenging the dominant social order. They can therefore, be seen to be in conflict with regulatory structures which, like the museum, act as part of the disciplinary apparatus of society. The moral panic created when Punk first emerged thus served to mitigate against Punk being collected or represented by museums. Punk epitomised the behaviour that society, and therefore museums, did not wish to encourage. Similarly, clubcultures such as Acid House

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126 We shall consider later however, how initial moral panics can soon subside as the establishment nullifies subversion through incorporation, so that by the 1980s for example, Punk began to be represented within museums.
and Rave are also noticeably absent from museum collections and exhibitions: Their status as folk devil, in particular associated with the drug Ecstasy, has served to marginalise them; for as one museum indicated, "I can't imagine – or I can imagine, perhaps, what would happen if we did show [tape illegible] or Acid House." (Interviewee CM; 8)

Identities and histories in general, that have been labelled deviant because of their sexual orientation, lifestyle or political views, often remain marginalised by museums. Interviewee KC for example, revealed how their museum fails to acknowledge the sexuality of actors represented within its exhibitions even where their sexual preference is a key aspect of their identity and public persona "as there was a sense that might be seen as problematic." (17) Interviewee CM also stated that representing lesbians and gay identities would be "something we would have to think very long and hard before we tackled." (4) The questionnaire also revealed that the recognition and representation of politically motivated subcultures such as road protestors is also limited. Even issues surrounding young people, can cause concern for example,

"it’s astonishing…that we’re almost into the 21st Century, eh, and some people still have great difficulty in coming to terms with some of the broader issues, the ‘less acceptable’ in inverted commas, eh, of teenagedom.” (Interviewee CM; 8)

Trustram could have been referring to the paradox that subcultures present museums with, when she stated:

‘Social history curators are charged with ways of displaying material which is potentially threatening to the established order within an institution which traditionally stands for permanence.’ (Fleming, Paine, and Rhodes 1993;76)

As we shall explore in more detail later on, where subcultural identities and histories are represented, a rounded picture of subcultural lifestyles is invariably not presented; left out are the difficult sides, the illegal activities such as drug taking, or the sensitive areas such as sexist, racist or homophobic politics. Similarly, representation is made through limited, unchallenging and ultimately tokenistic gestures such as the collecting of club flyers.

Whilst the danger subcultures pose to society can be imagined (see Cohen 1980, for an example of amplification of moral panic over Mods and Rockers), some associations with subcultures however do concern real issues. Subcultures are often closely linked to drugs for example, and other aspects of subcultural lifestyles, such as the right to live a nomadic or communal lifestyle in this country, are being curtailed and increasingly legislated against. Moral panics concerning subcultures have sometimes lead to legislation, so for
example the Entertainment’s (Increased Penalties) Act 1990 was rushed through parliament due to increased alarm about Rave, and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (see Wasik and Taylor 1995) directed at controlling Ravers, New Age Travellers, squatters and protesters, was introduced. Whilst such Acts may serve to criminalise subcultural activities, they do not necessarily have any direct legal baring on the ability of museums to represent subcultures. However, as museums are seen as moral guardians which ratify culture, dealing with the part of subcultural lifestyles which has been conceived as illegal or unacceptable, presents an ideological rather than legal challenge.

The only piece of legislation which arguably could have a direct baring on museum representation relates to homosexuality. Male homosexuality remained criminalised until relatively recently, when the 1967 Sexual Offences Act went some way to legalising it. Successive British governments however, have continued to refuse to recognise gay rights; Section 28 of the Local Government Act was introduced in 1988 for example which states that it is illegal for local authorities to promote homosexuality (Stacey 1991). The direct relevance of Section 28, it can be argued, is more imagined than real as no authority has been prosecuted under the Act, however it is mentioned by museums as cause for concern.

Museums have also served to marginalise the representation of subcultures, and other challenging subjects, because their role as moral guardian was inextricably tied in with their conception as ‘major organs of the state dedicated to the instruction and edification of the general public’(Bennett 1988;63). Museums, together with libraries and lecture halls, were established for ‘direct and explicit educational purposes...places to which to turn for instruction, information and knowledge.’ (Hooper-Greenhill 1991;12) The interpretation of ‘education’ was limited however; ‘education’ based on the rational belief that essentialist ‘facts’ existed to be presented in an objective manner.

As we have examined, museum authority was based on the notion of essentialist history: in order to sustain a position of authority, the myth that history and the past could be presented in a definitive, objective manner needed to be perpetuated. Museums became places where incontrovertible ‘facts’ were presented, rather than spaces for debate and exploration. By interpreting ‘education’ in a limited and passive manner, museums were
established as places where visitors were not encouraged to be creative and explore their own meaning making.

This tradition has over recent years been challenged, however a legacy of the modernist paradigm is that museums are not regarded as appropriate places to debate contemporary and contentious social issues. Opposition to the tackling of controversial topics, Wallis suggests, is made on definitional grounds; ‘Museums don’t do these kinds of things, they say; they never did before, and they should not start now.’ (1996;122) Wallace comments that ‘it is disconcerting to contemplate how numerous and varied are the contemporary issues, routinely given historical attention in the academy, the media, and in politics, that history museums simply do not touch at all’ (1996;122). He suggests that ‘distinct limits remain on what can be said...[for] Some politically volatile topics -delicately referred to as “controversial”- can be addressed only if the discussion is not brought down to the present; others are entirely taboo.’(Wallace 1996;120) Though referring to the American context, these observations it could be argued, are just as true to the British context.

A minority of cutting edge museums have begun to provide forums for debate however. **Capital Concerns** at the Museum of London for example, was an innovative programme of exhibitions which attempted to address subjects of current concern for the area, with the specific intention of instigating debate: this was achieved through the use of computerised questionnaires and open public debate events. Two exhibitions in particular, *Drugs: What Should London Do?* and *Pride and Prejudice: lesbian and gay London*, featured subcultural material and were notable because of the potential controversial nature of their subject matter.

It can be argued however that a number of factors were necessary in order to enable the Capital Concerns programme to be realised. Opening in 1976, and developing from the London Museum (which itself founded in 1912, had a “very modern outlook”), the Museum of London does not have the ideological baggage of being founded directly on the modernist paradigm. The museum itself has “always prided itself on being slightly sort of anti-establishment” (Interviewee ^;10) and the current director is very keen on “being a bit controversial and...going for things that aren’t just safe traditional ones” (Interviewee ^;11). Additionally, although the museum is funded with public money, an arms length
approach is taken. Thus, an open and experimental climate has been focused within the Museum which has enabled more challenging initiatives to take place.

Thus although they should be seen as examples of a genuine attempt by a museum to raise awareness and engage the public in debate, other factors however, can also be identified which contributed to the acceptability of the Drugs and Pride exhibitions: although they were positioned within a prominent space within the museum, they were temporary exhibitions lasting only six weeks, they were also small scale, giving a basic introduction to the issues as there was no space to develop a representation of the complexities of the issues (Interviewee A A: 14). They also grounded the contemporary issues in a historicised context, and legitimisation was also achieved through consciously presenting their subjects in a balanced and informed manner.

Thus as Gosling has commented, ‘with the exception of contemporary art galleries, most museums still play safe. Although controversial subjects are examined, the aim is usually to present a balanced view.’ (2001;41) Controversial subjects are therefore, engaged with by the presentation of debate about them in an apparently objective, impartial and controlled manner. Placed in a historicized context, contemporary divergent, even antagonist opinions, become ‘ironed out’ as objective representations leave no room for the representation of emotions that can run high.127

As the modernist paradigm still dominates the majority of museums, and public perceptions of them, even where it is recognised that museums should be oppositional, that they should engage in debate and pose questions, this can be difficult to achieve;

“...I think we should be representing the oppositional but actually that’s different from being oppositional, and I think the museum is...a very difficult context in which to be oppositional.” (Interviewee KC;26)

Museums ultimately play a part in maintaining the status quo: museums remain places of conformity, places which attempt to bring people together in similarity, to show commonness. As the last chapter revealed, museums leave little space for diversity and difference. Thus as apparatus within the hegemonic structure, even where subcultural material culture itself is not inherently challenging, it may be excluded on political

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127 It is interesting to note that a similar approach has been taken for the permanent display on the controversial and emotive subject of foxhunting, at Melton Mowbray Museum in Leicestershire (see Viner 2002).
grounds because the lifestyle or beliefs with which it is associated are deemed too subversive and challenging to the Establishment. Certain subcultures for example, have orientated towards politics that may be perceived as a threat to the establishment (the anarchistic beliefs of certain sections of Punk that follow bands such as Crass for example), or to environmental protest (road protest or anti-nuclear).

That museums continue to be institutions that provide ‘educational’ and social and cultural improving spaces is also evident in the manner in which behaviour is controlled within them. Eating and drinking is still prohibited in galleries, and many museums still maintain a reverential quietness where visitors are expected not to talk too loudly or cause a fuss. That many museums remain places for quite contemplation illustrates that cultural ownership of museum spaces is still often implicitly assumed to lay with the ‘educated’. They remain spaces deemed unsuited to the debate of issues or representations that might cause disturbance.

Although museums have prided themselves on being apolitical, the very act of representation or absence is political, and museums can never be institutions free from subjectivity. Indeed museums are constantly guilty of favouring the establishment, as Helen Clark, curator of ‘The People’s Story’ in Edinburgh, comments;

‘Bias tends to be a term levelled at the museum by other professionals, who do not accuse museum displays which challenge the status quo and uphold the Establishment as presenting an extremely limited view of the past.’ (quoted in Coxall 1999)\(^{128}\)

As Kavanagh has stated in reference to the absence of women from museums,

‘This state of affairs is, in part at least, born of a preference some have for an approach that eliminates anything problematic in order to minimise the difficulties and discomforts involved in questioning culture.’ (1994b)

The same may be said then, of subcultural identities. Museums in attempting to maintain the status quo and appear objective, are wary when ‘it seems that any museum endeavour can become either a casualty of, or fodder for, the battle over the nature of contemporary cultural interpretation.’ (Bunch 1995;33) Histories and identities that cannot be easily represented, thus get ignored.

\(^{128}\) It is also interesting to note that this exhibition was also criticised for being bias in favour of women. There were the same number of women featured as men however. That the equalisation gave the appearance of favouring women, is revealing as it illustrates that ‘the unconsciously accepted ‘norm’ has always been bias in favour of men.’ (Coxall 1999)
Although the current climate has moved towards inclusiveness where museums are agents for social inclusion, identities having been labelled as deviant and that are rejected and excluded from society because they are seen to deviate from societies norms and values, is perpetuated by museums. Here lies another inherent paradox: although museums profess to have embraced inclusive agendas, because museums have been established as authoritarian it is difficult for them to represent that which society rejects and poses a challenge to the establishment. A contradiction which Bennett highlights is that whilst museums purport to serve a public made up of equals, it actually serves to differentiate populations (1997;104).

Indeed the criticisms that are levied at museums who act as agents of social inclusion, illustrates the resistance to the engagement of museums in contemporary debate: such museums are accused of ‘subverting their roles and responsibilities to political and governmental ends, politicising an otherwise ‘objective’ and ‘neutral’ organisation’ (Dodd and Sandell 2001;13). Museums can thus ‘recoil’ at suggestions for them to respond to issues of ‘disadvantage, injustice, inequality and discrimination’, as they prefer ‘to maintain an illusion of objectivity and impartiality’ and are ‘unwilling to adopt a standpoint on issues which might be interpreted as biased or politically motivated’ (Dodd and Sandell 2001;32). Museums therefore still maintain the status quo and thus avoid controversial issues or contemporary debate. Most museums do fail to deal with emotive subjects such as death, politics, religion and sex for the rational tradition of the modernist museum has lead museums to be constructed as safe, detached spaces. As Interviewee CM commented,

“there is, I think, quite an expectation on the part [tape illegible] visitors, our Trustees or the local Council, that, we are somewhere you can bring your child and not have to worry about what they are going to see.” (8)

That museums help maintain the status quo is also connected with the museums role in constituting public memories. Traditionally museums have ‘remembered’ the histories of the Establishment, the official versions of ultimately, the winners in history. Museums have not been expected to tell histories which are challenging to the Establishment or to public memory: The memories that museums endorse are therefore often selective. What is ignored are the histories that society finds difficult or ‘ugly’. As Patrick Green, the chairman of the European Museum Forum, has stated ‘ ‘We [Britain] are still too inward-
looking. We are also afraid of tackling difficult subjects. Museums in the UK tend to avoid uncomfortable issues such as slavery, for example.” (Morris 2002; 11) Similarly, as Mark O’Neill has argued (2002), museums shy away from representing the darker sides to humanity.

Initiatives to readdress the balance or those pertaining to injustices of this century, are even more likely to meet with opposition. One only has to consider the Enola Gay affair to see how even a great national museum is not above the censors (Macdonald 1998). Even where emotive topics are addressed, they are historicised and therefore to an extent, become less challenging. Dealing with contemporary challenging subjects such as the British governments role in the war against Afghanistan or the British governments involvement in the arms trade to totalitarian governments, would be more likely to receive a mixed and more volatile public response (if the authorities were to allow them to happen). As one respondent commented,

“I’ve not heard of any objections to it [exhibition on past censorship in the theatre] perhaps because it’s describing historical phenomena and therefore, people can sort of, frame it like that and it therefore, becomes in effect, innocuous.” (Interviewee KC;25)

Though museums may have gradually become places where past injustices are addressed, they are rarely places that attempt to engage in addressing contemporary injustices. For example it would be difficult for a museum to attempt to engage in subjects such as institutional racism following something such as the Lawrence affair. Many cases of injustices inflicted on subcultural groups could be cited, for example the ‘Battle of the Beanfield’ where a festival convoy, including women and children, were brutally beaten by police (see McKay 1996). However, how easy would it be for museums to challenge the ‘official’ versions or explore the abuses of authority of events such as these? Thus although museums play a much more active part in learning and have begun to encourage ‘education’ in its widest meaning (see Hooper-Greenhill 1999), to what extent do museums provide an informed and comprehensive interpretation of past or current events and subjects?

As museums stem from a tradition of edification, and continue to regard themselves as positive educational tools, then representing a subject that is challenging or an identity that has been labelled deviant, is problematic. If museums raise awareness about challenging issues, drugs for example, they position themselves in danger of appearing to endorse or
promote that which they represent. Museums are not above reprisals and indeed in America, the response to controversial exhibitions has been extreme: ‘National newspapers publish calls for the dismissal of curators and directors who dare to challenge the primacy of popular memory or the cultural vision of political leaders’ (Bunch 1995;33).

As Karp and Levine argue, museums can be sites for contention as well as conformity, and as Lumley states, museums should engage more in contemporary debate (1988;13), however it has been difficult for museums to address controversial issues and deviant identities and histories, because they are not perceived as a space appropriate to deal with such areas: “I think it would, rightly or wrongly, be quite difficult for us to be seen to display drug usage because this is an area which has a drugs problem” (Interviewee CM;9). Another museum stated “I think if we were to suggest something on, drug related issues, full stop, there might, we might be asked to, eh, redefine our, eh, area of working.” (Interviewee LT;25) Although LT did indicate that it would probably be acceptable if they looked at some aspect of drug culture within another subject, the message behind such quotes is that museums are not places where problems such as drugs use, can be directly discussed and explored in relation to a contemporary context.

As museums continue to operate as legitimising institutions, attempts to represent deviant identities or histories invariably can be understood and challenged as being supportive. Moves to challenge the museum as neutral and objective space and engage with challenging or contemporary issues, are often met with opposition and resistance from many sides. Some museums have suggested for example, that opposition to the representation of subcultures or associated challenging issues, could come from various quarters, “I think a lot of the objections you would get would be much the same whether they came from the Council, the Trustees or the visitors.” (Interviewee CM;8). Others however, have identified in more specific terms where criticism could come from.

Local authority controlled museums can particularly lack autonomy from political agendas. Negative governmental attitudes towards subcultures, borne out in legislation such as the Criminal Justice Act and comments from MP’s such as “They call themselves new age travellers…we call them new age vermin.” (McKay 1996;45), can influence museums. In particular, Section 28 has been a weapon used by councillors and trustees. One museum who attempted to represent lesbian and gay culture for example,
“went through a really dreadful time in terms of the Councillors...they said the press releases could go out but the press releases couldn’t mention the word homosexuality or lesbian which completely meant that there was no point in sending them out really.” (Interviewee BB; 11)

Section 28 was used as an excuse to attempt to stop the initiative. Other museums also indicated that this would also be a problem for them: “I think we’d have to watch our back within the council, we would have to cover that angle [Section 28] first.” (Interviewee JL; 14).

Often pawns in wider political agendas and personal reputations, museums can self-censor in order to retain political support. Interviewee MI indicated for example, that their museum would like to address the clubculture scene but need to work out how it could be achieved within a difficult political climate:

“we tread quite a fine line at the moment because of the way we’re funded...We didn’t have local government support, councillors thought, you know they see galleries are a waste of money and a waste of time.” (4)

Thus, even when willingness to engage in more challenging areas, is there, conservative climates can moderate what museums do: Often where more challenging issues have been engaged with, it is because of forward thinking managers or directors that are willing to take risks. As one interviewee commented,

“the manager of the curatorial services department...has given us the room to experiment and to go out and see what’s there and encourages us to push boundaries. If you had a conservative manager you would be stuffed.” (Interviewee FF; 16)

The majority of museums however, operate within a climate of self-censorship. As one interviewee stated “its not so much that we’re unwilling to address contentious issues but we are conscious that we need to do it terribly carefully, otherwise the whole thing could be [tape illegible].” (Interviewee CM; 5) Another commented,

“we’ve been very lucky here in that we’ve never suffered any kind of censorship from any, elected members. We do have to be aware of their priorities. For instance, in election year, it wouldn’t be too good an idea to have something massively controversial on that the Councillor would feel compromised by and would – might become an election issue for them.” (Interviewee LT; 23)

As Bunch argues however, although ‘Hovering over the profession is the spectre of scholarly self-censorship’,
'the greatest danger is not from threats to funding sources or pressures exerted by governmental officials, but from the profession's willingness, wittingly or unwittingly, to self-censor exhibitions and public presentations, to smooth the rough edges of history, art, and science in order not to offend in this.'(1995;34)

To collect and represent material which society has rejected, may place museums in a position of not only offending public sensibilities, but endangering public support. This is borne out in responses to the questionnaire; a museum for example, expressed concern about addressing subcultures as staff were unsure as to “What is publically acceptable” (small local museum), another commented “We collect only from ------- District which is a very conservative, rural area, such a commitment would be inappropriate to the area.” (small local museum).

Public expectations of museums as ‘places to muse in comparative freedom and security.’(Hein 2000;viii), can therefore act as a barrier, particularly in a climate where financial security is often reliant on visitor numbers. Visitors can object when they are confronted with something they deem inappropriate. In particular, although the museums' profession professes to be inclusive, many museums are still concerned about keeping their traditional audiences. As one museum commented;

“I mean with the best will in the world it is an extraordinary uphill struggle with museums, to sort of change the culture, because of all the expectations that are attached to them...I think there is a degree of some censorship that goes on within museums because of this perceived [tape illegible] that this might offend audiences, will alienate audiences more to the point I think.” (Interviewee KC;21)

Another stated,

“I think there would be resistance from certain people within the museum. Certainly they would want convincing that this wasn't just going to alienate their existing audience without bringing in a new one... Then if you are seen by certain members of the field to kind of be appealing too strongly to one audience...to the exclusion of others or to the kind of bewilderment of others, then that's quite, I think it's seen as problematic, it is quite problematic.” (Interviewee KC;12,14)

Concern to not offend the public can be an easy excuse therefore;

“People are concerned that visitors...could get upset...I think it comes from wanting to look after people. Maybe that's simply projection onto them, of their own...wish not to have anything controversial but it's always - it's presented in terms of what the visitors would think.” (Interviewee DT;16)

The marginalisation of subcultures from museums however, can also occur because of self-censorship from subculturalists themselves. Whilst there have been examples where initial
suspicions from subculturalists have been overcome (see below), the willingness of subculturalists to engage with museums, is a precluding factor. Inclusion in an institution which is perceived as part of the establishment may not appeal to those who construct their identities as in opposition to the establishment and may hinder museum attempts to represent subcultures even when museums are willing to take a risk and represent subcultures. Thus, the continued marginalisation of subcultures from museums, may not be due simply to an unwillingness on the side of the museum to engage in this area; rather the result of reticence on the part of subculturalists themselves. This is born out in the responses museums received when they did approach subcultures: museums have had to work hard to overcome initial suspicions, gain trust of participants and persuade them to become involved. First reactions often were “a sense of caution, not having been involved with public institutions before.” (Interviewee PB;3) Another stated, “you certainly do meet with suspicion, which is about kind of appropriation and access and ownership of this particular history.” (Interviewee KC;4)

The gap between the subculturalist and the museum professional is invariably great and can mitigate against initiatives being effectively carried out. As May comments; ‘Quite simply, it may not be appropriate for a grey-suited person more familiar with the deviants of city financial life to interview Hell’s Angels about their beliefs and actions.’ (May 1993) Similarly, McNeill has commented ‘Groups of people who feel under threat are unlikely to respond enthusiastically to a researcher with a questionnaire’ (1990;70). Participants can be concerned about how they will be represented and the potential repercussions of representation. One museums who displayed Hells Angels’ objects for example, revealed “I think they were slightly nervous because they’d never shown objects from their clubhouse in public so they wondered what the public perception of those objects would be.” (Interviewee PB;3) Another stated, “There was a level of embarrassment with some of the younger people because they had never done anything like this before and, you know, they might have been talking about things that perhaps their parents didn’t know they got up to and they were quite anxious to know that if...they would be anonymous and confidential...that’s the element of trust coming in again where we had to sort of convince people that we were bona fide and we weren’t going to expose them to their parents’ wrath or anything like that. So on certain subject matters, it might have been sex or drugs or whatever, then we found that some people would tend to be more coy about it...” (Interviewee LT;16)
As May has argued ‘Given the essentially secret nature of much deviant behaviour, those involved are unlikely to be willing to be interviewed, or at least to give truthful answers in a survey’ (1993). Subcultures are often,

‘about assuming or creating a new identity, of embracing marginality, and being openly provocatively different. These identities play with the idea of margins and marginalisation.’ (Hetherington 1998,16)

inclusion within an institution which is perceived as part of the Establishment, may be undesirable therefore.

Indeed, as we shall now move on to consider, how museums represent such ‘cultures of resistance’ (McKay 1996) without sanitising and draining their very oppositional nature around which their identities are constructed and maintained, is challenging. How can those groups, operating outside dominant value systems (consumerism, individualism, conservatism and so forth) and embracing alternative ways of life and politics be acknowledged within authoritarian institution? If subcultures such as Punk, as Hebdige suggests, presented challenges to the ‘semantic disorder’ through their transgressional styles and behaviour, and can be considered potent with political subversive potential ‘for in challenging the established orders of meaning, the punks were inevitably perceived to constitute a threat to the social order itself’ (Beezer 1992,109), how is it possible to represent this within a authoritarian institution which itself is part of the disciplinary apparatus? The desire to represent controversial subjects or deviant identities can be therefore “at loggerheads” with museums who do want to attempt to challenge their mainstream status (Interviewee KC,4).

**Folk devils in our midst!?**

Having explored the marginalisation of subcultures from museums in reference to their often attributed ‘deviant’ status, we now move on to consider in more depth the representation of subcultural identities and histories. A number of questions need to be addressed when considering the various museum initiatives: Why were such initiatives undertaken and what challenges were presented, given the difficulties and barriers to representation that have been discussed above? Were the initiatives successful in challenging the orthodoxy’s of the museum and the assumptions of the public, or did such initiatives inevitably reinforce the established norms of society?
We have examined in the previous chapter how museums have attempted to classify the material world, place it in an assemblage of order and thus know and ultimately, control it. We have also examined in this chapter how museums were constructed, and continue to be, places where culture and public memories are ratified and sanctified. Indeed Hein has written that,

‘As dispensers of coherent order, replacing the contingency and disorder of real time and real events, museums contribute to the production of a secure sense of the world’s intelligibility.’ (2000; 14)

Representations of subcultures which acknowledge the deviant aspects of such identities, could challenge and reveal the façade of such security. When museums do represent subcultures then, they invariably do so only once their deviant status has subsided.

Thus, although it may be seen as a significant step that some prestigious museums have undertaken exhibitions, such as the National Maritime Museum’s Skin Deep exhibition on tattooing for example, such exhibitions however, only occur after the subcultures or practices have become part of the mainstream. Indeed, as has already been argued, museums engage in a number of legitimating practices to justify inclusion even where subcultures represented have become accepted in the ‘mainstream’. Tattooing for example, is no longer an underground practice but an acceptable form of body decoration removed of the stigma once associated with it. The Skin Deep exhibition legitimises its attention by relating the history of tattooing to the explorations of Captain Cook and his travels to Tahiti, to indigenous peoples’ practice of body decoration and in general emphasising the artistic aspect of tattooing; with the majority of artefacts on show being artworks and illustrations (Plates 18 & 19). The exhibition makes reference to famous people with tattoos (historic and contemporary), and includes children’s interactives (Plates 20 & 21). Little mention is made of the associations that tattooing has with subcultures or with the criminal underground. Even the exhibitions advertising material eludes to quality and sophistication (Plate 22). Tattooing then has been striped of any oppositional, subversive or criminal associations it might have had, and is presented in an artistic and family friendly manner.

The subjects of other exhibitions such as those that address biker culture, could also appear challenging, but as one interviewee commented,
Plate 18: Artwork on show in the Skin Deep exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Plate 19: Artwork on show in the Skin Deep exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
Plate 20: Interactives in the *Skin Deep* exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Plate 21: Interactives in the *Skin Deep* exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
Plate 22: Advertising leaflet for the *Skin Deep* exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
“motorcycle culture has become fairly mainstream and I suppose when things become mainstream they do begin to inhabit the realms of kind of, eh, public museums and art galleries.” (Interviewee PB;3)

Though in relation to one exhibition, public concern was expressed that the museum was seen to be working with certain clubs, the curator of that exhibition thought that Hell’s Angels could be regarded as ‘a kind of mainstream club’ given that they have a well documented history. That other clubs, such as the Outlaws and Outcasts, “weren’t big enough, didn’t have enough history” to be represented within the exhibition (Interviewee PB;8), it can be argued, was used to legitimate the marginalisation of the more fringe and subversive sections of the ‘Biker’ subculture.129

It can be argued however, that not only do representations occur once deviant status is subsided, but also that museums help to negate the deviancy and defuse the threat. By attempting to represent a world that the majority of the public knows exists, but does not have access to, or knowledge of, museums help to alleviate the fear of the unknown: museums, when they represent deviant subcultures, make the subaltern knowable. Placing subcultures within a museum context then, can not only serve to satisfy curiosities, but also defuse the threat: representations suggest that the danger is under control, it has been contained. They remove the threat of the unknown by making it available to be consumed, and that consumption can take place in a safe, comfortable, and controlled environment.

Drawing from Baudrillard, in order for museums to live, the objects of their attention must die, and thus ultimately, that which museums attempt to save for posterity, ultimately eludes their grasp (1994;7). It can be argued that ‘extermination through museumification’ (Baudrillard 1994;10) happens when museums attempt to represent subcultures: that in an attempt to make subcultures live within history, museums collect their material evidence, but in doing so they kill the vibrancy, energy and subversiveness of the very subcultures they profess to preserve. Thus it can be argued, that once deviant identities appear in the museum context, they are inevitably sanitised and castrated: Indeed this was the sentiment behind Elle magazines’ article, ‘Who killed Streetstyle?’ (1994).

129 Again we can see that at the Manx Museum where much collecting, recording and representations of Bikers has been undertaken, it relates to the TT Races and the mainstream side to biking (pers. com.).
As has been discussed, museums shy away from engaging with contemporary issues or addressing the harsher sides of society. Walsh criticises museums and heritage for example, for promoting 'an uncritical patriotism' and contributing to the distancing of processes that effect our daily lives (1992;1). He suggests they are guilty of trivialising and packaging what are horrific experiences and museums have 'contributed to a form of institutionalized rationalization of the past' (1992;2). Museums are not at the cutting edge of negotiating the status between what is labelled deviant and what is deemed acceptable, for as we have seen they can only deal with deviance at its most shallow level.\textsuperscript{130} Museums do however, play a part in the maintenance of a disciplinary society through the regulation and defusing of deviancy. They serve to trivialise and present uncritical representations of subcultures because the modern public museum remains a conservative institution and part of the disciplinary apparatus of society.

Museums, through their representations, like the endless coffee-table books have done, have consigned subcultural subversion to the historical tomb. Subcultural deviancy has become defined as youthful rebellion in which every generation engages with. Thus by placing contemporary expressions within a genealogy of now established subcultural expression, the real challenges that the contemporary present can be defused, normalised and thus controlled. Thus we can locate two linked strategies of power operating within museums which helps to control potential subversive nature of subcultural identifies. Drawing on Foucault’s conception of disciplinary power where museums are part of the disciplinary apparatus, representations of subcultures can be understood as efforts to identify and locate subcultures as ‘other’ and thus reaffirm identity of ‘us’ (the ‘normal museum visitor/spectator and museum staff) as superior. However, if we also draw on Gramsci’s idea of hegemony, the museum becomes a site to sanitise and incorporate subcultural deviance.

\textsuperscript{130} Different levels of deviancy do exist, from youthful rebellion (which initially a cause for concern, can be passed off as something one "grows out of") to subversive politics (anarchism) and practices (drug taking) which are viewed as more serious and inherently deviant. Museums it is argued here, only engage with subcultures which can be placed within the former category.
Disciplinary apparatus in operation through inclusion.

As we have seen, early public museums had a normalising function. They helped to construct a norm of humanity, i.e. that of the white, bourgeois male 'whose normative status was reinforced by the display of all manner of deviations' (Bennett 1997;102). Working to a structuring paradigm of self:other, us:them, home:exotic which was fundamental in the modernist European mind set (Pearce 1995;311-312), master narratives prevailed where ‘us’ was defined by ‘historical progress, individual achievement, civilisation and high culture’ and the ‘other’ as ‘primitive groups, exotic cultures, and historical stasis’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000a;18) that have been dominated.

Such structures are still identifiable in the modern public museum today: This is borne out in representations of subcultures, as such identities are often placed within the category of ‘other’, and therefore controlled and dominated. For even where initiatives have been instigated out of genuine concern to represent subcultures, inevitably because this representation takes place within the confines of the museum, such initiatives become drawn into the structures of dominance that operate.

This structuring of ‘Other’ is revealed when one considers who initiatives are directed at (this applies as much to other marginalised groups as it does with subcultures): do they communicate with communities themselves, enabling them to learn something about themselves and to celebrate their achievements, or do they address the majority public who would otherwise remain generally ignorant? Exhibitions that address subcultures commonly seem to be targeted at the general public: through text panels that explain jargon, psychology and symbolism behind subcultural styling and identities, the public are given the keys to a world that would normally remain closed to them. That this also helps to create a sense of subcultures as ‘Other’ is revealed in the following interpretation text accompanying the ‘Tribes’ case in Fashion Works:

“As we change from children to adults we develop our own sense of personal identity. Some people like to blend in with the crowd, others prefer to stand out. We may feel uneasy about punks, goths, and bikers because they appear more threatening than yuppies, Sloane Rangers, and train-spotters!” (my emphasis)

Here the use of “we”, serves to locate subcultures as outsiders to the audience that is being addressed: to group visitors as ‘Us’, and places subcultures, as ‘Other’.

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Representation of subcultures thus can embody to an extent, what Hebdige has described in relation to photography, 'a desire and a will to know the alien-in-our-midst, the Other, the victim, and the culprit' (1983;74). Although, as we shall see, subcultural subversion is translated into harmless youthful rebellion, it is being represented to consumers who often are now no longer young, to whom contemporary youth subcultural expressions are alien, are Other. The points Hebdige raises in relation to the early use of photography in the surveillance of working class youth, thus has resonance in the museum context. He suggests that photography was adapted for use within new contexts of control, and that images made of the 'inmates' of Barnados children's home in the Victorian period, were the beginnings of sustained interest in a long line of youth subcultures:

'After the Other Victorians have come the Other Elizabethans, the roundheads, the skinheads, and the punks, the rockabilly's, the mods, the rastas, and the rest-the black and white trash of Britain's declining inner cities.' (1983;74)

Hebdige suggests that the enormous amount of 'explanatory' literature' that has 'developed around the fringes of the 'youth problem' has its 'visual corollary' in 'tasteful anthologies of photographs of every British subculture' available in bookshops around the country. Making a spectacle of themselves, and thus pretty pictures and interesting 'character studies', Hebdige suggests that portraits of Skinheads for example,

'fix crime on a pin for us. We can gawp, indulge our curiosity from the safety of our positions out here. The skinhead fixed in our compassionate and punitive gaze. The skinhead as victim, the skinhead as culprit.'

Depicted in his/her context, the voyeur is treated to glimpses of;

'Places we wouldn't dare venture in... These are people we wouldn't dare to stare at in the street. These are the signs of our times.'(Hebdige 1983;77)

Museum representations like photographs can also provide a safe position from which 'dangerous' identities can be consumed, for as with photographs, the subcultural participant is simultaneously present and absent: captured within the frame of a photograph or museum plinth, but devoid of energy or life-force.

The public's desire to 'know' and 'experience' (albeit in a safe and distanced manner), the subaltern world of underground subcultures, is illustrated by the popularity and proliferation of a multitude of publications of an encyclopaedic nature (see for example Barr 2000; Daly and Wice 1995; Larkin 1994). And as we have seen, museums too have contributed to such potted guides to subcultural worlds that are both voyeuristic and part of the disciplinary apparatus (Haye and Dingwall 1996; Polhemus 1994).
If we return to Foucault and his concept of surveillance within disciplinary society, we see how museums operate as disciplinary technologies engaged in a system of ‘normalisation’: technologies of normalisation which play a key role in the ‘systematic creation, classification, and control of “anomalies” in the social body’ (Rabinow 1991:21). As ‘conservative agent[s] of normalization’ (Hein 2000:ix), museums through their representations of subculture, set the represented apart: emphasising the normative status of white, bourgeois male, by the display of ‘all manner of deviations’ (Bennett 1997:102).

Museums thus function as ‘normalising instruments’ within the technologies of normalisation, however, it should be recognised that such systems operate at different levels. Rather than being those that serve to isolate anomalies, museums are secondary instruments in such technologies: shying away from subcultural identities currently considered deviant and a social threat, museums represent those for which the process of normalisation has already begun. Thus ultimately, it is the museums role to affirm and complete the process of normalisation. Denying a recognition of the politically subversive potential of subcultures within representations serves to illustrate for example, how the deviant can be contained. That Punk was once perceived as a threat to the social order itself, signalling the breakdown of western civilisation, is not now apparent within museum representations, for example.

Where subcultures are not marginalised from museums then, representations can be equated with Foucault’s notion of discursive formations: that through the opening up of a subject, making it known and talking about it, one can control it. Thus, where traditionally forbidden discourses relating to subcultures, such as issues of drugs and sexuality, have been given space within museums, in doing so a general economy of power and knowledge is ultimately being exercised. Rather than denying deviant subcultures existed, museum representations serve to identify the deviant, satisfy the public’s curiosity, but ultimately illustrate how they have been controlled and contained.

Placed within the context of evolutionary narratives for example, subcultural deviance becomes defined as youthful rebellion: representations serve to lay claim and confirm that individuals progress out of such youthful experimentation to become ‘normal’ citizens: as one curator commented, “a lot of people buy them [Dr. Marten boots, studded wrist bands etc] as, as a sort of minor rebellion. They can’t go the whole hog...[yet these] constituted at least a minor act of defiance” (Interviewee CM;15) Implicit in understanding
subcultural identification in these terms, is the message that subcultures are something that one ‘grows out of’. In concluding with this, museums perpetuate the association of subcultures with ‘youth’, denying the deep felt subcultural affiliations that individuals can have, and fail to recognise the many subculturalists who are not ‘young people’.

Thus, although it is useful to utilise Foucault’s strategies of categorisation and labelling that pathologise, contain and transform the ‘deviant’, it is important to recognise that museum representations of subcultures not only serve to control subcultures by putting them on show and providing the kit by which they are recognisable, but also to simultaneously castrate any subversive elements they may have had. To explore this issue further it is worth returning to Gramsci, for we can then see how ‘subversive’ elements may be dealt with in different ways. For Gramsci it a matter of the use of hegemony to absorb threats into the mainstream, to accommodate and incorporate, for as Brooker argues a ‘subtle and insidious tactic...is simply to absorb the threat into mainstream, making it acceptable, domestic, trivial.’ (1988;67); normalisation through the denial of deviancy.

We have seen how the media and cultural industries play a contradictory role in reference to subcultural deviancy. The media in particular, both serves to help create and contain subcultures: to induce moral panic, spread knowledge of, and commodify subcultural identities and expression. Cultural hegemony works to contain, silence and assimilate, and thus defuse threats to the stability of the dominant authority. Such practises are also identifiable within museums (although they are unconsciously undertaken), both in terms of the contexts in which subcultures are placed, and the interpretations they are given. As Helen Coxall comments, ‘Language is a site of power, and people are marginalized or endorsed by its use.’ She continues;

‘Museum visitors bring different, experiences and perspectives with them with which they will reinterpret meanings of their own. However, if the available information has been closed down by evasions and gaps, and if visitors bring limited knowledge with them, their potential as negotiators of meanings will be severely restricted. Thus, the choices made by creators of exhibitions about the interpretation of their materials relating to versions of history are crucial.’ (1999)

Subcultures, like popular culture in general (see Moore 1997), are often treated as ‘light relief’, defined as leisure and thus de-politicised. The ‘Growing Up’ exhibition at the Museum of Childhood for example, displays a ‘Rasta’ outfit. The ideology of the Rastafarian religion is based on the desire to return to Ethiopia and the creation of a black
'Zion' in which black people can escape the corruption and soulessness of the white dominated 'Babylon'. Underlying the peaceful manners of Rastafarian, is an ideology that is potentially confrontational, however this power of Rasta is negated by a museum display which, under the heading of 'Movements' makes only perfunctory reference to the politics of this religious subculture. The real political agenda of this subculture is not explored within the accompanying interpretation and knowledge on the significance of Rasta and the black, gold, red and green colours is closed down. 'Rasta' becomes just another example of youth culture and sartorial style. Similarly, the reduction of tattooing to children's interactives in the Skin Deep exhibition (placed at the end of the exhibition), serves to confirm the containment of potentially deviant material.

Museums also contain subcultural deviancy and oppositional potential by simply placing it within the context of the museum. As one curator commented, "I think that the nature of museums, is that, it becomes basically pretty innocuous [through] the context that you put it in." (Interviewee KC;27). Thus, even potentially challenging material, can therefore, become innocuous by inclusion within the museum,

"[the museum is] sort of perceived as safe, and actually probably, that also tends to anaesthetise and make innocuous objects, which actually aren’t in themselves innocuous and are quite controversial, because of the context in which you’re representing them." (Interviewee KC;25)

That even the most thoughtful, and to an extent, provocative, exhibition on subcultures, can become innocuous by being placed within the context of the museum, is illustrated in relation to the Sound & Fury exhibition. The only exhibition to really acknowledge the challenging side of subcultural formations, this exhibition for example, had a social and moral context section, that assessed 'the claims and counterclaims made about controversial areas of HM [Heavy Mental] Imagery'. Headings within this included, 'Sex, sexism and obscenity' and 'Satanism, Backmasking and Violence' (Museum notes). The exhibition was also accompanied by a schools worksheet that asked pertinent questions about censorship and museums, directly (see Appendix 9). This was a touring exhibition however, and the material had to be fitted into differing museum contexts. At Nuneaton Museum for example, due to a lack of space, the exhibition ran on into a kitchen/cloakroom area. 131 Although the museum did attempt to incorporate the space by

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131 Lack of space meant that for some museums, material such as the customised guitars, motorbikes, a model of Stonehenge and stage decorations such as banners, had to be left out. Thus, at some venues, visitors would not have received a full picture of the diversity and creativity of the Heavy Metal subculture.
putting up posters and eluding to a bedroom context, the end result ultimately however, is one where the subversive nature of Heavy Metal is nullified (see Plates 23 & 24).

The subversiveness of identities and their material culture becomes inert, not just through inclusion within museum spaces, but also through deliberate acts of silencing. Where subversive material has been put on display, its subversive nature is ignored. The Punk material on display at Opie’s Museum of Memories in Wigan (Plate 25), is of a controversial nature and its inclusion within the context of a family orientated museum is indeed, surprising. That some of the material was banned and the extent of the outrage that the material caused in the late 1970s, is not brought to the visitors attention in any of the accompanying interpretation: within the context of this consciously family orientated museum, the subversive nature of this material can be overlooked as it is drowned out by the profusion of popular material culture and nostalgic rhetoric.

Similarly, the subversiveness of the Punk material on display in the “Those were the days” section of *Our City*, The Discovery Museum, Newcastle (Plates 26 & 27), is silenced by the absence of interpretation: the text accompanying the exhibition states “This case shows items from the 1970s; including hippy clothes from the early 1970s and punk clothes from the mid to late 1970s”. However, it also includes material relating to bands such as Vice Squad and Penetration (who were significant because as girl bands they challenged the patriarchy of the music industry and subcultures themselves) and Crass (an anarchists band). This material and its significance is not recognised however, and therefore it remains inert.

Exhibitions that have dealt with potentially difficult subcultures such as Bikers, also sanitise and therefore control their subjects, through the focusing on the material culture of such subcultures, rather than the participants themselves. Moore has commented about the *Bike Art* exhibition at Birmingham,

‘This was a ground breaking exhibition, a brave and bold attempt to explore an aspect of popular culture in a museum, particularly in choosing to focus on a subculture which is unpopular with the media and faces strong prejudice from society as a whole.’ (1997;80)

He notes however, that subject matter was sanitised somewhat, for in revering the bikes, clothes, jewellery and tattoos, any insight into the lifestyle of their users was overlooked: ‘consumers of this material culture were curiously absent, or present only in photographic
Plate 23: Sound & Fury: the art and imagery of Heavy Metal on display at Nuneaton Museum

Plate 24: Sound & Fury: the art and imagery of Heavy Metal on display at Nuneaton Museum
Plate 25: Punk on display at Opie’s Museum of Memories, Wigan
Plate 26: "Those were the days": the 1970s section of *Our City*,
The Discovery Museum, Newcastle

Plate 27: "Those were the days": the 1970s section of *Our City*,
The Discovery Museum, Newcastle
Plate 28: ‘The Swinging 60s’ section of *Our City*, The Discovery Museum, Newcastle

Plate 29: Close-up cartoon from The Swinging 60s’ section
*Our City*, The Discovery Museum, Newcastle
images’ within the exhibition. (Moore 1997:80) Similarly, Streetstyle ultimately failed for him, because ‘the full story of each subculture was sanitized through a narrow focus on design’ (Moore 1997:81).

Even where a subject which is political nature is addressed, the context in which it has been approached can nullify the subversive potential. The exhibition Protest at Snibston Discovery Park, Leicestershire displayed subcultural dress (Teddy Boy, Hippy, and Vivienne Westwood Punk) alongside that of political movements such as the Suffragettes and CND. As decorative arts exhibition, the emphasis of the exhibition was about clothes and how they are used to make statements about ourselves. Displayed in a fashion gallery, on static tailors dummies, in a family orientated museum, with only the briefest contextual information was provided. Although it was a positive move that such an exhibition was held, invariably the oppositional and subversive nature of the material featured was sanitised. The emotive nature of the material was also lost: What courage it took to wear, and the outrage it caused is not conveyed by the exhibition.

Suppression of the subversive potential of subcultures can operate through a combination of covert and overt means: As one interviewee, who had curated an exhibition which involved participants of Biker subcultures, commented for example, “one potential flashpoint we thought might be was the private view of the show” as all the clubs involved with the exhibition came in their full colours. They continued however, to comment that,

“I think...because it was in the context of the -------- and the Corporation of London and, the rest of it, and obviously, you know,...we've got lots of security...there weren't any problems at all actually...I mean I think most of the guys were pretty shocked to actually be in the building” (Interviewee PB:8) (my emphasis)

The subversive potential of subcultures however, can be contained by direct censorship. The Museum of Brighton for example, was forced by a local councillor to cover over the swear words painted on a Punk’s leather jacket on display (Appendix 10). Here, by complying with wishes of authority, the museum was complicit in making clearly visible it’s real power and authority over the ‘deviant’ other. In Chapter Five it was also acknowledged how a curator explained that Punk outfits within their collection would probably not be exhibited because they were not “real Punk”. It can be argued however,

132 It can be noted that an orthodox approach was also taken: the subcultural outfits were included in a ‘Dare to be Different’ section which addressed youth rebellion, whilst the Hippy outfits were placed in a separate section, ‘The Hippie Trail’, which emphasised it as an ideology and whole way of life.
that the ‘obscenities’ scrawled on a shirt which included “The Older Generation brought us into this fuck-up of a world, and Then leave US to sort the mess up” and “NEVER MIND THE SEX PISTOLS HERE’S THE BOLLOCKS” (Plates 5 & 6), had a bearing on its exclusion from display.133

Another less direct way that subcultural identities are contained, incorporated and ultimately controlled, is through representations that are essentially romanticised and sentimentalised: in particular, structures of nostalgia are recoursed to. This practise is identifiable in the media, for example Readhead examines the way the media looked back at the mythical ‘Summer of Love’ of 1988 - itself a reference to summer of love in 60s - of Acid House (1990;1). Museum exhibitions also serve as ‘vehicles for the nostalgic remembrance of sentimentalised pasts’ (Bennett 1988;67), becoming ‘shrines of nostalgia.’(Pieterse 1997;124). As Trustram has argued for example, social histories’ approach to labour history utilises a mode of presentation that ‘tends to encourage nostalgia for an idealised past and discourages a more critical appraisal.’ (1993a;74)

As we have already acknowledged, implicit in some representations of subcultures, is the message that this is something one ‘grows out of’; museums also concentrate their attention on historical subcultural identities for whom the deviant status has been moderated. Nostalgia however, can also serve as a means of denying subversive or oppositional potential.134 If we return to the results of the survey for example we see that respondents indicated they had undertaken exhibitions on specific decades in which subcultures, commonly in the form of their style, feature: The 50s (Teddy Boys), Stamford in the 60s and Back to the 60s’ (Mods and Rockers), Cod War and Kipper Ties (Punk). Others focus on the teenager: Juke Box Generation: Growing up in the 50s & 60s, Teenage Kicks – an exhibition of youth culture from 50s to 90s, Putting on the Style: Three decades of teenage fashion’ and The Young Ones: 1945-1995. Statements such “celebrate this

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133 This conclusion can be supported by the obvious uncomfortable relationship the curator had with some of the Punk material: when a t-shirt blazoned with ‘BOWIE FUCKS DONKEYS’ was revealed by this costume curator from a storage box, without comment, she left the room and left this researcher to carry on looking at the material alone!

134 Although nostalgia has been identified with postmodernism by Jameson, and therefore may seem incongruous as existing in an institution governed by a modernist paradigm, it can be argued, as it has been elsewhere, that modernist and postmodernist characteristics can be seen to exist simultaneously within society. Nostalgia is used by museums as a means of attracting the public, and as a way to make subcultures acceptable within a museum context, representations which are nostalgic however, are still structured by the overarching modernist paradigm: they are subject to the construction of cohesive, evolutionary narratives, to
decade with us, and...remember life in the 1970's.” (medium local authority museum), or “saunter down memory lane” (publicity for the V&A's ‘Warpaint and Hairspray: A streetstyle hair and make-up day’), request the public to reminisce a constructed past that is uncomplicated and unchallenging.

Stock phrases such as ‘The Swinging 60s’ and ‘Those were the days’, and stereotypical images, can be recoursed to. ‘The Swinging 60s’ section of Newcastle’s Our City exhibition, for example, uses a cartoon-type caricature of Hippies to add colour to the display (Plate 28). This depicts Hippies dancing and holding flowers, and using phrases such as “Love”, “Peace”, “Groovy”, “Far out”, “Freak out man”. Noises such as “Squeak” and “Clang” come from the band, one person floats above the crowd, and a male dancer in the foreground proclaims “These Shoes are Killing me” (Plate 29). Whilst one should be careful of becoming too cynical and not recognising the genuine humour of this representation (and similar cartoons are present throughout the exhibition), the parody presented here is an issue for no other, more in-depth representation is provided of the Hippy subculture. Some clothes, records and posters of early 1970s Hippy are on display in the next section (see Plate 26), however, with the absence of any interpretation that introduces the values and ideologies of the Hippy movement, the visitor can leave the museum with the image of Hippy as just another youth sartorial fad. Nostalgia, and humour, then, can operate as means of counteracting subversiveness by denying the challenges subcultural identities present(ed) or symbolise(d). Reducing subcultural subversion to harmless youthful rebellion and stereotyped representations, is thus a political act.

Museums’ representation of subcultures through a nostalgic approach, works together with other heritage initiatives to sanitise and ultimately control, once deviant identities. As Redhead comments, youth culture ‘is seen as part of the nation’s heritage and ever more cities vie for tourists on the basis of their respective pop music and youth culture histories’ (Redhead 1993b:1) Divorced from any past moral panic they may have aroused, subcultures have become an acceptable part in the reconstruction of local identities; Punk for example, has been commercialised and packaged as a tourist product by a number of local authorities in the North West of England (see Bagnall and Robinson 2001). Ghettoised as leisure, subcultures act as a trendy means to liven up a councils’ image. For
museums, as well as the heritage industry in general, subcultures have thus become commodities that are sanitised through heritage.

This leads on to another strategy through which subcultural deviancy is defused; that of equating subcultures with the ‘exotic’. Whereas subcultures as nostalgia works within a framework of ‘Sameness’, which interprets them in light of understood parameters, i.e. youthful rebellion, subcultures as ‘exotic’ serves to maintain their difference, providing an insight into the world of the ‘exotic Other’. Exhibitions which address subcultures can take on anthropological tone, and often subcultural identities get compared with indigenous peoples. As Chapter Five introduced, through the influence of Ted Polhemus, the Streetstyle exhibition in particular, reflected this. Here, direct comparisons were made between the spectacular elements of subcultures and indigenous peoples: the exhibition guide, for example, stated,

‘In traditional tribal societies, body decoration and dress are essential symbols of social and cultural continuity...We now find adornment and dress serving the same function among groups which have evolved in the developed West over the last half century – the styletribes’

Other museums have also made such connections as the representation of subcultures is often included within the wider context of exhibitions on body adornment, for example Skin Deep at the National Maritime Museum, The Pursuit of Beauty: Five Centuries of Body Adornment in Britain at the National Portrait Gallery, and Body Arts at the Pit Rivers Museum. That museums treat subcultures as exotic, can also be identified in the way that the most visually stimulating subcultural identities, are always chosen for representation.

Beezer has argued that;

‘street-originating subcultural styles end up in the high street as marketable and mainstream fashions. The punk bin liner and safety pin, once icons of rebellion, are reduced to decorative innovations which rejuvenate the flagging fashion industry.’(1992;110)

Museums also draw on subcultural dis-establishment value, to attract new audiences. Once incorporated into the ‘mainstream’, but still ‘exotic’ through an association with the subversive, subcultures have been used by museums to spice up galleries or help to give themselves a trendy, up-to-date image: see for example, the Museum of Scotland’s use of tattoo and piercing imagery in one of their first advertising campaigns. Both the ‘primitive other’ and subculturalist have been anthropomorphised, and in standing as the exotic
Other, become reduced to visually stimulating signs of dominant cultures power to defuse and diffuse. Like the native impotent in the face of the domination of western capitalism, the symbolic attempts made by subculturalists to stand in opposition to 'the mainstream', ultimately cannot escape the hegemonic order.

Museum representations that commodify subcultures, also serve to challenge any subversive associations they may have had. *Streetstyle* for example, had a shop at the end of the exhibition where items such as 'streetwise' Dress-me-up Michelangelos’ David fridge magnets and Cyberpunk duffel bags were on sale (see Furnival 1994). The V&A also ran a competition in collaboration with the Dr Martens Dept Store (Plate 30). Indeed, the manner in which the subcultural outfits were displayed and beautifully photographed for the *Surfers, Soulies, Skinheads & Skaters* book, were reminiscent of a catalogue for an expensive boutique. On display, and sometimes literally, for sale, subcultures when featured in museums then, are castrated of their oppositional stance, subversive potential, their sometimes aggressive mannerism, and become inert, and arguably, dead.

**Breaking down boundaries: the reconceptualisation of resistance and deviancy.**

Throughout this chapter, the status of subcultures as 'deviant other', has gone unchallenged. Indeed, it must be recognised that subcultural identities have been the focus of moral panics and governmental legislation; they are often formulated against, are in opposition to, the 'mainstream' and dominant culture; they can be expressions of an individuals desire to be different, to adopt alternative values, politics and lifestyles; and they, and their associated material culture, can offend, outrage and shock: this is to say, subcultures may be understood as 'deviant'. That subcultures are automatically resistant, subversive and deviant, should be understood as questionable however.

The theoretical challenges that have been directed at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies' (CCCS) conception of subcultures as delinquent and subversive (see Chapter Two), need to be explored further now, as it is possible to identify that a breakdown of the perceived boundaries between 'alternative' and 'mainstream', creative subculture and conformist popular culture, has occurred. A reconceptualising of resistance, and its position in relation to popular culture, has taken place, and this needs to be examined in relation to the museum context.
From Sidewalk to Catwalk  
1940 to Tomorrow  
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Sponsored by Perrier and The Independent

Win!
£100 voucher for the new Dr Martens Dept Store 
(1-4 King Street, Covent Garden) plus a fantastic 
pair of Dr Martens boots specially made to 
commemorate the V&A's Streetstyle exhibition. 
We're also giving away a pair of Dr Martens boots 
and a T-shirt to five lucky runners-up.

How to Enter
Answer the four questions overleaf and post in one 
of the competition boxes at either the Dept Store or 
the main entrance of the V&A.

Rules and Regulations
1. The competition is open to all ages  
2. Closing date of the competition is 19 February 1995  
3. Entries must be posted in one of the competition boxes at 
the Dr Martens Dept Store or the main entrance of the V&A  
4. The competition is not open to employees or their relations 
of Dr Martens or the V&A, or associated companies  
5. Entries are limited to one per person  
6. No cash alternatives will be offered for the prizes  
7. All successful entrants/winners will be notified by 3 March 
1995. The winner will be the first correct entry drawn. 
Runners-up will be the next five entries drawn.  
8. No other method of delivery of entry form is acceptable  
9. No purchase necessary  
10. The judges decision is final and no correspondence will be 
entered into

Victoria and Albert Museum

Plate 30: Competition sponsored by the V&A and the Dr Marten Dept store, London
There has been a long history of youth being defined as a particular urban problem, 'youth-as-trouble, youth-in-trouble'. The Chicago School was responsible for establishing in the interpretation of youth 'two enduring images'; youth as 'a painful transitional period' and the youth as product of a deprived urban environment (Hebdige 1983;77). Drawn from this, the CCCS conception of subculture, as we have seen, was sympathetic to delinquent expressions, romanticising the resistance of those that were seen to be disadvantaged. Youth culture in general went ignored as attention was focused on spectacular subcultures whose 'semiological guerrilla warfare' was revered. A dichotomy between 'straight' youth and creative subcultures was created, as subcultural authenticity was located within a position separated from mainstream consumer culture.

For traditional theorists such as Hebdige, subcultural 'style is marked out rather by a knowingness, a wilful anarchy and an irrepressible optimism...[a] disavowal of the conventions of adult dress' (1980;42). It is expressive of a resistance to capitalism by 'beating the system' through use of second-hand and cheap fashions, and offering challenges in the form of utilising social surplus normally discarded as rubbish. (1980;45) Within such conceptions however, there is no room for those that cannot be seen to engage in such practices. The 'depth' model established by CCCS and deviancy theory, which located authenticity beneath the media stereotypes has been challenged however.

As we have seen, the CCCS perspective has been challenged as problematic and insufficient, as the validity of interpreting subcultures simply in terms of resistance, has been questioned (McRobbie, 1994; Redhead, 1990;Thornton, 1995). In Over-the-counter-culture: retheorizing resistance in popular culture, Beverly Best re-examines 'resistance'. Here she rejects the traditional structuring that has labelled popular culture as ‘not authentic’, commercially contaminated, ephemeral, superficial, fake’ and positioned it as oppositional to 'high' culture and 'folk' culture which are characterised by notions of 'authentic', 'originality, integrity and truth' (1997). She argues that all cultural texts must negotiate in some way with the mass or micro media or the culture industry, and that resistance can be located within popular culture and less 'traditional' political spaces such as the 'everyday'.

Hebdige has been criticised for it seems according to him 'that the symbolic potency of a style rests entirely upon the innovatory and unique nature of a subcultures'
appearance.' (Clarke 1982; 10). Difference need not always be understood in terms of resistance, but can be linked with 'systems of distinction', for example, 'taste cultures' (Thornton 1994; 177). Thornton takes issue with theories which locate subversiveness as the 'pure' subcultural state which is evaporated by media attention, arguing that 'disparaging media coverage is not the verdict but the vehicle of their resistance' (1994; 184), and that subcultures are not necessarily intrinsically subversive but become so through negative portrayals in the media. Where as Hebdige locates 'selling out' as incorporation into hegemony - therefore rejection is defined in terms of 'resistance' (1979; 94-97), Thornton locates it in terms of betrayal - i.e. selling outside of the constructed limits of subcultural market, to outsiders such as Top of the Pops audiences (1994; 180).

'Youth subcultures are not organic, unmediated social formations, nor autonomous, grass-roots cultures which only meet the media upon “selling out” or at moments of “moral panic.”' (Thornton 1994; 188)

Youth subcultural expression is involved in a complex and negotiated relationship with the cultural industries and mass media. As Redhead argues, what have been theorised as 'authentic', 'grass-roots' or folk' youth subcultures are no longer distinct from dominant culture, if they ever were (1990). For Redhead there has been too much emphasis on the deviant and rebellious aspects of subcultures, whereas, youth cultural expressions exist in a complex relationship with the cultural industries and the mass media (1990; 41). This then, accounts for the characterisation of post-punk subcultures which are defined by a 'speeding up of the time between points of authenticity and manufacture' (1993b; 24). The one dimensional nature of subcultural theory orthodoxy's which placed emphasis on rebellion and subversive, Redhead believes, paved the way for the dominant rhetoric which argues that the,

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' historical line of development of youth subcultures...has come to a (permanent) halt, leaving only the alternatives of either wallowing in a retro-pop nostalgia for a golden past, or else deepening the left and right cynicism which permeates current cultural politics' (Redhead 1990; 40).

As Beezer argues, 'A view of subcultures as a movement from subversion to incorporation is a romantic story with a tragic ending.' (1992; 112).

Cultural theory has now come to locate resistance much more widely: resistance can be located in the mundane and everyday. Thus, as the status of subcultural subservience and resistance has been challenged, so too has the BCCCS dichotomy of mainstream v
subcultural youth, which privileged the latter because of its perceived symbolic resistance. Subversive practises and resistance is therefore, no longer just equated with subcultures. Mort for example, analyses working-class lads buying Armani jumpers (McRobbie 1994;34) and research into the dress of the Casuals, has highlighted their use of sartorial signifiers in a ‘status orientated lifestyle’ (Cartledge 1997; Lloyd 1988). Not sartorially spectacular in the traditional sense, subversion occurs through consumption, in terms sometimes of how garments are obtained, who used by and how, and through their low-profile appearance; their respectable dress helped evasion of the police at matches (Lloyd 1988). Indeed, a re-theorisation of deviancy has occurred, which locates subversion and rebellion not in the spectacular but rather in ‘tactics of invisibility’ (Evans 1997a).

Thus, although McRobbie’s warning against pursuing a cultural popularist agenda so far as to understand anything which is consumed, and is popular, as oppositional (1994;39), should be heeded, and that challenges that have been made to traditional subcultural theories regarding the re-theorisation of resistance, should be recognised. Indeed, what are the implications of the re-theorisation of resistance, in relation to our examination of museum representation of subcultures? If, as has been argued, subcultures are marginalised from museums because of their perceived deviant status, or when they are represented, their subversive potential is ignored, what does it mean if the subversive and oppositional can be located elsewhere? If subversiveness can be located in the mundane and everyday?

In particular this raises the issue that material culture is not necessarily deviant, and not all the material culture relating to subcultures, will be challenging. It is the recognition of context, of how things are consumed and used, that can make them so; for example, a five pound note is not ‘challenging’ until it has been rolled up and used to snort cocaine, a babies’ dummy is not controversial until it is revealed that it was worn at an illegal rave party by someone who had taken Ecstasy. Thus it is the choice of interpretation that can make objects controversial or not.

Whether subcultures have been defined as deviant, and thus ignored by museums, or have been labelled as youthful rebellion, and thus sanitised, attention focuses on their resistant characteristics, and fails to recognise the other sides to subcultural identities that may or may not be deviant: their friendship systems, use of language, use of space and so forth. As McRobbie has argued, ‘few writers seemed interested in what happened when a mod went home after a week-end on speed. Only what happened out there on the streets mattered.’
Some aspects of a subculturalists life can actually be deeply conservative; individuals may conform to excepted modes of behaviour such as owning a house and a modern car, having a family and a steady job.

Although, recent cultural theory then, may question that a division between subcultural and mainstream exists in reality, it is important to recognise however, that the perceived division is often an important dimension to the construction of subcultural identities (see Muggleton 2000). It is important therefore, not to attempt to deny the subversive status that subculturalists may feel themselves. Although the old model which divided the ‘pure’ subculture from the contaminated outside world, eager to transform anything it could get its hands on into a sellable item, has collapsed’ (McRobbie, 1994'; 161), the ideology of authenticity still exists within the minds of many subculturalists themselves. Theorists such as CCCS then, are guilty of creating false dichotomy between subcultures and ‘straight’ youth because they reproduce the ‘anti-mass-media’ discourses of those under study;

‘While youth celebrate the “underground,” academics venerate “subcultures”; where one group denounces the “commercial,” the other criticizes “hegemony”; where one laments “selling out,” the other theorizes “incorporation.”’ (Thornton 1994;176)

The ‘mainstream’ is therefore a ‘vague monolith against which subcultural credibility’s are measured’(Thornton 1995;6)

It is important therefore, to consider the implications that representations within the context of the museum, could have for subcultures themselves; given that their alternative, outsider status is something treasured and guarded. As Ted Polhemus has commented;

‘club culture is intrinsically ephemeral and fluid while collecting is just the opposite -freezing time and motion...To think that someday the Antiques Roadshow might have its own, bearded flyers expert may shine too bright a torch on a world which thrives only furtively, in the dark of night.’(1996a,75)

If part of the attraction of subcultural affiliation, is located within the need to rebel against ‘the mainstream’, and coherent subcultural identities are based on the belief that they are different and present a challenge to the mainstream, what could be the results of museum exposure? If ‘Approving reports in mass media like tabloids or television, are the subcultural kiss of death’ (Thornton 1995;6), what could museum representations be?
As we have seen, subcultural capital is based on being in the know, on exclusivity; subcultures create their own jargon and so forth, to keep outsiders, out. One could suggest then, that they might react to the following anecdote with humour and relief, rather than horror: When a middle aged, middle class archivist who had made it their mission to document the local music scene as comprehensively as possible, was asked why the local thriving dance music and Bangra scenes were not represented at all in the collection, he replied somewhat perplexedly, that this was because he could not tell the difference between the artist and the title of the music and therefore could not classify said material (pers.com.). Subcultural barriers to incorporation, in this instance, may be seen to be doing their job!

A place for resistance and subversion?

If we return to Foucault, it could be suggested that resistance is not a viable option at all. As we have seen, Foucault conceptualises power as a vast network of ‘micro-mechanisms’ that are incorporated within the entire social sphere. Rather than associating power with domination and subjugation, Foucault conceives that all individuals simultaneously undergo and exercise power, with power operating at both the conscious and unconscious level. This suggests that one can never escape the ‘network of control’ as ‘power [is] “always already there”…one is never “outside” it…there are no “margins” for those who break with the system to gamble in.’ (Foucault 1980).

Best argues that there is an analogy between Foucault’s conception of power, and how it functions in modern society, and the mechanisms of commercialisation of the ‘culture industry’;

‘Foucault’s description of the mechanisms of power as being so diverse and as operating at so many social levels that even moments of resistance are not outside its network of control, can be likened to the culture industry’s ability not only quickly and efficiently to diffuse forms of resistance by incorporating and commodifying the objects, styles or mannerism of that resistance, but to capture no more than an isolated or fleeting stylistic moment (of music, fashion, etc.), package it, market it, and sell it back to the public as a complete and coherent lifestyle or youth movement.’(Best 1997;21)

Thus, it can be argued that resistance is no longer possible in a media consumer saturated society where any attempt to resist is quickly commodified and commercialised. As Jameson has also suggested for example,
local countercultural forms of cultural resistance and guerrilla warfare, but also even overtly political interventions like those of The Clash, are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves might well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it.’ (Jameson 1984;87)

That such conceptualisations leave no space for potential resistance to power or commercialisation however, is problematic. Best challenges what she considers to be ‘a hopeless and overly pessimistic view’, and uses Foucault cautiously to attempt to theorise popular culture as a site of oppositional practice (1997). She recognises that;

‘contemporary theorizing of popular culture must allow spaces for possible resistance, as well as being able to take issues of domination, exploitation and cultural imperialism into consideration. It must recognize the contradictory nature of popular cultural products, in that they can be the site of both hegemonic and counterhegemonic ideological production depending on the context of their reception or production.’(1997;19)

Best suggests that although it might first appear that Foucault’s theorisation of power leaves no room for the possibility of resistance, the argument that there ‘cannot be power relations without resistances’ can be identified and that, like power, resistance takes place on many social levels and in many forms (1997; 26). Best argues that resistance is unimaginable outside the context of domination for ‘every form of resistance, to be anything other than meaningless, must be founded on normative criteria’ (1997;25). We must be able to establish normative criteria in order to have something to rebel against, something to subvert. Gordon also suggests that for Foucault,

‘the instruments and techniques [of power] are always liable to forms of re-appropriation, reversibility and re-utilisation not only in tactical realignments from “above” but in counter-offensives from “below”’(1980).

Thus, although challenges to oppression may be posed within the same discursive formation of oppression, this does not necessarily undermine the oppositional potential of the challenge; for example a musical text may still challenge the conventions of popular music industry, and have oppositional effects on audiences and other musicians, even though it is circulated in the form of a commodity (i.e. record, compact disk etc.) (Best 1997). Best thus suggests that the concepts of contradiction and negotiation are helpful for they allow the space for oppositional potential within the discursive formation of oppression. (1997;22-23).
If museums, as it has been argued within this thesis, help propagate and maintain the values and norms of society, and pare down the complexities of society into palatable narratives, it could be argued that they invariably help establish a 'norm', to subvert. They also help to make concrete the structures of power and control that operate without society: the hierarchies of value, knowledge and power that exist.

Within this thesis, there has not been room to explore how representations of subcultural identities and histories have been read by audiences. To undertake this would require another research project. When major exhibitions relating to subcultures have been held however, they have received attention from a youth audience. The V&A and Barbican for example, reported a significant rise in the youth presence within their visitor profiles. Thus it can be argued, that when exhibitions on subcultures are held, they do attract new audiences to museums. No research has been undertaken to ascertain what the perceptions of these new audiences has been however. Did they recognise the conservative context of the museum operating to, as this thesis has argued, sanitise and castrate subcultural energy and resistance? Or, did they engage in their own subversive readings? Was the museum a site in which they gained some initial knowledge about a subculture, previously elusive to them, and were they now armed with information that could help them to seek out involvement with that subculture? Did they appropriate the lifestyles represented within the museum for themselves?

That oppositional potential can be realised within a context of oppression as Best argued above, can rarely be identified within the context of the museum itself. One such example, where oppositional expression was given a platform, was in Scotland: Glasgow Museum Service represented the Faslane Peace Camp through two initiatives: a ‘New Age Travellers’ caravan in the ‘Scottish Travellers’ section of the Transport Museum (Plates 31 & 32) and an Open Museum Faslane touring display. These representations have been enabled by both the local governments and museum service’s positive and progressive approach to social inclusion: the text accompanying the ‘Travellers’ display states;

“Gypsy travellers are one of the oldest minority groups, contributing to both the economic and cultural life of Scotland. Their nomadic lifestyle has often been subject to discrimination. Glasgow City Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the rights of all minority groups in the City.”

The Open Museum’s Faslane is an educational display aimed at school children. For both initiatives to have happened however, required the museum to relinquish its authoritative
Plate 31: ‘New Age Travellers’ caravan on display in the ‘Scottish Travellers’ section of the Transport Museum, Glasgow

Plate 32: Inside the ‘New Age Travellers’ caravan
position: to acquire the objects and requisite knowledge, museum staff had to gain the trust of the protestors at the camp, which required many visits and a willingness on behalf of the staff to enter the subculturalists own environment. They had to sometimes visit at unusual times and could not arrange appointments in the usual way. They also had to be comfortable in an environment where they sometimes witnessed illegal activities such as smoking cannabis.

That subversion can also occur within the context of the museum was also realised at the opening night to the *Faslane* display, where travellers and protestors were invited. A number of individuals were caught with drugs and having sex in the museum, were thrown out, and the museum service had a bill of around £2,000 to cover damages and security for the night (perc.com Interviewee VL). Not only then was the campaign of the protesters given legitimisation by being included within the context of the museum, the subversive elements to the associated subculture could not be suppressed by the museum, and indeed participant had a party, with free booze and food at the museums expense!

Although it has been argued that placing subcultures within the context of the museum can sanitise and contain their deviant potential, that subjects become innocuous through inclusion, there is some evidence to suggest that the opposite may also be true: that subjects can become more controversial because of their inclusion within the museum context. Gloucester City Museum’s plans for a young people’s arts project, ‘Dressed to the Nines!’, caused outrage and became a front page headline of the local paper, when what was actually an innocuous project on identity and adornment, was misinterpreted as a body piecing workshop (see Appendix 11). Similarly, a painting of a Poll Tax riot caused much controversy when displayed at the Museum of London, but none at all when it was displayed elsewhere in the capital. As Interviewee commented in reference to the above:

> “we are the creator as well as the curator and I suppose because we interpret things and we...are supposed to be about real life, as it were, then maybe...it can become more controversial because its...an institution doing this controversial subject, not just the sort of maverick artist.” (19)

Thus because of the expectations established by the modernist paradigm, museums could utilise this potential and actually intentionally become sites of controversy and debate. They could instigate initiatives that drew attention and forced society to address that which makes it uncomfortable and uneasy.
Conclusion.

We have seen that the prevalence of the modernist paradigm of museum, has lead to the marginalisation of subcultural identities and histories from museums, as the representation of that which has been rejected by society and labelled deviant, poses a problem for an institution which has positioned itself as a moral guardian and educator. We have also considered that when subcultures do attain representation, the museum arguably acts as disciplinary apparatus, using representations to elevate public anxieties and fears, and perpetuate societal norms. As Pieterse has argued, representations of Others 'are either exoticizing (emphasizing difference) or assimilating (emphasizing similarities).' (1997:124). Both strategies, can be identified in reference to the representation of subcultures within museums, and both serve to contain and castrate subcultures.

We have also explored in this chapter, how deviancy is socially constructed and exists at different levels of severity, and we have begun to suggest that resistance is not the sole preserve of subcultures, but that it can be located in the everyday as well as the spectacular or political.

This chapter then, has suggested that what the modernist paradigm serves to do, through its desire for objectivity and neutrality, is to limit museums scope for debate, and the potential to explore how societal norms are constructed and regulated: to limit the examination of how groups are demonised, scapegoated, and limit challenges to the labels that have been attributed.

Whether directly, or at arms length, museums rely on funding from local and central government. They also rely on the good will of trustees, councillors, Friends of the museum, and on the goodwill of the public, who are ultimately their visitors, for their existence. Thus, whilst it is important to recognise the constructed nature of deviancy, and that subversion can be located within dominance, it can be argued that whilst museums continue to operate to the paradigm of modernist museum, they act less as sites where power struggles can occur, and more as sites where dominant ideologies are perpetuated and normalised.

Thus, museums can serve as vehicles for the castration of subversive elements in a number of ways. They help to strip an identity of its subversive potential, for ultimately if it has
been accepted by such an institution as a museum then it has been sanctioned by the authority. In the interpretation of displays, what was once seen as a threat is turned into youthful rebellion. Past subcultures are presented with a tone of nostalgia and humour. The real dangers that these identities were believed to present to contemporaries, is glossed over or forgotten, and thus important aspects of subcultural histories are written out of official museum presentations of the past. Museums remain places of conformity not places of debate or places to address controversy. The museum’s duty to the Nation is seen to be to objectively save heritage for posterity, yet what it is actually doing for the Nation is maintaining the status quo.
CONCLUSION

As the introduction revealed, the impetus behind this thesis originally stemmed from a concern that subcultures had been marginalised from museums. The primary research undertaken indeed revealed that this is the case, that subcultural identities, histories and material culture have been under-represented by British museums: 80% of the 339 museums that responded to the survey for example, indicated that they had nothing of relevance in their collections.

It was discovered that there were apparently many reasons which led to the marginalisation of subcultures. Whilst only a small proportion of respondents were hostile to the idea of museums collecting and representing subcultures, a common response was that addressing such a subject area was "not appropriate" to their region/museum. Some respondents also felt that it was too challenging a subject to address. Respondents also expressed a fear of "getting it wrong", which led them to shy away from this subject.

In particular, practical problems such as shortages of staff, research time, budgets, storage space, and pressures to be more accountable and fit in with governmental and local agendas, (which all pull museums to do more with what seems ever decreasing resources), were given as the main reasons for marginalisation by a significant number of museums. As museums did not already have appropriate material within their collections, the resources that would be needed to build up a knowledge base on and acquire material, precluded subcultural representations from happening.

The status of subcultures as being of minority interest and relevance, has also led to their marginalisation: limited resources get directed elsewhere, to subjects or communities that are perceived as more pressing or 'mainstream'. The issue of the exclusion of subcultural identities and histories from museums therefore, did not register as a particularly pressing concern for any of the museums contacted. Although subcultural participants may also suffer from other indices of exclusion such as their ethnic origin, sexual orientation, political beliefs, homeless status etc, collectively subcultures did not seem to be an...
immediate area of concern in the same way that the need to address other marginalised communities, such as ethnic communities or disabled people, does.135

Some museums also stated that they have not addressed subcultures because there has been no call to do so by the public. The marginalisation of subcultures from museums can therefore be identified as a self-perpetuating problem. A cycle of exclusion exists (Figure 24): subcultural material-cultural is not valued and so it is excluded; therefore it remains unrepresented and thus not legitimated; this contributes to its remaining under-valued in the public’s eyes and therefore it is not being donated to museums; so it does not get collected and so does not get represented and so remains marginalised and so does not get collected ...

![Cycle of exclusion established through structures of power, knowledge and value.](image)

We have seen however, that the marginalisation of subcultures from museums has not been total and that subcultural identities have received a limited amount of representation. Small amounts of material culture have been collected, however this generally occurs in an ad hoc manner. More widespread than collecting practice however, has been the representation of subcultures through exhibition initiatives. Such initiatives tend to be temporary, as subcultures are rarely represented within permanent displays. For the majority of museums that have represented subcultures, initiatives have been small scale, however a handful of major temporary exhibitions, such as *Streetstyle* at the V&A and the

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135 Maybe this is in part due to an assumption that there exists the element of choice behind the adoption of a subcultural identity, which is not possible with other excluded identities.
touring exhibition *Sound and Fury*, have set a precedent and have made significant contributions to the representation of subcultural identities within museums. It has been subcultural *identities* that have received the attention however, for the *histories* of subcultures remain largely ignored by museums.

When representations do occur, initiatives tend to be legitimised by the recourse to an emphasis on the artistic and the visual aspects of subcultures. There also exists a tendency of museums to define subcultural identities simply in terms of leisure. We have also seen that there is a disposition to only represent historical subcultures: those of the past decade or so, generally remain ignored - most noticeable for their absence are the profusion of dance sub/clubcultures. It is also only spectacular subcultures that get represented, those traditionally associated with 'youth culture': Teddy-boys, Mods, Rockers, Punks, Goths. Derivatives of these, or less well known subcultures such as Northern Soul or Riot Grrl for example, do not get recognised. In particular, there is a significant absence of the representation of Black or Asian orientated subcultures such as Hip-Hop, Ragga, Bangra and so on. Sexually orientated subcultures such as gay Skinheads or 'Butch/Femme', also remain hidden.

This thesis became much more than an exposé of subcultural marginalisation however. The initial research to establish whether subcultures had been marginalised raised many problematics and contradictions. Although subcultures may appear to be judged by many museums for example, as of minority significance and interest and are therefore not addressed, the popularity of the phenomenon when they have been represented by museums, cannot be denied;

'The response to the Streetstyle Exhibition was phenomenal. In terms of attendance's, visitor numbers exceeded the projected 70,000, reaching a staggering 109,000 in just under fourteen weeks. Media coverage was overwhelming, amounting to some £2 million of free worldwide, and broad-ranging, television, magazine and newspaper articles.' (Haye and Dingwall 1996;conclusion)

Thus, whilst the primary research and the reasons given by museums themselves seemed initially to provide the answers to the question of why subcultures have been marginalised, on closer investigation and analysis it soon became apparent that issues such as resourcing shortages are not the *why* but the *how* of the problem: Why subcultures have been marginalised is located on a much more fundamentally structural level. The reasons that museums provided for their poor representation are in fact *symptoms* of the problem rather
than its *cause*, and in-depth analysis of these symptoms reveals the deep-seated 'norms', traditional ways of working that museums follow, often without question.

The investigation into the lack of representations of subcultures in museums and the contribution subcultures have made to, and the influences they have had upon, British society, led therefore to the exposure of the actual cause; the continued dominance of the modernist museum paradigm. Indeed, the research process revealed that museums could never adequately represent subcultures while this paradigm remains enmeshed with everything museums do. That museums may find themselves in a "no-win" situation, where they can be criticised for excluding identities and histories such as subcultures, yet if they do address them they can never really do a good job at recording or representing them, is due to structural forces and traditions that subordinate the individual curator or museum.

**The dominance of modernist model.**

This thesis then, has established the extent to which the dominance of the modernist paradigm within contemporary museums, continues. It has been identified that the marginalisation of subcultural identities and histories is due in part to the political and economic pressures that bare down on museums which leads limited resources to be directed elsewhere, however, this thesis has argued that these very pressures can be traced back to one cause: the modernist paradigm.

A lack of vision as to the potential of museums, is also arguably a contributing factor to the modernist paradigm’s continued dominance. This is again in part due to the fact that many staff do not have the time or energy to address what museums should or could be. As Hooper-Greenhill comments;

'Under-staffing and under-funding in large sections of the museum field leads to a concentration on getting things done, rather than to an interrogation of current practice... working practices, ways of thinking and professional values are slow to change.' (2000b:4)

However, the dominance of the modernist paradigm is also due to the limited ways of thinking and perceiving that this paradigm engenders. The modernist paradigm then, still tempers what can be achieved. For the majority of museums, authority and the power of
legitimation remains firmly within the realm of the museum. The visitor is often still ‘a passive consumer, rather than the creator of her own history or identity’ (Murray 2001). Communities are sometimes utilised by museums for the latter’s own ends, and many museums have not yet become part of their local communities in any integrated sense.

Representations are structured by modes of operation that the modernist paradigm established. Subcultural identities are understood in essentialist terms; they are labelled and classified, interpreted objectively and placed within representations which emphasise a single narrative, whilst what types of subcultural material-culture, and how it is collected and displayed, is controlled by rigid discipline divisions. This has limited the kinds of material-culture that is collected: clothing and ephemera associated with subcultures is most commonly collected, as the majority of initiatives occur within social history or costume departments.

It has been shown that the modernist paradigm works to restrict all inclusive practices within museums by establishing ideas and then expectations within the profession and public alike, as to what the institution of ‘museum’ should be. The museum is still expected to present ‘facts’ in an objective and balanced manner, and to not take risks, but rather appeal to the majority. Indeed, we have examined how the modernist museum paradigm put in place self-legitimating practises which naturalised its structuring practises and closed down potential educational possibilities.

In particular, this thesis has explored how the structures of power, knowledge and value that the modernist paradigm established, have contributed to subcultural absence. Drawing on Foucault and Gramsci, it has been revealed how museums remain as disciplinary apparatus and agents of governance. That although the paternalistic rhetoric may have disappeared, museums are still places of civic pride whose role is to help create and mould a civil public. Thus identities that have been associated with deviancy, and that are associated with the profane, stand as antithesis to the model citizen the museum is engendered with fostering.

Addressing the representation of subcultures within museums reveals the power structures that are in operation: To an extent, what museums are doing is ‘regulating by defining’, for it can be suggested that museums act at secondary level to the media discourses, which also regulate by defining. As Redhead argued, ‘‘Authentic’ subcultures were produced by
subcultural theorists, not the other way around.’ (1990;25), and we can suggest that what museums do through their desire to provide authentic representations, is to produce the subcultural identities they depict.

Addressing subcultures also reveals the values and practices that have been naturalised within museums. For example, acknowledging the knowledges that exist outside of the museum makes the inadequacies of the modernist paradigm apparent. The authenticity of museum representations becomes a particularly contested terrain the nearer we get to contemporary experience: knowledge of subcultures is located firmly within the subcultures themselves, not museums, and thus when the identities museums represent do not fit subculturalists (or even the publics’) own personal understanding of what is ‘authentic’, challenges such as those directed at the Streetstyle exhibition, are made. As Moore has argued, ‘The subject matter of museums should arguably be material culture and its significance in people’s lives in its fullest diversity, not just those fragments which curators deem to be authentic.’ (Moore 1997;5). Thus pressure to exclude knowledge that is designated as deviant (subcultural) comes from sources that are both internal and external to the institution of the museum.

This also leads one to question the accuracy of all historical representations: consider David Phillips’s nightmare fantasy where, in taking a group of artists from the past to a major present day art gallery, ‘all hell breaks loose’ as cries of ‘That’s not mine!’ ‘What have they done to it?’, ‘Where’s the rest of it?’ and ‘It wasn’t meant to be seen like that’ echo through the galleries again and again’ (1997;1). Though envisaged in relation to art, this same scenario could easily apply if time travellers visited any social history or costume display. That this is simply the inevitable fate of whatever representations museums produce should not be accepted.

As this study into the representation of subcultures has shown, the modernist paradigm’s dominance is beginning to be challenged. Research such as this, has started to highlight the inadequacies of the paradigm, and expose the inappropriateness of a paradigm that was founded on an epistemology quite different to that existing within the contemporary period. A minority of museums are also undertaking positive work to challenge the practises and values that the modernist paradigm established.
Nevertheless, the modernist paradigm is so entrenched within the concept and reality of ‘the museum’ that attempts to challenge its dominance only manage to scrape the surface. Thus although some museums may be seen to be attempting to embrace inclusive practises by moving away from being object led towards a fuller engagement with their local communities, and by applying more reflexive and interactive approaches to their representations, the spectre of the modernist museum remains. As Susie Fisher argues:

‘Can it be that some of the old assumptions from the glass case era are still lurking in the age of the push button interactive?...Museums are employing cosmetics to glamorise the old agenda, but the face underneath remains the same’ (2002;33)

The mixed reception that this research received by museum professionals, highlights the tensions and barriers that currently exist. The value of this research was not recognised as important by some - negative feedback ranged from incomprehension to vehement opposition. Many other museum professionals however, offered their support. Many responses were accompanied by apologies for the lack of representation a respondent’s museum had undertaken: “sorry to have been so negative” was a common response. Often they stressed that they would do more if only they could, and indeed comments such as “Too many ‘shoulds’, too many ‘coulds’ – not enough time!”, revealed that a willingness to become more inclusive does exist but practical pressures mitigate against this. Thus this thesis is not critical of the individuals that work in museums, but rather offers a challenge to the paradigm that they are forced to work within, and which so limits what they can achieve.

To acknowledge the existence of a modernist museum paradigm, it should be reiterated is not to deny the diversity of museums, both now and within the nineteenth century. Rather, this thesis argues that there is a common paradigm which has generated various models which have in turn facilitated a range of modes of museum practice. The expression ‘modernist museum paradigm’ is used reflexively and the particular characteristics that are explored, reveal the peculiarities of a Western tradition of thought, of knowledge and history making.

A paradigm may contain a huge and growing diversity of modes of practice but that diversity may never actually breach the boundaries of the paradigm. Museums for example, still realise exhibitions by: utilising permanent and temporary displays of objects behind glass, in cases and on plinths; linear narratives remain the most prevalent mode of ordering; they provide written interpretations with the remit to inform and ultimately
‘improve’ the general public. Whilst some may have engaged new technologies for interpretation, or have become more people rather than object lead, the paradigm is never fully escaped. As we have seen, exhibitions such as Streetstyle may appear groundbreaking initiatives, but closer analysis reveals the traditions of practice which inevitably restrict what is achieved.

The death of museums?

The inappropriateness of the modernist paradigm to a ‘postmodern’ age is such that, if this issue is not addressed, the ‘death’ of museums is a possibility. As Moore has suggested:

‘Might not the political analysis of the flawed ideological nature of museums suggest that it would be better to get rid of museums altogether, as outdated vestiges of imperialism, as fundamentally too flawed and beyond redemption?’ (1997,10)

Museums place so much emphasis on their role to collect and preserve ‘real’, ‘authentic’ objects in order to hide the fact that the modernist museum’s ideologies are in fact collapsing - they are engaging in self legitimising practices. One could argue, utilising Baudrillard’s third order of simulation, that museums are faking their death in order to hide the fact that they are already dead.

Hooper-Greenhill argues that if museums do not engage with current theoretical critiques of the modernist museum, and interrogate traditional practices, they will ‘become stale, internally focussed and redundant.’ (2000b,3) Museums need to become relevant to contemporary society;

‘Otherwise, the greatest museum in the world will become as irrelevant as Shelley’s Ozymandias, and our culture will be that bit more barren:

Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless
and bare

The lone and the level sands stretch
far away’ (Jones 2001,13)

Indeed, the fundamental question that can be drawn from this examination of the representation of subcultures, is not do museums need subcultural histories? but rather, and more significantly, do subcultures need museums?
In order that museums become relevant, and indeed, integral to contemporary society, they need to change fundamentally. The exploration of the marginalisation of subcultures from museums has indeed revealed what changes are necessary. Museums need to become reflexive and responsive within their operational structures so that they can respond to change or current issues, quickly. They must acknowledge the different and even conflicting authenticities that participants themselves create. This however will mean both a much closer working with participants and the handing over of the control of knowledge. It will also demand a breakdown in museum claims to universal truths, as what they would have to recognise and represent are versions and a multitude of ‘truths’.

To make such diverse representations will require museums to embrace a new epistemology. They will have to acknowledge and understand how differing meanings are made by viewers, and that even contradictory meanings would need to be presented. Museums would have to recognise that the understanding of identities as fixed has given way to a ‘fluidity of positions’ (Redhead 1990;75) for as Bennett argues, subcultures are ‘prime examples of the unstable and shifting cultural affiliations which characterise late modern consumer-based societies.’(1999;605) Maffesoli’s ‘neo-tribes’ are not rigid forms of organisation but are characterised by a certain ambience, a state of mind, expressed through lifestyles that favour appearance and form (1996;98). Such shifting social identifications and associations profoundly challenge the ‘static monumentality’ of the present institution of British museums.

A recognition of conflicting viewpoints would inevitably require museums to become places where issues can be debated and explored. Thus the way forward lies in museums becoming forums for cultural debate. By using material culture as a starting point they could (re)present the various competing and conflicting histories and voices within our society. This would give museums a relevance that they presently lack. As Gosling has argued, ‘it would be refreshing to see un-apologetically opinionated exhibitions’ (2001;41).

To censor and not represent challenging or confrontational issues and subjects, such as those related to subcultures, continues to perpetuate conservative preconceptions about the museum, that it is an institution which represents only unchallenging subjects and established orthodoxy. Packe stresses the importance of willingness to take risks and make mistakes, which can be learnt from, and he suggests that ‘Above all else museums and galleries should cause debate and stir up feeling amongst the visitors and encourage people
to challenge traditional views’ (2001;95) He indeed reveals that ‘Museums have helped broaden my horizons and altered my thinking but, in my eyes, that’s what a museum is for.’ (Packe, 2001;96). Bennett argues however, that only when the museum hands over the power to know and construct knowledge to groups outside its institution can it become an effective instrument for public debate. (1997;104)

Museums have a role to play in changing public preconceptions about them, to deconstruct what the museum is and could be, and include the public in this process. Only once the public understands, only once it is given the power to know, will it accept and take control of such power. As Bunch argues,

‘The public needs to know, and it is the profession’s obligation to inform it, that museums can be “temples” and “cathedrals” and wonderful “nation’s attics.” But they are also places of scholarship and interpretation, places where celebration can often co-exist with controversy.’(1995;35)

If museums are to survive it is crucial that they cease being disciplinary apparatus and become educational apparatus. However, this would also require considerable changes in the present ‘education’ (or rather training) system and a far wider understanding of the true meaning and etymology of the word ‘education’. To educate is ‘to lead out’; to show people how to learn, rather than the deflecting of their inquisitiveness by a narrow and rigorous projection of information. As Bunch argues:

‘Museums must not look to educate visitors to a singular point of view. Rather, the goal is to create an informed public that can analyze, criticize, understand, and manipulate history, culture, art, and science so that it informs their lives and aids them in addressing the normal dilemmas of life.’ (1995)

indeed,

‘If museums...are to be effective and valuable educational institutions, they must operate in an environment in which they are free to teach, support, validate, and celebrate; they must also be free to challenge, question, illuminate, and confront.’(Bunch 1995;59)

The modernist logic, the old rational and objective paradigm must be rejected whilst enchantment, the inspirational, and the dialectical are embraced. By marginalising subcultural identities and histories (and to an extent popular culture), what museums have done is exclude ‘a sense of youthful energy, excitement and danger’ (Moore 1997;73).

Such changes cannot simply be realised through the creation of a temporary exhibition or through the refurbishment of a gallery, by the creation of a new post or an inclusive
mission statement. Change needs to be comprehensive and pervasive through new and reflexive attitudes to collecting, to collection management and documentation systems, through changes in staffing structures, in exhibition and representational practices, in relationships with the public, and so on.

The post-museum, and the paradigmatic shift required before its emergence.

Any significant progress towards what Hooper-Greenhill has identified as the ‘post museum’ will be thwarted until the grip that the modernist model has on the operating structures, and the perceived role of museums (both internally and externally), is broken. For this grip to be released the cycle of exclusion, identified above, needs to be broken; however, such a break would require a fundamental breakdown of the modernist paradigm itself.

The paradigmatic shift required before the emergence of a any new kind of museum will present considerable challenges. As Dodd has already recognised in reference to social inclusion;

‘many museums and galleries will face imperatives for changes in working practices and those who have traditionally held power and are accustomed to an autonomy that has resulted in neglect of audiences (and potential audiences), will continue to feel both uncomfortable and threatened.’ (Dodd, 2001 ;5)

As we have seen, although forward looking museums are attempting to make changes, progressive attitudes and initiatives are not widespread throughout the profession. Similarly, one can argue that even the most progressive changes are not able to challenge the modernist model fundamentally: Essentially museums remain duty-bound to a public and governing bodies (councillors, trustees etc) who still perceive the museum’s role in a traditional sense.

Where museums, like The Museum of London, have been established in the twentieth century and have from their foundation encouraged an open and inclusive environment, then arguably the strangle hold that the modernist paradigm has had on them is slackened. Being able to offer such practical challenges to the modernist paradigm is however, unlikely for the majority of museums. Indeed as Hooper-Greenhill has also argued;
what is needed is no small modification of existing practice, but a virtually complete re-conceptualisation of the social purpose and communicative style of the museum as an organisation' (2001).

The evidence this researcher has gathered demonstrates that movement towards a paradigmatic shift has hardly begun. However, unless the rate of change increases markedly within British museums there is unlikely to be a successful shift. The concept of 'post-museum' can be seen to be emerging in other countries where first nation peoples have been forcing change and establishing their own community museums of all kinds not based on Western values. However, Science and children's museums in America, and even in Britain, have also begun to set a precedent for change, particularly with regards to embracing experiential learning.

Eureka in Britain and the Exploratorium in the US for example, have something to teach museums of all disciplines, and may even help challenge discipline divisions themselves. The Exploratorium's combination of science and art, and its commitment to self-liberation has fostered a real spirit of inclusion and empowerment. Indeed its central vision, which strives to realise the belief 'that human understanding will cease to be an instrument of power...for the benefit of a few, and will instead become a source of empowerment and pleasure to all.' (Hein, 1990;ix), needs to be behind the challenges to the modernist museum paradigm.

Precedents for change can also be found where 'the past' and history is a contentious part of peoples' everyday lives. Museums in Northern Ireland for example are beginning to address the very difficult political history of the country, and museums are being used in community relations work, 'to promote understanding, reconciliation and community development' (Crooke 2002;26).

In Britain in general however, this force for change has been limited. In this context traditions are too entrenched, thus progressive institutions are rarely able to make far reaching fundamental changes: As the case study of Streetstyle revealed, the need for different approaches may be recognised, but the ability to embrace this is limited. Indeed, Hooper-Greenhill has argued that it is likely that much of the intellectual development of the post-museum 'will take place outside the major European centres which witnessed the birth of the modernist museum.'(2000;153)
Perhaps what is needed in the British context, is that Hooper-Greenhill’s conception of the post-museum is embraced as inspiration, but that it also be divided into two distinct types of organisation within one institution: the re-born ‘post-museum’ and what I provisionally call here, the ‘expresseum’.

The former will continue to collect, hold and preserve objects; however this will be driven by attention to the use-value of objects rather than the mere accumulation and classification for accumulation’s and classification’s sakes. The post-museum will also embrace ‘intangible heritage’ such as memories, songs, poetry and ‘cultural traditions that embody that culture past and future’ (Hooper-Greenhill 2000;152). It may continue to exhibit material, it may have some permanent displays; but the onus of this work will be directed at provision for none local audiences such as tourists.

The latter however, formed without the baggage of ‘museum’, will act as a focal centre for the local community and will have a number of roles (arts centre, artist studios, youth and play work provision, café, and so forth). A major part of its function would be temporary exhibition space(s) where communities, histories, identities, and issues can be (re)presented, discussed, and expressed. The ‘expresseum’ would draw on the post-museum’s resources, for example its pool of collections; and the two organisations would have to work in an essentially symbiotic relationship. Yet the ‘expresseum’ would not just be about material culture. The ‘expresseum’ exhibition space(s) would be the nucleus for all manner of events and creative expressions; exhibiting would merely be one of many forms of communication utilised. And the ‘expresseum’ would not be simply contained within a building, but rather conceived as a process and experience (drawn from Hooper-Greenhill 2000;152-153).

Such flexibility would enable all the people involved with the ‘expresseum’ to engage with histories, communities, and issues in a more fluid, dynamic manner. The ‘expresseum’ would recognise knowledge as fragmented and multi-vocal, would be responsive to change, indeed be ever changing, and ever expressive. Envisaged as such, a new definition

136 A model that has inspired this conception, has been the Museum Of in London. A temporary museum in a disused warehouse, the philosophy of the Museum Of was of flexibility and change. Having no collections, it borrowed material to completely transform itself with each exhibition hosted. Reinventing itself in succession it became for example, the Museum Of Collecting, the Museum Of Memories, the Museum Of Me.
for museums would enable them to engage with the indefinable, with the duality and ambivalence that permeates cultures and society, and with the super-swift metamorphoses of subcultures.

**More research needed.**

This thesis has merely found the tip of the iceberg as regards the representation of marginalised identities, histories and material culture, and the need for a new paradigm for museums. More research in the following areas would take the issues raised here necessarily further:

There is a need to explore the attitudes of subculturalists themselves towards museums and inclusion within them. Many questions need to be addressed: How are exhibitions on subcultures received? Do participants recognise themselves when represented? Are they happy with those representations? Is the attention welcomed? As Hebdige has acknowledged in relation to his work;

'It is highly unlikely...that the members of any of the subcultures described in this book would recognize themselves reflected here. They are still less likely to welcome any efforts on our part to understand them. After all, we, the sociologists and interested straights, threaten to kill with kindness the forms which we seek to elucidate.' (1988a;139)

Indeed, one subculturalist interviewee responded during Muggleton's enquiry with:

'Sociology, yeah? Yeah, I did that stuff at college. Hebdige and them lot. It's all bollocks, isn't it?' (2000;1)

Are, and would subculturalists be, just as negative to museum interest?

It may be argued that subcultures are ambivalent towards or disinterested in museums. Most of the call for representation of marginalised people within museums is being asserted by communities whose marginalised identities are based on ethnicity, gender or disability; however where marginal status is a seen as a matter of choice, i.e. as with subcultures, change is not being called for. Other than from this researcher, no campaigns from subculturalists to get their identities and histories included within the context of the museum are known. Why? Before this question can be explored there needs to be more research.
This thesis has raised the problematics of representing 'deviant' subcultures within the authoritative context of the museum, and has suggested that representation can threaten, or would be perceived to threaten subcultural subversive status. More investigation is required to assess the extent to which representation poses threats to subculturalists’ insider status. The following issues need much more consideration and further investigation:

If attention is welcomed by subculturalists, as we have seen it has been when instigated by some museums, could it be argued that such welcoming reveals the power of museums’ status and control, and the persuasiveness of that status; especially when some subculturalists are willing to give their limited insider knowledge to an institution which will only expose it to a wider uninitiated public, and thus begin the process whereby eventually the high street sells stylised simulacra of their material-culture’?

Inclusion maybe welcomed as egos are raised and culture is validated - just as inclusion maybe rejected as privacy is invaded and culture misappropriated. The very nature of subcultural affiliation is paradoxical in that it demonstrates a dialectic between wanting to belong and be accepted and wanting to subvert and be different. Museums have the power to make some people complicit in their own alienation and exposure through the promise of ‘honour’ from inclusion.

Conversely, subculturalists may be only too willing to be ‘exposed’ through (mis)representation as they perceive museums as presenting no threat at all. Such ‘exposure’ can be a form of control on the part of the subculturalists, i.e. participants tell the museum lies because they feel the eager curators with their limited knowledge would be gullible. Also such ‘exposure’ is often felt as being irrelevant and innocuous as museums are regarded as fusty institutions that never tell it how it is and can never get it right. Of far more threat to subcultures are the all pervasive media and cultural industries. Being perceived by subculturalists as so far behind cultural trends that they cannot expose actual subcultural exclusivity, the museum thus offers subculturalists an institution that could be manipulated into a smoke-screen.

More research is needed on the representation of subcultures within institutions and contexts outside the remit of this thesis. Independent museums and particularly those that
are directly related to or have been formed by subculturalists themselves require investigation. A cursory look at, for example, the British Tattoo History Museum in Oxford, the Tattoo Museum and Library, and the Hash Marihuana Hemp Museum in Amsterdam, reveals the extent and diversity of their collecting and approach. Indeed, more work needs to be undertaken to understand the extent to which subcultures themselves have recorded their own histories. More research is also needed into representations in other contexts: such as the exhibitions *Vive le Punk* and *Brothers Under the Skin* at The Chamber of Pop Culture in London. Further research could also address how subcultures are represented in the culture industries and this could be compared with the findings of this thesis.

Research could also address how art galleries have dealt with subcultures. A cursory examination reveals that the modernist paradigm is being both endorsed and challenged within this context. Within exhibitions such as *Rock Style* at the Barbican (see Hilfiger 1999) and *Icons of Pop* at the National Portrait Gallery (see Hoare 1999), which address the mainstream musical expressions of subcultures, many characteristics of the modernist paradigm can be identified: here representations are chronologically ordered for example, histories have been reduced to a narrative of the great ‘geniuses’, the canon. Conversely, representations have been undertaken in galleries which have engaged individuals involved with subcultures, for example the photographic exhibition *English Candies* at the Viewpoint Photography Gallery, London or *The Beautiful People* at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery, Bradford, have begun to recognise personal responses and explore stereotypes.

There especially needs to be more recognition and exploration of the representation of subcultures in their widest sense: more research into sexuality and sexual orientated subcultures, into protest and political groups. How have they been marginalised, or treated when represented? How does this compare with the findings here? If we also accept that subversion and resistance can be located outside subcultural identities, in the mainstream and mundane, and can be realised through tactics of invisibility for example, then further research is also required in this area.

The above ideas are merely suggestions; much more research needs to be undertaken before any conclusions about these issues can be drawn. What can be drawn from the research so far however, is that the modernist museum legacy still prevails and that
museums still act and are expected to act as objective, neutral and safe environments. They are places that do not make challenges to the dominant ideologies of the time; for example they do not question that Britain is a monarchy or that capitalism is the dominant mode of operation. Museums do not voice fears or concerns, voiced elsewhere, about globalism and the dominance of monopolies, or the rise in privatisation of the public services, the state of the country’s ‘education’ and ‘welfare’ systems, the rising problems of unemployment or crime, or the government’s policies on immigration.

**The potential benefit and value of museums and material culture.**

This thesis is not an attempt to be negative towards museums so as to encourage the very real threat of demise they are presently faced with. On the contrary, it is a call for more support for museums, to allow them to evolve to survive, to allow them to engage in society more fully.

Neither is it suggested here that all should change. Museums of museums are an attractive and valuable concept. Indeed, it is not argued that the modernist paradigm has no place; in fact the opposite, in that it should be one of a number of options, and that it is now a very useful paradigm by which others can be measured and contrasted.

We have seen how Lyotard has challenged the notion of grand-narratives, however it must also be acknowledged that certain aspects of the modernist paradigm provide useful and indeed powerful tools for making sense of the world. But they should be seen merely as tools rather than permanent foundations. And Best and Kellner argue for the existence of different forms of grand and master narratives, positive and negative (1991;172).

‘We would argue that just because some narratives of legitimation are highly dubious, politically suspect, and unconvincing does not entail that we should reject all grand narratives’ (Best and Kellner 1991;176)

They insist that it is better to bring to light and then critically examine narratives of modernity rather than simply prohibit them by ‘Lyotardian Thought Police’. Indeed, as the very structure of this thesis, and of any other thesis, demonstrates, be it Lyotard’s or even Baudrillard’s, it is impossible to dispense with narrative structure altogether (Best and Kellner 1991;171-3).
Overviews and simplifications are in fact essential to identify and highlight oppression and inequalities amongst the complex dynamics of society. But these tools of simplification must only be used to identify and highlight. It must always be recognised that such overviews, if sustained beyond their initial usefulness, marginalise voices by creating a loud and logical narrative that cultures must fit into. Museums cannot afford to abandon the use of totalising periodisation, historical and sequential thinking altogether, but they need to abandon the praxis of using categories to fix structures.

As this thesis argues, if museums are to survive then now is the time to attempt to recapture the enchantment that was lost with modernism. Ironically, however, as museums attempt to become more responsive to the heterogeneity of society, and representations have invariably become less object rich, some of the magic that modernism never succeeded in dispelling, with all its claims to scientific rationality, is being lost: Though the interpretation may be sparse, the educational provision non-existent and the politics and poetics of representation somewhat dubious, old Victorian displays - huge hardwood cases stuffed with objects - hold a certain mysterious resonance for the imagination. This enchantment may be lost when postmodernist and post-structuralist informed practice becomes the structuring ethos behind exhibitions.

However, postmodernist discourses do present a particular challenge to the modernist paradigm, and threaten to destroy the very foundations upon which the modernist museum is based. Subcultures are analogous to postmodernism: they represent flux and fragmentation; they cross a number of marginalised indices: gender, race, sexuality, youth, contemporary and popular cultural; their cultures are generated in opposition to disciplinary apparatus, they are the sites of substantial adaptable knowledge bases which are outside the dominant static knowledge base: subcultures therefore manifest the threat of the postmodernist paradigm in way that is tangible and active.

However, popular culture and subcultures also illustrate a possible way forward. Moore suggests that it may only be through popular culture, that museums can adequately justify their value to society, given that popular culture is the culture of the majority (1997;95). Like the conclusion that Moore draws for popular culture as a whole, subcultural material invariably encourages a more interdisciplinary approach to museum work. Such an
interdisciplinary approach would inevitably pave the way for the emergence of the ‘post-museum’ and ‘expresseum’.

If the ‘post-museum’ is ever born, for it to survive it will have to retain some of the best characteristics of its parent (Hooper-Greenhill 2000; 152) but it will also have to abandon some of the worst. It will need willingness to change and strive to what may seem like idealist aspirations.

The question now is - to what extent can an institution rooted in modernism reinvent itself?

   How can the flowers be taken out of the dustbin?
   How can the folk devils be brought in from the mist?
Appendix 1

Questionnaire, the different versions of the covering letter, and reminders.
Subcultural Material Culture Within British Museums

Please tick the appropriate boxes and write your answers in the spaces provided, continuing on a separate sheet where necessary. The questionnaire should be answered by a representative for the museum in response to the museum's collections and activities as a whole.

Background information
Name of institution: ___________________________________________

1. Type of museum;
   □ National          □ Local authority
   □ Independent       □ University

2. Is the museum's collection;
   □ Single disciplinary □ Multi-disciplinary

   Please indicate the discipline areas which the museum's collection covers;
   □ Social history     □ Ethnographic □ Fine Art     □ Archaeology
   □ Local history      □ Science      □ Technology  □ Archaeology
   □ Transport          □ Industrial   □ Geology     □ Biology
   □ Costume            □ Decorative arts □ Biology     □ Biology

3. Please indicate the size of the museum's collection as a whole;
   (Give a rough estimate if a precise figure is not known)
   □ 0-5,000 artifacts  □ 10,000-20,000 artifacts □ 40,000+ artifacts
   □ 5,000-10,000 artifacts □ 20,000-40,000 artifacts

The collection
4. How many artifacts within the collection would you describe as 'subcultural'?
   (Please see the attached covering letter for a definition of 'subcultural')
   □ 0     □ 6-10        □ 20+
   □ 1-5   □ 11-20

   Please give a brief description of the type of artifacts held;
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

5. Does the museum have an active contemporary collecting policy?
   □ Yes          □ No

If yes, does it specifically address subcultural material within its remit?
   □ Yes          □ No
6. Does the museum have a separate collecting policy for subcultural material?
   □ Yes  □ No
   If yes, please describe:
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

Displays and exhibitions.
7. How many displays/exhibitions have been undertaken which have been devoted to a subject area that could be considered subcultural?
   □ 0  □ 1-3  □ 4+
   Please indicate the display/exhibition titles;
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

   and/or have featured subcultural material?
   □ 0  □ 4-6  □ 7+
   Please indicate the display/exhibition titles, and the display/exhibition's general remit.
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________

Other activities.
8. Please indicate whether your museums has undertake any other initiatives which have been directed at subcultural groups or have involved subcultural material.
   □ oral history projects  □ video recordings
   □ photographic documentation  □ other (please describe below)
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________
Future initiatives

9. Does the museum have any plans to begin actively collecting subcultural material?
   □ Yes □ No

10. Does the museum have plans to hold any displays/exhibitions which will specifically address any subject areas which could be considered subcultural in nature?
    □ Yes □ No
If yes, please describe the nature of the proposals;

or feature subcultural material in any forthcoming general displays/exhibitions?
    □ Yes □ No
If yes, please describe the nature of the proposals;

Attitudes towards subcultural groups and their material.

11. Has the museum instigated any relations with subcultural groups within the area?
    □ Yes □ No
If yes, please describe;

or have plans to establish relations?
    □ Yes □ No
If yes, please describe;
12. Has the museum or individuals employed by the museum, encountered any opposition to the collection or representation of subcultural material (e.g., by Trustees, Councillors, members of the public etc.)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

13. Would you say that the museum has an active commitment to addressing subcultural group identities and their material culture?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please indicate reasons why this is so:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

14. Do you know of any initiatives by other museums to collect or display subcultural material?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

15. Do you feel that past documentation and collection methods within your institution, enable you to answer these questions with confidence?

☐ Yes ☐ No

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND HELP.

Please indicate the name, position and contact address of a member of staff that could be approached should a follow-up interview be necessary.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

• Please return this questionnaire to:
  Nicola Clayton c/o The Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 103-105 Princess Road East, Leicester, LE1 7LG.
May 1998

Dear

The questionnaire attached has been devised to assist with the doctoral research I am currently undertaking with the Museum Studies Department at the University of Leicester. Its aim is to ascertain how much involvement British museums have had with subcultural groups and their material culture: what material of a subcultural nature has been collected, what efforts have been made to exhibit such material and what initiatives are currently being undertaken or are in the planning stages, to document subcultural identities and material culture.

I would be grateful if you or another professional within the institution, could spare some time to aid me in my research. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

• Complete the questionnaire in reference to your institution's collection and activities as a whole, (please pass on this questionnaire to other staff of the institution whose discipline may also be of relevance).
• Please tick the appropriate boxes to all of the questions, write comments on the spaces given (when applicable) and continue on a separate sheet if necessary.
• Please read the definition of the term 'subculture' given below and keep this definition in mind when answering the questionnaire.
• Please provide the name and position of a member of the institution that may be approached should a follow up contact be needed.
• Please return the questionnaire to myself at the address given above.

Working definition of the term 'subcultures':
The term 'subcultures' is taken in this study to refer to groups that are organised around shared interests or practices, that have constructed some type of collective identity and that are defined and define themselves primarily through visual and aural representation, i.e. through their clothes, the music they choose to listen to, the lifestyles they choose to adopt and so forth. The emphasis of research is on subcultures who have at some point in their existence, been labelled 'deviant'. For whom the choice of appearance, sexuality or lifestyle, has served to positioned them as different to and in opposition of, dominant values within our society. Of particular relevance are youth subcultures of all periods and expressions, lesbian and gay identities which consciously acknowledge their sexuality, and material culture which relates to 'deviant' activities such as tattoo and piercing. Groups such as trainspotters, 'Trekies' or pigeon fanciers are not appropriate to this research.

If you have any queries concerning this questionnaire do not hesitate to contact me.
Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Clayton.
May 1998

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I would be grateful if you could spare some time to aid me in my research. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

• Complete the questionnaire in reference to your Department's collection and activities as a whole. (please pass on this questionnaire to other staff of the institution whose discipline may also be of relevance).
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I would be grateful if you could spare some time to aid me in my research. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

• Complete the questionnaire in reference to all the museum collections and activities that your Service is responsible for, (please pass on this questionnaire to other staff of the institution whose discipline may also be of relevance).
• Please tick the appropriate boxes to all of the questions, write comments on the spaces given (when applicable) and continue on a separate sheet if necessary.
• Please read the definition of the term 'subculture' given below and keep this definition in mind when answering the questionnaire.
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• Please return the questionnaire to myself at the address given above.

Working definition of the term 'subcultures':
The term 'subcultures' is taken in this study to refer to groups that are organised around shared interests or practices, that have constructed some type of collective identity and that are defined and define themselves primarily through visual and aural representation, ie. through their clothes, the music they choose to listen to, the lifestyles they choose to adopt and so forth. The emphasis of research is on subcultures who have at some point in their existence, been labelled 'deviant'. For whom the choice of appearance, sexuality or lifestyle, has served to positioned them as different to and in opposition of, dominant values within our society. Of particular relevance are youth subcultures of all periods and expressions, lesbian and gay identities which consciously acknowledge their sexuality, and material culture which relates to 'deviant' activities such as tattoo and piercing. Groups such as trainspotters, 'Trekies' or pigeon fanciers are not appropriate to this research.

If you have any queries concerning this questionnaire do not hesitate to contact me.
Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Clayton.
Some weeks ago you were sent a questionnaire enquiring as to your institution's involvement with subcultural groups and material culture of a subcultural nature. As yet a reply does not seem to have been received.

I am writing again to ask you if you could complete and return one as soon as possible. I appreciate that it may not be easy to find the time to meet such requests, but your reply is of significance to my research, even if your museum has had no associations with subcultural groups or such material culture. Your help is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Clayton.
(Dept. Museum Studies, University of Leicester)
July 1998

Dear

Some time ago you were contacted to solicit help with my survey which is investigating museum involvement with subcultural groups and material culture which can be interpreted as subcultural in nature. As yet I do not seem to have received your completed questionnaire.

Your reply is important and as the initiative is now in its final stages, I am writing to you to ask whether you could try to complete and return it today.

Your help is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Clayton.
Appendix 2

List of all the museums contacted and all the museums that returned completed questionnaires.
Museums contacted:

Abbey House Museum & Kirkstall Abbey
Abbot Hall Art Gallery
Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums
Aberdeenshire Heritage
Abergavenny Museum
Abingdon Museum
Alderney Society Museum
Allhallows Museum
Almond Valley Heritage Trust
Arbroath Museum
Armagh County Museum
Armley Mills Industrial Museum
Arundel Museum and Heritage Centre
Ashburton Museum
Ashby de la Zouch Museum
Ashwell Village Museum
Athelestan Museum
Auld Kirk Museum
Ayscoughfee Hall Museum
Bagshaw Museum
Banbury Museum
Bangor Museum and Art Gallery
Bankfield Museum
Barbican House Museum
Barnet Museum
Bassetlaw Museum
Battle Museum of Local History
Beamish, The North of England Open Air Museum
Bedale Museum
Bedford Museum
Bennie Museum
Berwick Borough Museum
Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood
Bewdley Museum
Bexhill Museum
Bexley Museum
Bilston Art Gallery & Museum
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
Birmingham Museum of Science and Industry
Bishop's Stortford Local History Museum
Black Country Living Museum
Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery
Blandford Forum Museum
Bolton Museum and Art Gallery
Border History Museum
Borough Museum & Art Gallery
Boston Guildhall Museum
Botanic Gardens Museum
Bourne Hall Museum
Bowes Museum
Bradford Art Galleries and Museums
Bradford on Avon Museum
Braintree District Museum
Braunton and District Museum
Brecknock Museum
Bridewell Museum of Norwich Trades & Industries
Bridgenorth Northgate Museum
Bridport Museum Service
Brightlingsea Museum
Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery
Bristol Industrial Museum
Brixham Museum and History Society
Bromley Museum
Buckinghamshire County Museum
Burnham Museum
Burton Art Gallery and Museum
Bury Art Gallery and Museum
Bushey Museum and Art Gallery
Calderdale Industrial Museum
Cambridge and County Folk Museum
Campbeltown Museum
Carisbrooke Castle Museum
Castle Museum
Cecil Higgins Art Gallery and Museum
Central Museum & Art Gallery
Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum
Cinema Museum
City Heritage Services
City Museum
Clackmannanshire Museum & Heritage Service
Colchester Museums
Cookworthy Museum
Craven Museum
Croydon Museums Service
Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society Museum
Cuming Museum
Curtis Museum & Allen Gallery
Cusworth Hall
Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery
Cynon Valley Museum
Dales Countryside Museum
Darlington Museum
Dartford Borough Museum
Daventry Museum
Denbigh Library, Museum & Gallery
Derby Museums & Art Gallery
Design Museum
Devizes Museum
Devonshire Collection of Period Costume: Totnes Costume Museum
Dewey Museum
Dingwall Museum
Diss Museum
Ditchling Museum
Dorking & District Museum
Dorman Museum
Dorset County Museum
Dover Museum
Dudley Museum & Art Gallery
Dumfries Museum
Dundee Art Galleries & Museums
Dunfermline Museum & Small Gallery
Durham Heritage Centre & Museum
Earls Barton Museum of Local Life
East Ayrshire Museums & Arts Service
East Fife Museums Service
East Lothian Museums Service
Eastleigh Museum
Edinburgh City Museums & Art Galleries
Egham Museum
Elgin Museum
Elizabethan House Museum
Elmbridge
Ely Museum
Ensworth Museum
Epping Forest District Museum
Erewash Museum
Exeter City Museums & Art Gallery
Exmouth Museum
Fairlynch Museum
Fakenham Museum of Gas & Local History
First Garden City Heritage Museum
Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre
Folkestone Museum
Forfar Museum and Art Gallery
Forty Hall Museum
Gallery of Costume
Gladstone Court
Glasgow Museums
Gloucester City Museum & Art Gallery
Godalming Museum
Goole Museum & Art Gallery
Gosport Museum
Grampian Transport Museum Trust
Grange Museum of Community History
Grantham Museum
Greenwich Borough Museum
Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery
Guildford House Gallery
Guildford Museum
Guildhall Museum
Gunnersbury Park Museum
Hackney Museum
Halesworth & District Museum
Hampshire County Museums Service
Hampstead Museum
Harborough Museum
Haringey Museum & Archives Service
Harlow Museum, Passmores House
Harris Museum & Art Gallery
Harrogate Museums & Art Gallery Service
Harrow Museum & Heritage centre
Hartlepool Museum Service
Haslemere Educational Museum
Hastings Museum & Art Gallery
Hawick Museum & the Scott Gallery
Heatherbank Museum of Social Work
Henfield Museum
Herbert Art Gallery & Museum
Hereford & Worcester County Museum
Hereford City Museum & Art Gallery
Heritage Motor Centre
Hertford Museum
Highland Folk Museum
Hitchin Museum & Art Gallery
Holmfirth Postcard Museum
Holsworthy Museum
Hornsea Museum
Horsforth Village Museum
Horsham Museum
Hull City Museums
Hythe Local History Room
Ilfracombe Museum
Industrial Museum
Inverness Museum & Art Gallery
Ipswich Museum
Ipswich Transport Museum
Islington Museum
Jersey Museum
Kegworth Museum
Kelham Island Museum
Keswick Museum & Art Gallery
King John's Hunting Lodge
Kingston Museum & Heritage Service
Kirkcaldy Museum and Art Gallery
Kirkleatham Old Hall Museum
Lawrence House Museum
Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum
Leatherhead Museum of Local History
Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Record Service
Leisure & Tourism Dept.
Leominster Folk Museum
Letchworth Museum & Art Gallery
Lincoln Cycle Museum
Littleborough Museum
Littlehampton Museum
Llandudno Museum
Lleyn Historical & Maritime Museum
Lotherton Hall
Louth Museum
Lowestoft Museum
Lowewood Museum
Luton Museum Service
Lyme Regis Philpot Museum
Lynn Museum
Maidstone Museum & Art Gallery
Malvern Museum
Manor House Museum
Manor House Museum
Mansfield Museum & Art Gallery
Manx National Heritage
Marischal Museum
Maritime and Local History Museum
Market Lavington Village Museum
McLean Museum & Art Gallery
Mersea Island Museum
Mildenhall & District Museum
Millgate Museum
Milton Keynes Museum of Industry & Rural Life
Moot Hall Museum
Moravian Museum
Moray Council Museums Service
Museum of Childhood, Sudbury Hall
Museum of Costume
Museum of Costume & Textiles
Museum of Dartmoor Life
Museum of East Anglian Life
Museum of Eton Life
Museum of Farnham
Museum of Lancashire
Museum of Lincolnshire Life
Museum of Liverpool Life
Museum of London
Museum of North Devon
Museum of Reading
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<th>Museum Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Museum of Richmond</td>
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<td>Museum of Science &amp; Industry in Manchester</td>
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<td>Museum of South Somerset</td>
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<td>Museum of St Albans</td>
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<td>Museum of the Manchesters</td>
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<td>Museum of the Moving Image</td>
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<td>Nantwich Museum</td>
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<td>National Cycle Museum</td>
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<td>National Motor Museum</td>
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<td>National Museum of Labour History</td>
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<td>National Museum of Photography, Film and Television</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Museums &amp; Galleries of Wales</td>
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<td>National Museums of Scotland</td>
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<td>Neath Museum</td>
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<td>Nelson Museum &amp; Local History Centre</td>
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<td>Newark Houses Museum</td>
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<td>Newport Museum &amp; Art Gallery</td>
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<td>Newton Abbot Town Museum</td>
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<td>Nidderdale Museum</td>
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<td>Norfolk Rural Life Museum and Union Farm</td>
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<td>Normanby Hall</td>
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<td>Norris Museum</td>
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<td>North Ayrshire Council Museums Services</td>
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<td>North Down Heritage Centre</td>
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<td>North Lanarkshire Council Museums</td>
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<td>North Lincolnshire Museums Service</td>
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<td>North Somerset Museum Service</td>
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<td>North Woolwich Old Station Museum</td>
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<td>Nottingham City Museums</td>
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<td>Nuneaton Museum &amp; Art Gallery</td>
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<td>Old House Museum</td>
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<td>Oriel Ynys Mon/Anglesey Heritage Gallery</td>
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<td>Oxfordshire County Museum</td>
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<td>Paisley Museum &amp; Art Galleries</td>
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<td>Parc Howard Museum &amp; Art Gallery</td>
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<td>Pendle Heritage Centre</td>
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<td>Penlee House Art Gallery &amp; Museum</td>
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<td>Penrith Museum</td>
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<td>Peterborough Museum &amp; Art Gallery</td>
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<td>Plymouth City Museum &amp; Art Gallery</td>
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<td>Pontefract Museum</td>
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<td>Pontypridd Historical &amp; Cultural Centre</td>
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<td>Poole Museum Service</td>
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<td>Porthcawl Museum</td>
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<td>Portsmouth Museum &amp; Records Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Potteries Museum &amp; Art Gallery</td>
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<td>Powysland Museum</td>
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<td>Purton Museum</td>
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R. M. N. and District Museum
Radnorshire Museum
Ragged School Museum
Ramsgate Museum
Rhondda Heritage Park
Rhyl Library, Museum & Arts Centre
Richmondshire Museum
Rossendale Museum
Rotherham Museum
Royal Cornwall Museum
Royal Pavillion, Libraries & Museums, Brighton & Hove
Royston & District Museum
Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum
Rye Castle Museum
Saddleworth Museum & Art Gallery
Saffron Walden Museum
Salford Museum & Art Gallery
Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum
Saltash Heritage Collection
Sandwell Museum Service
Sandwich Guildhall Museum
Sanquhar Tolbooth Museum
Scarborough Museum & Art Gallery
Scolton Manor Museum
Scottish Maritime Museum
Seaford Museum of Local History
Sevenoaks Museum & Gallery
Sewerby Hall Art Gallery and Museum
Shaftesbury Local History Museum
Sheringham Museum
Shetland Museum
Shrewsbury Museum Service
Sidmouth Museum
Slough Museum
Smith Art Gallery & Museum
Somerset County Museums Service
South Molton Museum
South Ribble Museum & Exh. Centre
Southend Museums Service
Southwold Museum
Spelthorne Museum
Springburn Museum
St Helens Museum and Art Gallery
St John's House
St. Edmundsbury Museums
Staffordshire Museum & Arts Service
Stamford Museum
Stewartry Museum
Stockport Heritage Services
Stockton-on-Tees Museum Service
Stranraer Museum
Streetlife-Hull Museum of Transport
Sulgrave Manor
Swaffham Museum
Swansea Museum
Swindon Museum & Art Gallery
Tamworth Castle & Museum Service
Tenby Museum & Art Gallery
The Dock Museum
The Museum, St. James Street
Theatre Museum
Thornbury Museum
Thurrock Museum
Timetrap
Tiverton Museum
Tofaen Museum Trust
Tolson Memorial Museum
Torquay Museum
Torrington Museum
Town & Crown Heritage Centre
Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum
Towner Art Gallery & Museum
Trowbridge Museum
Tunbridge Wells Museum & Art Gallery
Tyne & Wear Museums
Ulster Folk & Transport Museum
Ulster Museum
University of Bristol Theatre Collection
Valence House Museum
Vestry House Museum
Victoria & Albert Museum
Wakefield Museum
Wallingford Museum
Walsall Museum & Art Gallery
Wandsworth Museum
Ware Museum
Wareham Town Museum
Warrington Museum & Art Gallery
Watford Museum
Weaver's Cottage
Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service
West Berkshire Heritage Service
West Somerset Rural Life Museum
Whitby Museum
Williamson Art Gallery & Museum
Wilson Museum of Narberth
Wimbledon Society Museum of Local History
Winchester Museums Service
Wisbech & Fenland Museum
Wolverhampton Art Gallery
Woodbridge Museum Trust
Woodhorn Colliery Museum
Worcester City Museums
Worthing Museum & Art Gallery
Wotton-under-Edge Heritage Centre
Wrexham County Borough Museum
Wycombe Museum
Wymondham Heritage Museum
York Castle Museum

Museums that completed responses:
Abbey House Museum
Abbot Hall Art Gallery
Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums
Aberdeenshire Heritage
Abergavenny Museum
Aldeburgh Moot Hall Museum
Alderney Museum
Alford manor House Museum
Allhallows Museum
Almon Valley Heritage Trust
Anglesey Heritage Gallery
Angus Museums
Armagh County Museum
Armley Mills Industrial Museum
Arundel Museum & Heritage Centre
Ashburton Museum
Ashby de la Zouch Museum
Atheilstan Museum
Ayscoughfee Hall Museum
Bagshaw Museum
Bakewell Old House Museum
Bangor Museum
Barbicar House Museum
Barnet Museum
Bath Museum of Costume
Battle Museum of Local History
Beamish, The North of England Open Air Museum
Beaulieu National Motor Museum
Bedale Museum
Bedford Museum
Bennie Museum
Berwick Borough Museum
Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood
Bewdley Museum
Bexhill Museum
Bexley Museums
Bilston Art Gallery & Museum
Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery
Bishop's Stortford Local History Museum
Black Country Living Museum
Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery
Blandford Forum Museum
Bolton Museums, Art Gallery & Aquarium
Border History Museum
Boston Guildhall Museum
Botanic Gardens Museum
Bourne Hall Museum
Bradford Art Galleries & Museums
Braunton & District Museum
Brecknock Museum
Bridewell Museum
Bridport Museum service
Brightlingsea Museum
Bristol Industrial Museum
Bromley Museum
Buckinghamshire County Museum
Bushey Museum & Art Gallery
Calderdale MBC Museums & Arts Division
Cambridge & County Folk Museum
Cambeltown Museum
Carisbrooke Castle Museum
Castle Museum
Cecil Higgins Art Gallery & Museum
Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museums
Clackmannanshire Museum & Heritage Service
Clifton Park Museum
Colchester Museums Service
Cookworthy Museum
Croydon Museum Service
Cuming Museum
Curtis Museum
Cyfarthfa Castle Museum & Art Gallery
Dales Countryside Museum
Dartford Borough Museum
Daventry Museum
Deal Maritime & Local History Museum
Derby Museums & Art Gallery
Design Museum
Devizes Museum
Devonshire Collection of Period Costume
Dewey Museum
Dingwall Museum
Diss Museum
Ditchling Museum
Dock Museum
Dorking & District Museum
Dorman Museum
Dorset County Museum
Dress & Textiles Department, Victoria & Albert Museum
Dudley Museums Service
Dumfries Museum
Dundee Art Galleries & Museums
Durham Heritage Centre & Museum
East Ayrshire Museums & Arts Service
East Lothian Museum Service
Eastleigh Museum
Elgin Museum
Elmbridge Museum
Ely Museum
Ernsworth Maritime Historical Trust
Epping Forest District Museum
Erewash Museum Service
Exeter City Museums & Art Gallery
Exmouth Museum
Fairlyncnch Museum
Fakenham Museum of Gas & Local History
Fife Council Museums (East)
Fife Council Museums (West)
First Garden City Heritage Museum
Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre
Folkestone Museum
Forty Hall Museum
Glasgow Museum Service
Gloucester City Museum & Art Gallery
Godalming Museum
Goole Museum
Gosport Museum
Grampian Transport Museum
Grange Museum
Grantham & Stamford Museum
Great Yarmouth Museums
Greenwich Borough Museum
Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery
Guildford House Gallery
Guildford Museum
Guildhall Museum
Gunnersbury Park Museum
Hackney Museum
Halesworth & District Museum
Hampshire County Council Museum Service
Harborough Museum
Haringey Museum & Archive Service
Harlow Museum
Harrogate Museums & Arts
Hartlepool Museums Service
Haslemere Education Museum
Hastings Museum & Art Gallery
Hawick Museum & Scott Gallery
Heatherbank Museum of Social Work
Henfield Museum
Herbert Art Gallery & Museum
Herefordshire Heritage Services
Heritage Motor Museum
Hertford Museum
Highland Folk Museum
Hitchin Museum
Holsworthy Museum Society
Hornsea Museum
Horsham Museum
Hythe Museum
Ilfracombe Museum
Inverness Museum & Art Gallery
Ipswich Borough Council Museums & Galleries
Ipswich Transport Museum
Jersey Museums Service
Kegworth Museum
Kelham Island Museum
Keswick museum & Art Gallery
Kingston Museum
Kirklees Community History Service
Lawrence House Museum
Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum
Leatherhead & District Local History Museum
Leicester Museums
Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Records Service
Letchworth Museum & Art Gallery
Littlehampton Museum
Llandudno Museum
Lotherton Hall
Louth Museum
Lowestoft Museum
Lowewood Museum
Luton Museum Service
Maidstone Museum & Art Gallery
Malvern Museum
Manor House Museum
Mansfield Museum & Art Gallery
Manx National Heritage
Marischal Museum
Market Lavington Village Museum
McLean Museum & Art Gallery
Mersea Island Museum
Mildenhall & District Museum
Millgate Museum
Monmouth Museum
Moravian Museum
Moray Council Museums Service
Museum of East Anglian Life
Museum of Franham
Museum of Lancashire
Museum of Lincolnshire Life
Museum of London
Museum of North Devon
Museum of Richmond
Museum of South Somerset
Museum of St Albans
Museum of Welsh Life
Nantwich Museum
National Museum of Photography, Film & Television
National Museum of Labour History/The Pump House: People's History Museum
National Museums of Scotland
Newcastle Borough Museum & Art Gallery
Newham Museum Service
Newport Museum & Art Gallery
Newton Abbot Town & GWR Museum
Niddersdale Museum
Norfolk Rural Life Museum
Norris Museum
North Down Heritage Centre
North East Lincolnshire Museum Service
North Lanarkshire Council
North Lincolnshire Museum Service
North Somerset Museum Service
Northampton Museums & Art Gallery
Northgate Museum
Nottingham City Museums
Nottingham Museum of Costume & Textiles
Nuneaton Museum & Art Gallery
Oldham Art Gallery & Museum
Parc Howard Museum & Art Gallery
Penrith Museum
Peterborough Museum & Art Gallery
Plymouth City Museum
Pontefract Museum & Wakefield Art Gallery
Poole Museum Service
Porthcawl Museum
Portland Museum
Portsmouth Museums & Records Service
Potteries Museum & Art Gallery
Powysland Museum
Purton Museum
Radnorshire Museum
Ragged School Museum
Ramsgate Museum
Reading Museum Service
Rhondda Heritage Park
Rhyl Library Museum & Arts Centre
Richmondshire Museum
Rossendale Museum
Royal Cornwall Museum
Royal Pavilion, Libraries & Museums, Brighton & Hove
Royston & District Museum
Rudstock Museum
Russell Cotes Art Gallery & Museum
Rye Castle Museum
Saddlesworth Museum & Art Gallery
Saffron Walden Museum
Salford Museums & Art Gallery
Salisbury & South Wiltshire Museum
Saltash Heritage
Sandwell Museum Service
Sandwich Guildhall Museum
Sanquhar Tolbooth Museum
Scarborough Museums & Gallery
Scolton Manor Museum
Scottish Maritime Museum
Seaford Museum of Local History
Sadgemoor District Museum Service
Sevenoaks Museum
Shaftesbury Local History Museum
Sheringham Museum
Shetland Museum
Slough Museum
Smith Art Gallery & Museum
Somerset County Museums Service
South Molton Museum
South Ribble Museum & Exhibition Centre
Southampton City Cultural Services
Southend Museums Service
Southwold Museum
Spelthorne Museum
Springburn Museum
Staffordshire Arts & Museum Service
Stamford Museum
Stockport Museums Service
Stockton Museums Service
Stranraer Museum
Streetlife- Hull Museum of Transport
Sulgrave Manor
Swaffham Museum
Swansea Museum
Tameside Museum Service
Tamworth Castle Museum
Tenby Museum & Art Gallery
The Cinema Museum
The Craven Museum
The Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall
The Meffan
The Museum of Science & Industry, Manchester
The Museum of South Yorkshire Life, Cusworth Hall
The Museum, Dunwich
The Stewartry Museum
Theatre Museum
Thornbury Museum
Thurrock Museum
Tiverton Museum
Tofaen Museum Trust
Torquay Museum
Torrington Museum
Tower Art Gallery & Local Museum
Town & Crown Heritage Centre
Tunbridge Wells Museum & Art Gallery
Tyne & Wear Museums
Ulster Folk & Transport Museum (NM&Gof NI)
Ulster Museum
University of Bristol Theatre Collection
Valence House Museum
Vestry House Museum
Wakefield Museum
Ware Museum
Warrington Museum & Art Gallery
Warwickshire County Museum
Watford Museum
Weavers’ Cottage
Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service
West Berkshire Heritage Service
West Somerset Rural Life Museum
Whitby Museum
Wilberforce House Museum/Old Grammer School Museum
Wilson Museum of Narberth
Wimbledon Society Museum of Local History
Winchester Museums Service
Wisbech & Fenland Museum
Wolverhampton Art Gallery & Museum
Woodbridge Museum Trust
Woodhorn Colliery Museum
Worcester City Museums
Worcestershire County Museum
Worthing Museum & Art Gallery
Wotton-under-Edge Heritage Centre
Wrexham Museum
Wycombe Museum
Wymondham Heritage Museum
York Castle Museum

The contact details of two museums could not be traced.
Appendix 3

Extra categories added to the data input table.
Subcultural Material Culture Within British Museums

Please tick the appropriate boxes and write your answers in the spaces provided, continuing on a separate sheet where necessary. The questionnaire should be answered by a representative for the museum in response to the museum's collections and activities as a whole.

Background information.
Name of institution: __________________________

1. Type of museum;
   □ National □ Local authority
   □ Independent □ University

2. Is the museum's collection;
   □ Single disciplinary □ Multi-disciplinary

Please indicate the discipline areas which the museum's collection covers;
   □ Social history □ Ethnographic □ Fine Art □ Archaeology
   □ Local history □ Science □ Technology
   □ Transport □ Industrial □ Geology
   □ Costume □ Decorative arts □ Biology

3. Please indicate the size of the museum's collection as a whole;
   (Give a rough estimate if a precise figure is not known)
   □ 0-5,000 artifacts □ 10,000-20,000 artifacts □ 40,000+ artifacts
   □ 5,000-10,000 artifacts □ 20,000-40,000 artifacts

The collection.
4. How many artifacts within the collection would you describe as 'subcultural'?
   (Please see the attached covering letter for a definition of 'subcultural')
   □ 0 □ 6-10 □ 20+ □ wrong
   □ 1-5 □ 11-20 □ don't know

Please give a brief description of the type of artifacts held;

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

5. Does the museum have an active contemporary collecting policy?
   □ Yes □ No

If yes, does it specifically address subcultural material within its remit?
   □ Yes □ No
6. Does the museum have a separate collecting policy for subcultural material?
   ☐ Yes      ☐ No
If yes, please describe:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Displays and exhibitions.
7. How many displays/exhibitions have been undertaken which have been devoted to a subject area that could be considered subcultural?
   ☐ 0      ☐ 1-3      ☐ 4+ ☐ wrong
Please indicate the display/exhibition titles:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

and/or have featured subcultural material?
   ☐ 0      ☐ 4-6 ☐ wrong
   ☐ 1-3      ☐ 7+
Please indicate the display/exhibition titles, and the display/exhibition's general remit.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Other activities.
8. Please indicate whether your museums has undertake any other initiatives which have been directed at subcultural groups or have involved subcultural material.
   ☐ oral history projects  ☐ video recordings  ☐ none
   ☐ photographic documentation  ☐ other (please describe below)
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Future initiatives.
9. Does the museum have any plans to begin actively collecting subcultural material?
   □ Yes       □ No       □ May do

10. Does the museum have plans to hold any displays/exhibitions which will specifically address any subject areas which could be considered subcultural in nature?
    □ Yes       □ No       □ May do
If yes, please describe the nature of the proposals;

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

or feature subcultural material in any forthcoming general displays/exhibitions?
   □ Yes       □ No       □ May do
If yes, please describe the nature of the proposals;

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

Attitudes towards subcultural groups and their material.
11. Has the museum instigated any relations with subcultural groups within the area?
    □ Yes       □ No
If yes, please describe;

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

or have plans to establish relations?
    □ Yes       □ No       □ May do
If yes, please describe;

   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
12. Has the museum or individuals employed by the museum, encountered any opposition to the collection or representation of subcultural material (eg by Trustees, Councillors, members of the public etc.)?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ no, but could ☐ N/A

If yes, please describe:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

13. Would you say that the museum has an active commitment to addressing subcultural group identities and their material culture?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ no comment

Please indicate reasons why this is so:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

14. Do you know of any initiatives by other museums to collect or display subcultural material?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

15. Do you feel that past documentation and collection methods within your institution, enable you to answer these questions with confidence?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ no comment

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND HELP.

Please indicate the name, position and contact address of a member of staff that could be approached should a follow-up interview be necessary.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

• Please return this questionnaire to:
Nicola Clayton c/o The Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 103-105 Princess Road East, Leicester, LE1 7LG.
Appendix 4

Script for in-person interviews.
In person interviews

Background Information:
• Interviewee
  - Name
  - Position
  - What collections within this institution are you responsible for?
  - Will you be answering this interview in reference to the institution as a whole or for the department that you are responsible for?
  - (Establish an understanding of the working definition of the term 'subcultural')

• The institution and the existing collections
  - When was the institution founded and what purpose was given for its establishment?
  - What geographical area does the museum serve?
  - Describe the profile of the museum's main visitor base
  - (Confirm the size of the institution's/department's collections)
  - (Confirm what subject areas the collection's cover)
  - Museum collections tend to have areas which are under and well represented, could you describe such strengths and weaknesses in the collection(s) for which you are responsible?
  - (Confirm whether institution has an active contemporary collecting policy and whether it addresses marginalised groups and in particular subcultures specifically - if not, why not?)
  - To what extent is a commitment to documenting contemporary culture placed as a primary duty in your institution's policy objectives?

Specific initiatives which have been undertaken:
• Collections
  - What does the institution have accessioned within its collections that you would describe as 'subcultural' given the working definition that has been provided?
  - When did collecting artifacts of a 'subcultural' nature begin?
  - Why did this area begin to be addressed?
  - Describe how these artifacts have been classified and catalogued?
  - How do such objects 'fit in' / align with the existing collections?
  - To what extent are there objects within the collections which have not been interpreted as subcultural in nature but possibly could be? (Give examples)
  - Is the practice of collecting material culture which could be interpreted as subcultural, ongoing?

• Exhibitions
  - What exhibitions have been devoted to a subject area which could be considered subcultural?
  - What exhibitions have featured material of a subcultural nature but were not necessarily devoted to that area?
  - Who was the instigator of the exhibitions?
- for what reasons were they undertaken?
- what was the time scale for the project from its initial conception to its completion?
- for how long was the exhibition on show?
- describe where and how was material for the exhibition obtained?
- describe the decision making process behind the choices made as regards what was included in the exhibition?
- was any financial backing/sponsorship support gained?
- have artifacts from the exhibition(s) been accessioned into the permanent collection?

- Other projects
  - have any other initiatives directed at subcultures, been undertaken? (oral history, photographic doc., video...)
  - why undertaken, who by?

Relations with subcultural groups:
- as regards collecting/exhibition etc. initiatives, who made the initial contact with subcultural groups and how was it made?
- how was your initial interest in subcultural groups received by them?
- how much did the group or individuals within the group become involved with initiatives?
- what was their responsiveness to the project overall?
- was this felt throughout the group?
- what was their reaction to the final outcome?
- have relations with the groups involved, been sustained now that the project is over?
- how would you personally, describe the experience? (place in positive or negative light...)
- would you say that this similar or difference to your colleges who also worked on the project?

Outcomes of the initiatives (Whether at all, initiatives have effected the museum):
- what was the extent of your professional knowledge of subcultures before undertaking the project?
- how has your knowledge and understanding altered now you have had first hand experience?
- would you personally be open to becoming involved in a project of a similar nature in the future?
- would you say that such initiatives effected the direction of collecting/exhibition schedules of the museum?
- have initiatives had an impact on the museum's visitor figures and visitor profile?
- do you feel that such initiatives effected the museum's general profile?
- what general responses have you encountered to the subcultural initiatives undertaken? (from councillors, trustees, friends, follow colleges, visitors, local media) were they positive or negative in nature?
Appendix 5

Fieldwork record sheet.
**MUSEUM FIELDWORK RECORD SHEET**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Name of interviewee: ___________________________________________________

Position: _______________________________________________________________

Institution: ____________________________________________________________

Contact address: ________________________________________________________

Tel/fax/email: ____________________________________________________________

Type of interview: _______________________________________________________

Date of interview: _______________________________________________________

Tape ref. No.: ___________________________________________________________

Transcribed/Written up: Yes □ No □

Relevant collections: ____________________________________________________

Relevant exhibitions: ____________________________________________________

Details obtained:

- Completed questionnaire Yes □ No □
- Taped interview Yes □ No □
- Collecting policy Yes □ No □
- Details of collected/accessioned material Yes □ No □
- Photos of artefacts Yes □ No □
- Press releases/promo material Yes □ No □
- Press clippings Yes □ No □
- Exhibition photographs Yes □ No □
- Exhibition texts/ outlines Yes □ No □
- Visitor comments Yes □ No □
- Related publications Yes □ No □
- Other Yes □ No □

Confidential:

 Name: Yes □ No □

 Institution: Yes □ No □
Appendix 6

An example of a negative response to the research
Nicola Clayton,  
Dept. Museum Studies,  
University of Leicester,  

19th July 1998

I am in receipt of your postcard following your original letter and reminder, in other words three communications from you. I am writing on a personal basis, which is why this is not on headed notepaper.

You seem to be unaware that many of the institutions you write to are voluntary in nature and are charities. In Suffolk around 40 of the 46 museums are wholly voluntary. Therefore to complete and post back your form will require a volunteer to devote more of his or her spare time to the task. Most of the museums I am thinking about receive NO revenue support and spend a considerable amount of their time and energy on simply existing.

During the last few weeks I have had to complete an annual return for the Museums & Galleries Commission (the DOMUS return), hold the Annual General Meeting of the Museum company and make a return to Companies House, then make a similar but different return to the Charity Commission. These are legal necessities with dire consequences if they are overlooked. All of this work is despite the very limited support given by district council, county council or national government. The National Heritage Lotteries Board has just reduced the grant available for capital schemes to such an extent that only 1 in 5 bids can succeed. So where do we go to replace our leaking roof? And what is the University of Leicester looking at? SUB CULTURAL GROUPS!!!!!!

The major sub-cultural groups must be the dedicated volunteers who give up their time and often their money to support a local museum. Nobody in my Museum (including me) gets paid or gets expenses. We even pay our own post and telephone calls. Do you pay for the postage on the three letters to me? No, I do through taxes. What a stupid perverted world we live in where we can afford to pay for a project such as yours (cost over a couple of years including tutorial fees, accommodation, office costs, oncosts etc. etc. ??) yet we have cut the number of professional staff working in Suffolk Museums by nearly 50% in five years.

So, please stop pestering me for information about something that I really cannot get my head around. I am perfectly willing to assist anyone with research into subjects germane to my museum and have offered post graduate work experience to one person within the last few years but your research project has about as much value as three men with planks on their head calling themselves art.

Yours very annoyed,
Appendix 7: Subcultural material culture! What’s that?

'The various youth sub-cultures have been identified by their possessions and objects: the boot-lace tie and velvet collared drape jacket of the Ted, the close crop, parker coats and scooter of the Mod, the stained jeans, swastikas and ornamented motorcycles of the bike-boys, the bovver boots and skinned-head of the Skinhead...' (Hall, 1996:54).

This appendix has been necessary because in researching this thesis it was quickly revealed, when giving presentations on this subject at museum conferences and from the primary research, that many museum professionals were completely unaware that a wealth of material culture that could be interpreted from a subcultural perspective, exists to be documented and collected. Some museum professionals, being unaware of even the existence of subcultures, could not envisage what material culture relating to subcultures might be. This appendix therefore, attempts to provide a brief introduction to what types of material culture may be considered 'subcultural'.

This material culture may be classified for ease of analysis, into four basic areas: material culture that is produced by the subcultures for their own consumption; material culture which is manufactured and retailed on a commercial scale, but is directed specifically at the subcultural market; material culture manufactured and retailed by 'mass' commercial ventures for the mass market, but which has been appropriated by subcultures; material culture manufactured and retailed by 'mass' commercial ventures for the mass market which uses subcultural iconography and parodies subcultural styling.

The first category recognises that subcultures do play an active part in producing their own material culture. Hand-made clothing and fanzines are examples of artefacts that are produced by the subcultures for their own use. Often an individuals' creativity can expand into a small commercial ventures, and cohesive, self-sufficient alternative economies of a subcultural nature do exist such as that of the festival circuit, which supports a network of craftspeople, jewellers, clothes stalls, candle makers, tattooists, black-smiths, bookshops, and so forth. Also classified within this area is that material
culture which is related to political subcultural activities, protest banners, placards, leaflets and so forth of gay rights movements for example, or even the more substantially physical items such as the tree houses built by ‘New Age Traveller’ road protesters.

The second category can be regarded as an extension of the first, in that often from a humble beginning simply serving the subcultural market, companies have become multinational ventures; fashions in the skate, surf and snowboarding scenes for example both in regard to the equipment used and clothes worn, are often based around now international designer names and brands (eg Quicksilver) and the merchandise of the so-called dance superclubs such as Cream, Ministry of Sound and Progress are another example.

Subcultures have become recognised as distinct lucrative markets by manufacturers and advertisers. So for example, the advertising of companies such as Ben Sherman now play on both their subcultural and fashionable markets. The gay market has also become increasingly targeted in recent years by 'straight' companies, (see for example the Gay Lifestyle expo's which have been held in London).

The concept of the subcultural bricoleur also provides the third category of artefact; goods that have been produced for the mass market but which are appropriated and their meanings changed. This area arguably provides the most material culture which relates to subcultures. This might take the form of actual alteration to an object such as adolescent styling of hair and make-up on dolls into subculture styles (Plate 33) or the customisation of modes of transport (Plate 34).

Similarly, it is the context in which an object is placed that can give it a new subcultural value, for example how clothes are worn, or objects such as the safety pin or the dummy and whistle which have become respectively, icons of punk and acid house subcultures. Hardware such as record decks and lighting systems can also be considered 'subcultural' because of the contexts in which they can be used.
Cultural identification of a given group with an object can also make that object appropriate for collection by association, for example material associated with Judy Garland can relate to Hollywood but also to the gay scene as she has been constructed as a gay icon, similarly the Body Shop's Peppermint Foot Lotion has been described as 'a mid-90s emblem typifying the agony and ecstasies of young gay love' (Pink Paper, 1996,39).

The final category includes a body of material culture which, while it is based on often the more visually elaborate cultures, is totally divorced from the original source's lifestyles or ideologies. Stylistically, all manner of objects have a subcultural influence. For example Jamie Reid's work for the Sex Pistols has had an enormous influence on the graphic design and typographical styles used in advertising, the media, publishing and fashion.

Such material however, can take the form of parodies of representation such as London tourist ephemera of Punks on postcards, greetings cards and dolls, (Plate 35). Such material culture plays on the stereotypes that have been fabricated around subcultural identities, and can both create and confirm them. Symbols or icons can also be appropriated. The smiley face, an icon itself adopted from previous subcultures, has become dissociated from the acid house scene which it came to symbolise in the late 1980s, and used in watered-down banal commercial initiatives aimed at the teenage consumer. Divorced of its previous associations with drugs through the passage of time, it has arguably become a safe and trendy icon (Plate 36).

The above are given as just a fraction of what could be addressed. More abstract references such as club interiors, i.e. how spaces can be customised, or media references such as television programmes, films or radio stations such as Kiss FM have not been discussed in any depth. This hints however, at the wealth of material culture which can be interpreted from a subcultural perspective.
Plate 33: Dolls customised into subcultural styles
Plate 34: A customised 'rat' bike and boots
Plate 35: Subcultures on greetings cards
Plate 36: Smiley face ephemera divorced of previous associations with drug culture
Appendix 8

Images of the *Streetstyle* exhibition at the V&A.

(copyright Victoria & Albert Museum).
Appendix 9

Schools Worksheet for the *Sound & Fury: The Art and Imagery of Heavy Metal* exhibition.
Schools Worksheet

One of the reasons the imagery associated with heavy metal music is **unique** is because of the variety of visual influences contained within it. These include:

- **Celtic** art; interlace patterns of intricate knots
- **Egyptian** art; pillars and architecture, scarab beetles
- **Victorian Gothic** art; morbid and macabre images
- **Surrealism**; nightmare images
- **Fantasy** art; landscapes
- **Psychedelic** art; mirror image words known as palindromes
- **Tribal cultures**; Native American feather headdresses

1. Many record covers include the interlace patterning of intricate knots of animals and foliage. Draw or make visual notes of an interlace pattern.

2. **Chrome ‘n’ Stone** is a graphic device in which lettering or imagery is painted to represent **cracked stone** or **glittering metal**. Find 3 works in the exhibition that include -
   a) **Chrome ‘n’ Stone**
   b) **Celtic interlacing**
   c) **Mythical creatures**

3. The sheets of tattoo designs which can be bought from tattoo equipment suppliers are known as **flash**. Design a simple tattoo **flash**.

4. Find an example of a **palindrome**
5 Make a drawing of a skull image from the exhibition

6 Sort the following words or phrases to fit these five categories -
   Armour
   Architecture
   Death
   Music
   Supernatural

   Dragon, coffin, stage banner, skull, archway, Vic Rattlehead, talismans, breast plate, ghost, Grim Reaper, chains, monument, monster, Donnington, magic, moshing, cityscape, helmet, pillars, sword

7 Find as many words as you can in this wordsearch, all the words relate either to the exhibits or are mentioned in the labels. Some words are diagonal and backwards.

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Possible topics for discussion after viewing the exhibition.

By showing Heavy Metal art in a gallery do you think that reduces its potency as a rebellious art form?

Is it necessary to include sexist images to represent Heavy Metal as an art form?

Is it right for art to be shown that might offend some people's religious beliefs?

Should censorship exist in art galleries?
Appendix 10

Press coverage of the censorship of an ‘obscene’ slogan on a Punk leather jacket on display in the Fashion Gallery at Brighton Museum & Art Gallery
Punk outfit closes fashion show

A chronological sequence from 1830 to the present links fashions in costume and interior decoration with figures in settings from High Victorian, Pre-Raphaelite, Art Nouveau (a very strong collection) to Art Deco, and with some surprising social contrasts: the 'Sunday Best' of a farmer's wife in 1875; two Liberty evening dresses; a Quaker wedding dress of the early 19th century; and a duffle-coated Aldermaston marcher. Outstanding examples of couture designed evening clothes include Jean Patou, Dior, Balmain, Lanvin, and Cavagnagh. Recent and contemporary fashions include what is planned to be an annually updated exhibit made by the Fashion Textile Department of Brighton Poly.

AN EARTHY Anglo Saxon swear word closed down an exhibition at Brighton Museum this morning. The four letter expletive decorated the sleeve of a punk outfit. Brighton Councillor John Blackman complained angrily to civic chiefs about the slogan which read "Highly offensive." Museum staff were ordered to cover up the offending word before today's public opening of the costume exhibition. It depicts dress through the ages and the punk illustrates the rebellion of youth against normal fashions.

Today the exhibition, in a gallery at the museum, opened briefly before the closure was ordered by museum boss John Merley. Chairman of the Tourism Committee Councillor Dudley Baker said the closure was to ensure the swear word was obscured. The doors were opened again after 30 minutes. The swear word had been covered by a chain wrapped round the punk's arm. But it was possible to make out the lettering.

Marks and Spencer are to set up the exhibition spokesman said: "It is a pity an unfortunate incident. We wouldn't want public to be offended."

"We trust it will not detract from the general excc of the exhibition."
AN obscene word on a punk rocker's jacket in Brighton Museum's new fashion gallery was covered up this week after complaints from councillors.

The museum bought the leather jacket from a 16-year-old local punk who had painted the words "Highly offensive" on the sleeve.

And some VIPs at a preview opening of the gallery were shocked. They called the exhibit "hideous," "totally unnecessary" and "out of context."

Later, council leader Bob Crisstofell and chief executive Reg Morgan told Mr Morley to cover up the offending word.

Dudley Baker, chairman of the tourism, museums and entertainment committee, also complained. He said: "I am appalled."

At the preview museum director John Morley said: "I don't see any reason for complaints."

And when a storm of protest blew up he refused to discuss the exhibit, accused the Gazette and Herald of sensationalism and slammed the phone down.

Cllr. Baker said: "Mr Morley was perfectly happy to cover up the slogan."

The punk is in a showcase between models of 18th century and Regency ladies. A note explains that it represents "social protest through clothes."

Leading Tory councillor John Blackman said the exhibit was "shocking, disgusting, foul and offensive."

"It was a total lack of responsibility exercised by Mr Morley," he said: "If it had not been covered up I would have pushed it over myself."

"I am very pleased the public will never see it."

By ALISON CRIDLAND

By ALISON CRIDLAND

BY ALISON CRIDLAND

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By ALISON CRIDLLAND
IT WAS as predictable as yesterday's scorching temperature that someone would get hot under the collar over a seven-letter swearword on show in Brighton Museum.

But for all the expected reaction the expulsive produced from Coun. John Blackman, allowing it to adorn the arm of a punk male model in a museum visited by children was rather juvenile.

The mannequin is among examples of costumes in the museum's new Fashion Gallery. Costume curator Lou Taylor described the Gallery as "not just a gathering of high fashion but a display of social history."

Need that display include examples of the kind of gutter-language used in 1982? Coun. Blackman thought not. His view is shared by many people concerned that children are growing up with a vocabulary of barrack-room swearwords.

The phrase "highly offensive" written on the punk's arm may be an example of the literary thoughts of some of today's youth. Impressionable youngsters seeing it boldly tattooed on a model in a museum would think this over-worked and tired adjective had been given the seal of social approval.

There seems to be an acceptance of swearing that smacks of defeatism; an acceptance that everyone uses bad language so "it's all right."

If the costumes are a part of social history then there is an argument for including punk graffiti; after all, punks set out to shock. It is not a strong argument for including a particularly offensive and degrading word.

Even after the fuss, the expulsive has not been delated, only obscured by a punk chain. It is still possible to read the offending word. It should not have been there in the first place.
Appendix 11

Project proposals and media outrage about Gloucester City Museum's 'Dressed to the Nines!' young peoples art project.
'Dressed to the Nines!'
What does the way you dress reveal about yourself?
An arts project for young people.

- Teenage street and music culture - punk to grunge and back again!
- Multi-cultural forms of dress - henna painting to religious 'costume'
- Status - uniforms from khaki to the pin strip suit
- Ritual - Christening shawls to wedding dresses
- Social groups - football strips, eco-warriors

Resources: museum’s collection of artefacts.

Possible themes/activities:

Only Skin Deep?
An expose of vanity down the ages. Discover the lengths men and women have gone over the years to enhance their appearance. Ancient civilisations put the poison belladonna into their eyes to make them sparkle, white lead was smeared on faces to achieve the ultimate pale complexion, even Roman men used to wax the hair from their arms. Until recently a sun tan was almost a fashion accessory and today we can our appearance using cosmetic surgery. But how much does, or should your appearance matter anyway?

The Hair Raising Celts
Were the concerns of ancient peoples over their appearance that different from ours today? The Celts went into battle putting limescale on their hair to make it spikey and using woad to paint patterns over their skin. With the help of local re-enactment groups we can look at the dress of other cultures and see how our own forms of dressing have many cross-cultural references.
The same theme could be explored in relation to the Romans, Saxons, Middle Ages, etc.

Bangles, Baubles and Beads
Even the earliest civilisations embellished themselves in some way, whether by marking their skin or wearing jewellery. Often they had social significance, from lucky charms and amulets to love tokens, or decorations such as medals.

T-Shirt Printing/ Painting

Debbie Newell
Museums Officer (education & Events)
City Museum & Art Gallery
Brunswick Road
Gloucester
GL1
01452 524131
Row erupts over city bid to back body adornment workshop

£1,500 FOR YOUTH PUNK PROJECT

A NEW council youth initiative has come under fire for allocating £1,500 to a body-piercing workshop, but only £100 to a troubled night-bus service for teenagers.

The decision by Gloucester city council’s youth policy working party stunned community leaders at Quedgeley, where the police-backed Liberty Bus scheme is desperately trying to get off the ground. Tories have accused the Labour-controlled council of wasting taxpayers’ money on a punk project.

The working group of six councillors, which was set up in May, met behind closed doors to make its first decisions on how to use the £20,000 at its disposal this year.

Workshops

The Body Adornment Project – a proposed “series of workshops on fashion, jewellary, armour, punk, art, tattoos, body piercing etc” – was successful in its bid for £1,500.

The council-run project aims to use the city museum’s archives to promote culture among youngsters.

Another £1,000 was allocated to a planned ethnic minorities photography project, featuring workshops on disposable cameras.

The Liberty Bus, which applied for £200, received only £100. It was set up after the amenity-starved suburb’s teenagers begged for help.

Peter Young, chairman of the Liberty Bus project and a Quedgeley parish councillor, said the decision was “crazy” and “a slap in the face for Quedgeley’s youth”.

Councillor Paul James, the sole Conservative councillor on the working party, said: “I can’t see taxpayers being very happy seeing their money spent on teaching youngsters about body piercing.”

The working group’s chairman, Labour councillor Tony Hanks, said the Body Adornment Project would “take history out to the kids”.

The photography scheme would tie in with the European Year against Racism.

The working party’s aim is “to develop the council’s approach for the involvement of young people in the development of policies and projects that affect them”.

No takers for free teen bus

Bored teenagers at Quedgeley and Hardwick turned their back on a free bus service into Gloucester last night.

Not a single youngster turned up for the Liberty Bus despite campaigning months ago for the facility.

They had complained to community leaders that there was nothing to do in the evening at Quedgeley and Hardwick – a call which prompted the Liberty Bus.

The community rallied around the scheme and a massive fundraising campaign succeeded in raising £500 to pay for a trial run of the bus which takes 13 to 17-year-olds into Gloucester on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

When the money had been raised – which included a £100 anonymous donation – 3,500 pass application forms were issued but not a single one was returned.

Response

And last night, as the organisers of the bus gathered at 7.30 for the first pick-up, their worst fears were confirmed – no-one turned up to use the service.

But Sgt John Clay who has personally ploughed in a lot of time and energy into the project, said he would now discontinue by the initial response.

He said: “I can’t see anyone turning up, but we had expected that and we are still very positive and optimistic about the future.”

There has been a problem with distribution of leaflets at Severn Vale School which is our target audience.

We anticipate that things will pick up over the next couple of weeks as word of mouth gets round.”

INSIDE TONIGHT: Hundreds of car bargains
Bibliography


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