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**White Riot: The Punk Subculture and British
Politics from the 1970s to the Present**

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Bachelor's Thesis

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Affirmation

I declare that I wrote this bachelor thesis independently under the supervision of Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D. and that I used the cited literature only.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this work is to define the development of punk in the United Kingdom in relation to political events occurring from the late 1970s until the present, represented in the song lyrics of selected bands. The work is separated into chapters represented by three main periods: the 1970s and 1980s; 1990s and 2000s; and contemporary punk music. Each period is represented by a suitable punk band, expressing their beliefs connected to the political situations dominating in the particular period. The artists I chose to represent punk music productions are The Clash, Billy Bragg, and Slaves. The quote included in the title of my work “White Riot” is a citation from a song of the same name by the analyzed punk band The Clash. Each of the target bands of my analysis represents different direction of punk in its continuous development affected by major political events.

The first part of each chapter introduces the political background in the United Kingdom connected with the development of punk ideology. It introduces punk attitudes in terms of politics and social and cultural events. It focuses on the response of British youth to the deficiency of the British parliament and notable Prime Ministers. The second part of each chapter consists of an introduction to the most prominent punk bands and analysis of relative songs for each period.

Through the inclusion of lyrics in my thesis, I would like to demonstrate the political perspective of punk musicians in a relative time range. It explains the origin of punk music in the 1970s and its development in terms of the music industry but also ideology up until now. The choice of artists I selected intends to present a model of punk musicians, who represent features of punk in terms of social and political background and musical appeal toward their audience.

Each chapter represents a period characterized by political milestones in the United Kingdom. It describes punk ideology and events and movements assisting in its creation. It explains how punk first emerged in the late 1970s from the dissatisfaction of British youth with preceding governments. It also explains punk’s reaction to ascending Conservatism. It later focuses on punk’s struggle at the turn of the century to maintain not only its role in society but also its position in the music industry. The presence of punk in contemporary years can be assigned to disturbing political events, such as Brexit. The selected songs represent attitudes of punk towards such political

developments, dealing with unemployment, Thatcherism, the end of the Cold War, feminism, multiculturalism, and Brexit.

2. Punk

2.1. Punk and Politics

Punk music and its ideology are dependent on politics. It reacts to the failure of the government and serves as an alternative for the frustrated society. Punk can be expressed in many ways - identifying as punk can be through appearance, music, personal politics, and lifestyle choices, but most importantly, verbally.¹ Punk expresses its attitudes and ideologies in everyday life through verbal communication, but more effectively through music. It criticizes the mainstream production of music and encourages people to take matters into their own hands and be politically active. Although politics are crucial when defining punk, it first emerged as politically neutral but significantly subversive as a part of its aesthetic.²

At the beginning of punk, certain pop scenes characterized purchasing clothes and paying club entrance fees. Many punks were unemployed and consequently unable to fit into such standards financially. Punk provided them with suitable characteristics so they had reasons to do something with their lives.³ It created an atmosphere, which supported amateurism usually, expressed by homemade production of music driven by anger and dissatisfaction.⁴ Since many punks were unemployed, it provided them with more time to engage in the subculture outside the mainstream society.⁵ Punk provided youth not only with political matters but with energizing music, dedicated to those less interested in politics. It served as an argument to stand out from the ongoing mainstream.

Punk later became divided into smaller sub-scenes with similar intentions: cultural, social, or political opposition of the current situation; disrespect towards symbols of authority; demand to express frustration of the minority; and an emphasis on free speech and self-government.⁶ Even though the variations of punk differentiated, the

¹ Gerfried Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics* (New York: Routledge, 2018), chap.2.

² Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.3.

³ Helen Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (Sheffield, Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2012), 7.

⁴ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 15.

⁵ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 20.

⁶ Matthew Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 10-11.

intention of the opposition was always common.⁷ Therefore, punk can be described as a community within a culture, and punk music without its sociocultural context is meaningless. One must know the relation of cultural signifiers, which cannot be separated from the context.⁸

2.2. Beginnings of Punk Music

Punk has never been a restricted community and, therefore, its music cannot be defined precisely because of its great division.⁹ It is often defined as pop music because it was popular when it first began for its difference and variety. Punk supports and targets variation in music elements because its free choice of music presents a free lifestyle. Even though it was sometimes labeled as pop, its constant emphasis on the rejection of capitalist pop and rock music by bands emerging from the working-class background surrounded by political radicalism showed the opposite.¹⁰ The flow of temporary bands provided the punk scene with new music and not burnt out and sold out musicians who were no longer willing to create, like in the case of the rock scene. It brought fresh opinions and attitudes towards the current politics by the musicians from the society affected by unemployment.

Apart from politics, punk was reacting to the failure of the 1960s rock and roll revolution by severe criticism of musicians who were willingly controlled by their managers in return for luxury. The idealism it represented resulted in selling out or being completely ruined.¹¹ The Hippie movement was also highly criticized for failing its followers but it served as a negative example for the new emerging punk.¹² As a reaction to the hippie movement, punk fashion tried to stand out. Punk clothes depicted the low-class background and a cheap lifestyle. The clothes were usually vulgar, spray-painted, and decorated with pins and studs, and their hair was cropped compared to rock bands, which were standardly defined by female features on men.¹³

⁷ Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture*, 46.

⁸ Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.1.

⁹ Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, Intro.

¹⁰ Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.1.

¹¹ Mark Anders and Ralph Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash* (Akashic Books, 2018), chap.1, Akashic Books e-book.

¹² Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.1.

¹³ Raymond A. Patton, *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.

Bands such as The Stooges, the New York Dolls and the Ramones are considered to be the first bands labeled as punk in the United States. However, the Sex Pistols are an essential part of the emergence of punk in the United Kingdom. To this day, the division in the punk scene, whether it started in the UK with the Sex Pistols or in the US with the Ramones, has not been answered.¹⁴ In both countries it started approximately at the same time in the late 1970s. The punk scene in Britain started in London as a reaction to economic problems and youth unemployment, while in the US it reacted to the consumerist culture, convictions about suburban life, and disenchantment of the American dream.¹⁵ British and American punk scenes have always influenced each other and the one special thing they had in common during its beginning was the Cold War.

The unity of the punk scene resulted in the independence of punk bands from major record labels all around the world. The do-it-yourself movement appeared because punk bands wanted to maintain control not only over their music production but in the whole punk scene. Its popularity can be assigned to the obligation of punk bands to modify their production due to a lack of finances. Since DIY was a prior characteristic of punk, musicians had to learn to function in the music industry without the financial support of commercial record companies.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.1.

¹⁵ Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.3.

¹⁶ Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.3.

3. The 1970s and 1980s

3.1. Punk and Politics in Britain

In the late 1970s, the British economy was in a state of crisis compared to the energizing 1960s. This decade consisted of industries in a bad shape and with workers panicking about their future. Weak finances resulted in cuts in public funding and unemployment. The crisis in the fuel industry caused a three-day week accompanied by power cuts and interrupted school process, all resulting in strikes.¹⁷ The unions and Callaghan's government ignored the frustrated and unemployed youth. They proposed crisis-management strategies rather than long-term solutions.¹⁸

Britain dealt with class division resulting in many being judged for their accent or education. Authoritarianism was also a problem as workers' opinions and rights were not considered important to the management, and such division resulted in a confrontational atmosphere. The confrontations between the trade unions and both, employers and government, defined British life in this decade, filling the news with footages of picket lines, power blackouts, unemployment and spiraling inflation.¹⁹

Punk as a musical movement emerged when the British economy started to decline as well as the previous rock music. Punk developed as a result of the damaged society but also similarly dysfunctional rock scene. The bands like Crass and Poison Girls voiced their opinion, which criticized systems, ideologies, and institutions relevant not only in Britain but globally.²⁰ Such a depressive and passive atmosphere of British youth was voiced by the emerging punk.

3.2. Thatcherism

On 4 May 1979, Margaret Thatcher was elected a Prime Minister by the desperate working class who wanted to remove the Labour Party from power. The leader of the Conservative Party took advantage of the British citizens, who were no longer supporting previously elected Labour Party, and enforced her ideology.

¹⁷ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 6.

¹⁸ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 133.

¹⁹ Sean Egan, *The Clash: The Only Band That Mattered* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), chap.1, Library of Congress.

²⁰ Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture*, 1.

The Conservative ideology can be described as a small government supporting free markets and the right to own property. Thatcher's view of politics was very clearly defined. She used to ask her cabinet whether they held similar convictions to her.²¹ Some consider Thatcher a great Prime Minister as she remained in power for eleven years, winning the Falkland War, reforming public services, passing anti-union laws, lowering taxes, and organizing rebirth of British business. Others see her as responsible for unemployment and the destruction of communities in the industrialized north of England.²² Even though Thatcher promised to lower rates of unemployment passed to her by the previous government, nearly three million people were unemployed even under her control by 1981, followed by urban riots in Brixton and other low-income areas.²³

Punk and Thatcherites, shared similar ideas - rejection of old ways and support of individualistic rejection of restrictions.²⁴ In Thatcher's perspective, this meant a change from the Labour Party and proposal of a free market, while for punk, it was a change they declared for the whole nation to end the social suffering. Most punks were not concerned about Thatcher's politics from its beginning, similarly to the previous Callaghan government. On the other hand, punks proudly represented the anarchy, chaos, national decline, and cultural and moral collapse against which Thatcher's right defined itself.²⁵

With her government, Capitalism ascended, and many had lowered their material expectations, while wealth was secretly increasing, being overshadowed by the highest degree of inequality. This difference divided the rich and the middle class slipping to the lower class.²⁶ Thatcher decided to close the steel and coal industries for the lack of their profit, resulting in many unemployed workers. They represented one of the pillars of the British economy and their decline could be seen as a national tragedy. The Sheffield steel was created by the working class that had defeated fascism and surprised the world with industrial accomplishments, which strengthened the United Kingdom.²⁷

²¹ Julian Knight, *British Politics for Dummies* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2010), 226.

²² Knight, *British Politics for Dummies*, 349.

²³ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.1.

²⁴ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, Intro.

²⁵ Patton, *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution*, 107.

²⁶ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, Intro.

²⁷ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.9.

After British Steel dismissed many workers from their jobs, the same followed for the coal mines.²⁸

3.3. The Miners' Strike

Since Thatcher was elected the Prime Minister, she decided to demonstrate her power over the unions, which used to have similar control as the government at that time. She did so on the National Union of Mineworkers led by Arthur Scargill. Thatcher planned to close the majority of British coal-mining industries except the most profitable ones. Scargill declared that he refuses to accept the destruction of the coal-mining industry, also mentioning Thatcher's parliamentary destruction of everything good and compassionate in the society.²⁹

With the gradual closing of mines, many miners decided to go on a strike and fight for their jobs. Continuously, more miners joined the strike that Scargill declared it the national strike in 1984.³⁰ 160,000 miners participated in the strike but not everyone was willing to join. Their rejection to participate in the protest was caused by modernity and profitability of some mines. It prevented them from closure leading to a lack of striking miners. This absence of commitment benefited Thatcher.³¹ The miners were turned back by Thatcher's newly militarized police force, shifting her to win the public relations. Thatcher received unintentional help when BBC accidentally involved miners in the Orgreave violence in an evening broadcast. The images of the miners fighting in defense were shown before the images of the police brutality, resulting in the suggestion of the police fighting in self-defense. Andrew Turnbull, Thatcher's assistant, compared The Battle of Orgreave to The Wars of the Roses indicating that something similar to the civil war erupted.

Punk also supported the striking miners. The Crass played a final show to support the miners before they disbanded. Bands like Chumbawamba, Redskins, New Model Army, and even apolitical bands like New Order were planning on doing the same. The Music for Miners consisting of writers, artists, and filmmakers was created to activate

²⁸ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.2.

²⁹ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.2.

³⁰ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.3.

³¹ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.4.

the youth in the support.³² Shockingly, miners returned to work after the NUM executive board won the vote and the strike, which lasted almost a year, ended.³³

3.4. Thatcher and Reagan’s “Special Relationship”

Six years later from Thatcher’s first election in the United Kingdom, Ronald Reagan was elected the president of the United States of America. Since their identical views on politics and sharing of the same enemies, they developed a special relationship. They both intended to change the world by the free market and aversion towards big government, labeling their relationship a “political marriage” by British journalist Nicholas Wapshott.³⁴ Reagan and Thatcher claimed “efficiency” as their motto, while they wanted to profit as well as to destroy the welfare state, government regulations, labor unions, or any obstruction to the market freedom.³⁵ Thatcher’s goals to prevent social expenditure and privatization of the state-owned companies provided an example to Reagan’s idea of the US. Both admired each other’s country and, therefore, shared common ideology outside and inside of their countries such as anti-communism and free-market economics.

At the same time as the US military had risen in power, Britain was threatened by the Argentinian junta occupying the Falkland Islands. Argentinians had a historical claim on the islands but both, them and Britain tried to maintain them. The occupation resulted in a quick war in 1982, with Britain retaking control with the help of the US military forces provided by Reagan. The climax of the war affected not only Britain’s impression of a peaceful country but also Thatcher status as a strong leader.³⁶ As a response to Reagan’s help, Thatcher supported him in his conflicts in Afghanistan and Libya.³⁷ The arrival of American cruise missiles to the military airbases in Greenham and Molesworth in the United Kingdom caused uproar in the British parliament and

³² Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.5.

³³ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.7.

³⁴ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.1.

³⁵ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, Intro.

³⁶ Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture*, 243.

³⁷ Paul Addison and Harriet Jones, *A Companion To Contemporary Britain 1939-2000* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005), 509.

resulted in mass protests of the British people.³⁸ With these events persisting, American and British workers had to deal with the increasing deindustrialization.³⁹

3.5. The Clash

The Clash is a band from London popular for the combination of music and social, cultural, and political views, not only in the United Kingdom but globally. The band was formed in 1976 and performed until 1986, but the statements that the band emphasized forty years ago are still relevant today.⁴⁰ Their music consists mainly of elements of punk, rock, reggae, ska, funk, and many other genres.

Even though the band provided criticism of the rising Conservative Party, they admitted Thatcher and Reagan gained their initial power by the disinterest of the British people towards politics.⁴¹ The band highly sympathized with the miners. As the fight between the miners and Thatcher continued, Strummer supported the miners even in the concerts. He promoted the hard-working miners and their fight not only against the Conservatives but also for the soul of the country.⁴² Therefore, the band provided a report of the events of the working class happening in Britain for those who did not experience them directly.⁴³

The singer and guitarist Joe Strummer was also a lyrics writer for the majority of The Clash songs. Strummer attacked Thatcher and Reagan's claims about making their countries great again, while they were spreading deindustrialization and unemployment. His lyrics are admired for portraying the rage of the 1970s' generation.⁴⁴ The band was managed by Bernard Rhodes, who was important for forming The Clash into what they became.⁴⁵ The Clash were met with criticism when they signed on with the American label CBS. Such criticism affected their situation, in which they were criticized for focusing on their popularity in the United States of America instead of battling Thatcher in their homeland.⁴⁶ Despite being recognized for

³⁸ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.3.

³⁹ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, Intro.

⁴⁰ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, Intro.

⁴¹ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, Intro.

⁴² Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.3.

⁴³ Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture*, 85.

⁴⁴ Roger Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?* (London: Routledge, 1999), 54.

⁴⁵ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 22.

⁴⁶ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 87.

their political views, the guitarist Mick Jones said the band does not understand such a statement as they express how they perceive life through their eyes.⁴⁷ The first presentation of this statement was through a breakthrough single “White Riot”, which introduces the beginning of their career.

3.5.1. White Riot

“White riot” is identified as one of the most prominent songs by The Clash. It was released as a single and later included in their first album called “The Clash”. The album was written with regards to the band’s everyday life, forming a street-level protest.⁴⁸ It was written by the singer Joe Strummer and bassist Paul Simonon after they participated in riots at Notting Hill Carnival, which is organized in West London to celebrate Afro-Caribbean culture.⁴⁹ Even though the song appeals to the appreciation of black people’s actions, many thought it was a white-privileged song advocating violence by using the words “white” and “riot” in the refrain.

The refrain “White riot, I want to riot”⁵⁰ refers to the riots of Notting Hill, started by a black community fighting for their rights. Their attempt to oppress the government resulted in a conflict with the police. Such events inspired Strummer and Simonon to compose a song illustrating the rage and chaos. The following line “a riot of my own”⁵¹ demands a riot of Strummer’s own - white people - not because he is racist, as many find intriguing, but because the white population does not fight for their rights adequately. It calls upon white people to follow suit with black rioters and loudly voice their discontent without fear of legal retribution.⁵² These lines are still relevant as the situation did not change much from that time resulting in the song’s popularity throughout all generations up until now.

The lines “Black man gotta lotta problems/But they don't mind throwing a brick”⁵³ explain how black people are not afraid to riot, even though they are under more pressure than white people because they must deal with racial difficulties.

⁴⁷ Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture*, 173.

⁴⁸ Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture*, 8.

⁴⁹ Egan, *The Clash: The Only Band That Mattered*, chap.1.

⁵⁰ Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon, *White Riot* (CBS Records, 1977), <https://genius.com/The-clash-white-riot-lyrics>.

⁵¹ Strummer and Simonon, *White Riot*.

⁵² Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.3.

⁵³ Strummer and Simonon, *White Riot*.

However, they are willing to handle the problems in their own manner often resulting in violence between the blacks and the police.

The following two lines “White people go to school/Where they teach you how to be thick”⁵⁴ refer to the school system not only in the United Kingdom but globally. It is indicating that, even though every race has the opportunity to get an education, black people are still under segregation because the white population is the one to get the proper education. On the other hand, such segregation is advantageous as one does not modify their intellect to the school system’s expectations. Such standard ends up corrupting student’s world view and adapting it to the system’s expectations as well as leading them to the system’s way of thinking.

The people at power are described in the lines “All the power's in the hands/Of people rich enough to buy it”⁵⁵ as corrupted, buying power with their wealth and, therefore, buying the people. Rich people usually do not know how to handle the power since they are not experienced enough to understand what the people need. These people are manipulated to obey the government and are “too chicken to even try it,”⁵⁶ meaning they are too afraid to disagree and not at all trying to destroy such a system.

The song encourages white society, which is afraid of the violence, to defend their rights. It portrays black people as strong and courageous, illustrating them as an inspiration. Such raw opinion, as stated in the song, outlines the emergence of punk. It also reflects the band’s perception of the British society in connection to the system.

3.5.2. Give ‘Em Enough Rope

The following album under the title “Give ‘Em Enough Rope” was the first to be released in the United States of America. This album gained worldwide attention but also criticism because it involves global topics. The song “English Civil War” is one of the most popular to the American audience because it uses melodies from popular American folk song called “When Johnny Comes Marching Home”. The song “Guns On the Roof” is popular for the story behind the making of the song. It received its title after the band members were arrested for shooting racing pigeons on the roof of their

⁵⁴ Strummer and Simonon, *White Riot*.

⁵⁵ Strummer and Simonon, *White Riot*.

⁵⁶ Strummer and Simonon, *White Riot*.

rehearsal room.⁵⁷ Many think that the song is about the incident as it starts with a sworn testimony used in courts. Even though he swears to tell the truth, the following verses of the song says the opposite.

The song describes the reality of males called to a war and its impact on their families as it says: “They torture all the women and children,”⁵⁸ indicating men’s separation from their families to fight for what the people at power caused. As in the song “White Riot” it points out the consequences of unawareness of the politicians on the life of ordinary people. They are forced to abandon their children and wives who suffer as much as the men on the front. Women are dependent on themselves, while men involuntarily kill on the field driven by the vision of freedom.

The expression “guns” in the refrain of the song is a metonymy referring to a war. The first inclusion of “guns” in the line “Guns guns a-shaking in terror”⁵⁹ expresses that the people fighting in a war are not willing to kill, they are frightened to kill and be killed. Males are forced to experience situations they never have before. The following line: “Guns guns guilty hands,”⁶⁰ points out that everyone knows that killing in a war is wrong because of the death of innocent people who did not want to be included in the war in the first place. These innocent people suddenly become killers, feeling guilty for their involuntary actions of killing. With the line “Guns guns shatter the lands,”⁶¹ the song expresses that not only people are physically and mentally suffering but the lands are being destroyed too.

The following line describes a system “built by the sweat of the many,”⁶² pointing out the hard work of the people who continuously remind the government of their discontent with the system. The voice of the people helps to shape the government. It also refers to increasing terrorism since the frustration created by the government creates rage, which can result in an assassination.

Other definitions of “guns” appear in the second refrain, indicating how serious the situation of war is. People who are not physically involved in a war may not realize

⁵⁷ Egan, *The Clash: The Only Band That Mattered*, 30.

⁵⁸ Joe Strummer and Mick Jones, *Guns On the Roof* (CBS Rescord, 1978), <https://genius.com/The-clash-guns-on-the-roof-lyrics>.

⁵⁹ Strummer and Jones, *Guns On the Roof*.

⁶⁰ Strummer and Jones, *Guns On the Roof*.

⁶¹ Strummer and Jones, *Guns On the Roof*.

⁶² Strummer and Jones, *Guns On the Roof*.

the major impact it has on society. The suffering of every single mind affected by the terror should be taken seriously.

The song emphasizes the importance of war awareness. People misinterpret war with heroism, ignoring the slaughter of innocent people. It illustrates a period of rising gun violence dominating around the world. This song reflects the band's awareness of global political events.

3.5.3. London Calling

The next and the third album under the title "London Calling" is considered to be the most successful album by The Clash. It differs from the previous albums for its multi-genre approach mixing jazz, reggae, and electronic elements. The most popular song from this album is also called "London Calling" and the themes of the song vary. It deals with the band's position in the music industry at the time, which was rather hopeless, as they did not have a proper manager. On the other hand, it depicts a situation in London and the writer's perception of the city. As already mentioned, this album stands out because of its multi-genre quality with reggae on top with the most significant song, "The Guns Of Brixton". The song deals with Brixton culture connected with crime, riots, and black culture.⁶³ Another song with reggae melodies is called "Rudie Can't Fail". Even though this album is melodically developed and lyrically expressive, the song "Death or Glory" differs by turning away from the political themes previously on the spotlight and focusing more on the morality of the youth. The youth is defined as interrupted by the responsibilities of life.

The beginning of the song describes a person, who regardless of their rebellion in the youth, has certain responsibilities toward the political system now. When one presents themselves as punk or rebel, they usually begin to obey the system reaching a certain age. It also describes a person who revolted in the youth by getting "'Love 'n' hate' tattooed across the knuckles of his hands,"⁶⁴ but in the adulthood became the one ignoring the same culture. The protagonist described in the song as a former rebel now punishes their children for participating in the same culture, which used to present his lifestyle.

⁶³ Egan, *The Clash: The Only Band That Mattered*, 66.

⁶⁴ Joe Strummer and Mick Jones, *Death or Glory* (CBS Records, 1979), <https://genius.com/The-clash-death-or-glory-lyrics>.

The refrain “Death or glory becomes just another story”⁶⁵ reflects on the life of a former rebel. It illustrates people’s promises that death is better than getting old and dying at the right time is necessary. The author disapproves with this statement as it is frequently repeated, yet not fulfilled.

The song also refers to the rock and roll scene at the time explaining that everyone is attempting to make rock music and puts a specific example of the phrase “death or glory” mentioned above, by depicting a musician swearing they will rather die than sell out. It also refers to criticism concerning the band’s contract with the American label CBS, which created the band’s accusations of selling out. To prove the opinion that people usually end up doing the opposite of what they swore they would never do, the song explains, “He, who fucks nuns, will later join the church,”⁶⁶ saying that people usually end up doing the opposite of what they swore they would never do, resulting in hypocrisy. It again indicates the hypocrisy of the punk lifestyle. The ideas preferred in the youth while being a punk lose their meaning in the adulthood.

The song later changes its perspective and focuses on a journey of becoming a successful band in the punk scene. It explains that every band starts from the bottom, encountering unpleasant experiences. “We 'ready heard your song”⁶⁷ indicates that the scene is slowly fading because the artists are making music with the same pattern and same rhythm, and the scene lacks originality.

The last verse of the song starts with: “We gonna march, a long way,”⁶⁸ can be lyrically described as final statement representing the whole song and mocking a promise of rebels to march a long way. People realize that the idealization of the world created during youth is difficult to achieve. It also unveils the band’s own goals to overcome the stereotype in the music scene affected by loss of interest in the punk ideology.

3.5.4. Sandinista!

The album “Sandinista!” contains the highest number of songs and is the longest album from the band’s discography, however, it did not succeed well. The

⁶⁵ Strummer and Jones, *Death or Glory*.

⁶⁶ Strummer and Jones, *Death or Glory*.

⁶⁷ Strummer and Jones, *Death or Glory*.

⁶⁸ Strummer and Jones, *Death or Glory*.

album released in 1980 criticizes the US foreign policy and the Cold War. The name of the album comes from the Nicaraguan Sandinistas who were Marxist revolutionaries who removed US-backed dictatorship from power in rebellion in 1979.⁶⁹ It was chosen because the band wanted to have meaningful title drawing people's attention.⁷⁰ This decision unveiled that the band was supporting the Sandinista rebels in their revolution.⁷¹

3.5.5. Combat Rock

After the not-so-successful album, The Clash moved on and released their bestselling album called "Combat Rock". Traveling across the United States of America and paying attention to the American culture secured the success of the album.⁷² Therefore this album gained its popularity mainly in the United States of America, with its hits "Rock the Casbah" and "Should I Stay or Should I Go". "Rock the Casbah" was the most successful song in America because of the misconception of the lyrics, thought to describe the anti-Iran position prevailing in the United States at that time.⁷³ Even though these songs are unforgettable, the album consists of politically affected and emotionally colored songs, for example, "Know Your Rights" or "Straight to Hell".

The latter is a song about utopian ideals destroyed by the reality, in which the success competes with constrain.⁷⁴ The song emphasizes the struggle of the British industry but also migration in the country. The beginning of the song introduces a melancholic topic when describing immigrants arriving in Britain described as a "paradise"⁷⁵ while Britain struggles to revitalize its industry, destroyed by Thatcher's government. It illustrates the collapse of the steel industry, one of the major ones in the United Kingdom as the "steel mills rust".⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.1.

⁷⁰ Egan, *The Clash: The Only Band That Mattered*, chap.4.

⁷¹ Patton, *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution*, 135.

⁷² Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 82.

⁷³ Egan, *The Clash: The Only Band That Mattered*, chap.5.

⁷⁴ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, Intro.

⁷⁵ Joe Strummer, Mick Jones, Paul Simonon and Topper Headon, *Straight to Hell* (CBS Records, 1982),

<https://genius.com/The-clash-straight-to-hell-lyrics>.

⁷⁶ Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, *Straight to Hell*.

Migration was highly criticized and found its opponents all over the country but the song also refers to the unfortunate adolescent youth developing under the Thatcherite power, since unemployment for adolescents was high. It indicates that Britain was considered a dominant country attracting immigrants while it was wrecked under Thatcherism. The refrain “There ain't no need for ya/Go straight to hell, boys”⁷⁷ is a reference to the Thatcherism and the band’s attitude towards it. It reflects a point of view of anti-migration characters indicating their approach towards rising migration in Britain.

The following verse focuses on the outcome of the Vietnamese war. The word “Amerasian” used in the lyrics means a mixture of American and Asian origin as the outcome of the Vietnamese war, resulting in many Vietnamese women left behind with children of American soldiers. The children are surrounded by American soldiers, who influence them, causing the misconception that they belong to the American culture more than to Vietnamese. The children described in this verse refer to their parents as “papa-san”⁷⁸ and “mama-san”⁷⁹, used in Vietnam to show respect. Their descent is explained in the line: “It ain’t Coca-Cola, it’s rice,”⁸⁰ with America described as “Coca-Cola” and Vietnam as “rice”. The tone of this part of the song is introduced as “blues”⁸¹ because it expresses children’s suffering as they do not identify as either race properly, being abandoned. The refrain after this part is dedicated to the identity crisis of the children not accepted in neither of these cultures, rejecting them at the same time. It, therefore, refers to Americans who refuse to accept any Vietnamese immigrants into their country, even when they are connected to Americans through origin.

The following part consists mostly of judgment of drug use in the “junkie-dom U.S.A”⁸². It criticizes rock stars for using drugs whose usages influences not only their fans but also the people around them. It is a reference to Keith Richard from the band The Rolling Stones, who set a similar example at that time.⁸³

⁷⁷ Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, *Straight to Hell*.

⁷⁸ Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, *Straight to Hell*.

⁷⁹ Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, *Straight to Hell*.

⁸⁰ Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, *Straight to Hell*.

⁸¹ Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, *Straight to Hell*.

⁸² Strummer, Jones, Simonon and Headon, *Straight to Hell*.

⁸³ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.1.

The main aim of the song is to contrast the struggle of immigrants worldwide with the anti-migration movements. It attempts to emphasize with immigrants coming to the United Kingdom and the US for different reasons and outline their experience with citizens of the countries.

3.5.6. The End of The Clash

The following album, “Cut the Crap” was considered a deviation from the original The Clash now only with two original members, Joe Strummer and Paul Simonon, calling, for an end.⁸⁴ The electric music on this album was not standard for the band and as a result not successful among their fans. Finishing the last two years of concerts, Joe Strummer decided to leave the band marking it the end of The Clash.

Musicians like Strummer were still supporting working-class strikes, such as firefighters strike in 2002, where he performed. Mick Jones, who was also attending the strike, joined him on stage, and together they performed three songs, one of them being “White Riot”. The true value of the band remained as the reunion of the two was not lucrative, but as they did the best - by supporting striking workers of the post-Thatcher era.⁸⁵

The Clash emerged in the punk scene when punk appeared as a musical genre. They used punk as a tool to express their attitude towards political events and spread it to the people. They expressed sympathies with the unemployed population of Britain to provide an understanding of their powerlessness. Their popularity in the music industry associated with the political background spread awareness of the striking workers under Thatcher’s government and therefore provided British people with a feeling of assurance. It appealed to the British population and demanded them to stay informed about the political events and to be unafraid to oppress the government. Their beliefs were supported worldwide and are acknowledged until the present. Their approach to politics at the time inspired British youth to participate in the distribution of punk ideology. Their reaction to the vulnerability of the British people involved many in common purpose to create a “riot of their own,”⁸⁶ related to the distinction of the punk attitude compared to the unwilling rest of the British population. They continued to

⁸⁴ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 82.

⁸⁵ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.10.

⁸⁶ Strummer and Simonon, *White Riot*.

contribute to the punk scene even after its climax at the beginning of the 1980s to prove the strength of the people they appealed to. Thatcherism provided them with ideas and proved the righteousness for their popularity in the punk scene. Thatcher's government encouraged The Clash and the punk production generally. Her government represented the base of punk ideology and represented what it attempted to avoid in the social and political context of the future of the United Kingdom. Her conflicts inspired punk in its ideology and encouraged its persistence.

4. The 1990s and 2000s

4.1. The End of the Cold War and Punk

Punk knew the vulnerability of the system since the subculture itself emerged from a dislike of the system and society on which the Cold War countries were based. Musicians like Joe Strummer created his identity based on the rejection of such politics through fashion, art, and music. On the contrary, many new punks were just beginning to develop their worldviews compared to the punk's origin, which evolved from deviation from a political framework.

The fact that punk questioned the Cold War order helped many people see the reality behind its ideology.⁸⁷ It helped to shape the society as it emphasized identity, which was a forgotten element in the Cold War society. Such a society lacked ideological alternatives.⁸⁸ Punk overcame the Cold War's boundaries by creating local scenes worldwide, connected with the same ideology.⁸⁹

By the end of the Cold War, culture and especially music focused more on an individual rather than on collectivity and the social. Punk was no longer about amateur music but more focused on professionalism. Many punk bands turned into the direction of creating small businesses established on their music. They focused on money-making and pleasure rather than violence, which prevailed in the former punk scene.⁹⁰

4.2. Punk as Mainstream

Punk logic indicates that if a punk band succeeds commercially, which means signing to a major label, it is no longer punk. Purchasing a corporate product is understood as material support of a corporation and therefore support of capitalism.⁹¹

In the 1990s, punk started to be commercially recognized and exposed to the mainstream audience. Subversive ideas, which used to mean lifestyle in underground scenes, were now just an image. The original punk was not meant to be for masses so the mainstream offered easily applied elements of punk such as clothes and punk

⁸⁷ Patton, *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution*, 178.

⁸⁸ Patton, *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution*, 179.

⁸⁹ Patton, *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution*, 176.

⁹⁰ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 128.

⁹¹ Stacy Thompson, *Punk Production: Unfinished Business* (New York: State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004), 144.

sounding music.⁹² Many punk bands in the 1990s omitted political issues and rather focused on their musical achievements. This resulted in the approval of one identifying as a punk without being involved in politics.⁹³

4.3. Tony Blair

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of the leftist Labour Party, which intended to culturally change the identity of Britain.⁹⁴ After eleven years of Thatcherism, Labour and Democrats regained their power in the 1990's victory of Tony Blair as the Prime Minister. Thatcher admitted that one of her greatest achievements was Tony Blair and the New Labour. This statement indicated that Blair's success to win the elections was by recreating Labour into an inconspicuous form of Thatcherism.⁹⁵ The socialist ideology of the Labour Party was not present anymore. The working class, which was a major feature of the Labour Party, broke as well as the old industries sustaining it. Such a society was replaced by the capitalist ideas promoting individual ownership of the property and personal wealth similarly to Thatcher's era.⁹⁶ One of Blair's aims was a revitalization of the British youth culture. He paid special attention to music and fashion, which helped to create the mainstream culture.⁹⁷ He was generally liked by the British people and popular for his ability to get away with any scandal.

During his years as Prime Minister, the United States attacked Iraq with information that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. Blair followed the US to the war contributing with the British military. No such weapons were found after the defeat of Hussein, resulting in the criticism and loss of sympathy from the British people.⁹⁸ The investigation followed, whether Britain's involvement in the war was reasonable regarding the possession of weapons of mass destruction by Hussein. Later, government documents proved the possibility of the possession, but the

⁹² Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.1.

⁹³ Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk: The Meaning Behind Punk Rock and Hardcore Lyrics*, chap.3.

⁹⁴ Patton, *Punk Crisis: The Global Punk Rock Revolution*, 184.

⁹⁵ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.10.

⁹⁶ Knight, *British Politics for Dummies*, 55.

⁹⁷ Addison and Jones, *A Companion To Contemporary Britain 1939-2000*, 127.

⁹⁸ Knight, *British Politics for Dummies*, 353.

people were not convinced. Pressure from the media, people, and the government made Blair leave his post in 2007.⁹⁹

4.4. Feminism

During this period, the media concentrated not only on the appearance of punk but also on female instrumentalists appearing in the music industry. Punk offered females to appear in the music industry and maintain their position on the stage. As female and mix-gender bands became popular, females started to create their own territory not only on the stage but also on the streets and at work.¹⁰⁰ The unemployment contributed to the reevaluation of female equity.¹⁰¹ The vision of the future in a time of unemployment frustrated many females and their forced social status to be ladylike.¹⁰² Destroying the dress code and tenderness assigned to femininity, punk tried to embrace ugliness. The concept of sexuality was perceived more aggressively in punk compared to the 1960s.¹⁰³ Even though punk offered a new perception of females, it was challenged by male discontent but also mainstream. For example, many bands with mixed genders were pressured by the press because it paid more attention to female members of the band. This was an intention to make tension in the band, which would lead to the band's splitting up.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, during the Falkland War, male energy was turned towards the military, serving as a tool to rehabilitate their masculinity, which was now limited with the arrival of females into the scene.¹⁰⁵ In the end, many bands turned into more commercial direction due to escalating violence in the punk scene, which resulted in females in punk being pushed aside.

4.5. Billy Bragg

The turn of the century lacked political bands in the punk scene as a result of the political ease and influence of the mainstream culture. Many bands in the scene removed political elements from their production and focused more on their career.

⁹⁹ Knight, *British Politics for Dummies*, 358.

¹⁰⁰ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 187.

¹⁰¹ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 20.

¹⁰² Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 21.

¹⁰³ Sabin, *Punk Rock: So What?*, 63.

¹⁰⁴ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 54.

¹⁰⁵ Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock: Female Musicians of the Punk Era*, 128.

Billy Bragg is a folk-punk musician involved in the punk scene since its beginning in the late 1970s. He was inspired by the band The Clash, when he saw their concert in 1977, which convinced him to engage in political activism. Through music, Bragg expresses activism against racism, capitalism, and other contradictions of globalization.¹⁰⁶ He continues his career in the present, being politically active and engaging in movements, but this chapter focuses on his career in the 1990s.

Bragg's music production transfers its meaning not only through music, but through song and album titles and its release date. He offers a sympathetic attitude towards his audience when acknowledging war dissatisfaction they share. His attention is focused on matters in the United Kingdom, such as the working class, but also on the worldwide affairs, such as the global economy.¹⁰⁷ His music describes the struggle of powerless against the controlling capitalistic power. He challenges capitalism with his music by creating songs, which appeal to the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality in the modern world. During his career, he has been supporting labor unions and other concerns of the left-wing politics into the present.¹⁰⁸ He proved himself an authentic representative of the political left and disenfranchised groups, often being invited to state his opinion for newspapers such as *The Guardian*.¹⁰⁹ Bragg's fame can be ascribed to his engagement in social and political movements, and his contribution in political activism.¹¹⁰

4.5.1. The Internationale

The first album Bragg released in the 1990s is "The Internationale", generally his fifth album. It is one of the most politically influenced albums he released. It consists of covers of protest songs and socialist albums. The most popular song on the album is "The Internationale", which emphasizes the struggle with racism and nationalism. He customized the song to include modern-day motifs.¹¹¹ The only song on

¹⁰⁶ Ola Johansson and Thomas L. Bell, *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009) 8.

¹⁰⁷ Johansson and Bell, *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Johansson and Bell, *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Johansson and Bell, *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, 36.

¹¹⁰ Johansson and Bell, *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, 39.

¹¹¹ Johansson and Bell, *Sound, Society and the Geography of Popular Music*, 36.

the album written exclusively by Bragg is “The Marching Song of the Covert Battalions”, which describes the development of capitalism and the reality behind it.

4.5.2. Don’t Try This at Home

The following album released in 1991 under the title “Don’t Try This at Home”, gained its popularity in Britain for the inclusion of pop elements. It also deals with feelings of love but from a perspective of a left-wing activist. He describes his regrets about relationships with politically uninterested or conservative girls. He also uses melancholy in his songs to point out the change from a war heroism towards its damage. It also deals with sexuality and homophobia spreading at the end of the cold war.

In a song called “The Few”, Bragg portraits the attitudes of British nationalist. At the beginning of the song, Bragg introduces people who “paint their faces red, white and blue,”¹¹² which is a reference to the flag of the United Kingdom, hinting the nationalist approach of the people. He then continues, “they salute the foes their fathers fought,”¹¹³ describing the nationalist’s disinterest in their history. The line “Foes their fathers fought” refers to the nationalism fought in the Second World War, in which their fathers participated, fighting against what they are promoting now. It is confirmed by the “rising the right hand”¹¹⁴ a nationalistic greeting adopted by Hitler. Later in the following verse, Bragg describes the intention of the nationalists to get media attention in order to be feared by the public. It escalates in the following verse, which describes how British nationalists destroy the heritage of their neighbor countries as a reaction to their national pride. The European countries react with fright, while the British stereotype proves that it is “just as rotten as it looks”¹¹⁵. However, British people react to such a behavior, it usually proceeds without a solution. Therefore, the nationalists are able to continue with their activities.

4.5.3. William Bloke

“William Bloke” is the following album released in 1996. The album obtains a more positive perspective as it is less political and rather influenced by a parenthood.

¹¹² Billy Bragg, *The Few* (Elektra Records, 1991), <https://genius.com/Billy-bragg-the-few-lyrics>.

¹¹³ Bragg, *The Few*.

¹¹⁴ Bragg, *The Few*.

¹¹⁵ Bragg, *The Few*.

After five years' pause, his focus is directed on the acceptance rather than criticism. Even though his criticism remains, it is accompanied by melancholy. It shows Bragg's life catharsis. He also focuses on the corruption of relationships, which can be affected by wealth.

The song "From Red to Blue" describes a change in the perspective when becoming a parent, however, he describes this change in the social and political aspects. The beginning of the song expresses frustration towards society, which maintains to accept the ignorance from the government. They adjusted to the situation and proceed with their life, reluctant to make a change. He continues to complain about his unheard criticism to a person who used to share his attitudes but changed "from red to blue"¹¹⁶. It illustrates a camouflage of the Conservatism into the New Labour. Red is associated with the Labour as political color while blue represents the Conservatives. It reflects an occurrence of Tony Blair's New Labour simultaneously with continuing Conservatism. He admits that parenting has changed him in the following line, "You're a father now, you see things in different ways"¹¹⁷ and explain that such change is necessary for every parent. Even though he transformed his viewpoint on life, in general, he mentions that: "But that alone does not explain the changes I see in you,"¹¹⁸ again hinting on Blair.

The song later describes the dilemma of a parent's choice in the upcoming elections. "Should I vote red for my class or green for our children?"¹¹⁹ reveals his preferences in the election choosing between the Labour red and the Environmentalist green. He favors the Labour over the Conservatives pointing out his working-class background. On the other hand, he expresses environmental concern for the future of children since the global warming outbreak. A statement "I will not forsake"¹²⁰ declares his resistance towards manipulations in government.

He continues to criticize the change of Blair's political direction in return for money. He focuses on Blair's New Labour Party, which is known to share Conservative features described as a "bright shining lie"¹²¹. The people were tricked into thinking that the British government is heading in a different direction than Conservatism but Blair's

¹¹⁶ Billy Bragg, *From Red to Blue* (Cooking Vinyl, 1996), <https://genius.com/Billy-bragg-from-red-to-blue-lyrics>.

¹¹⁷ Bragg, *From Red to Blue*.

¹¹⁸ Bragg, *From Red to Blue*.

¹¹⁹ Bragg, *From Red to Blue*.

¹²⁰ Bragg, *From Red to Blue*.

¹²¹ Bragg, *From Red to Blue*.

New Labour was just a camouflage. In the last verses he again mentions his change in attitude caused by parenthood. He explains that the beliefs of the minority are hard to achieve and therefore result in adjustment, explained in “I hate the compromises that life forces us to make,”¹²² but even though he is forced to shape his ideas in accordance with the changing society he “hold them to be true”¹²³.

4.5.4. England, Half English

The album released in 2002 and later re-issued in 2006 under the title “England, Half English” reveals from its name crisis of English national identity. It deals with the increasing multiculturalism in Britain and struggle to identify the national identity. Themes such as mixed culture resulting from migration and the struggle to characterize an English person are illustrated in songs “Take Down Union Jack” or “England, Half English”.

The latter song appeals to English people and demands them to realize that nobody has a pure English origin in the opening lines “My mother was half English”¹²⁴. Regardless of his mixed descent, he is forced to be identified as English because he is “Tied up in the red white and blue”¹²⁵, referring to the Union Jack. In the following lines, he continues to mention all the reasons for Britain’s half Englishness, including his cuisine. The lines “I had a plate of Marmite soldiers/Washed down with a cappuccino”¹²⁶ describe a half English breakfast. “Marmite soldiers” are toasts served with typical British spread “Marmite”, which he consumes with Italian cappuccino, making his breakfast half English. He continues to inform that he consumes Indian curry a week followed by “Bubble’N’Squeak”, which is British food typical for breakfast, defended by his half English appetite. He later continues to analyze British history, mentioning Britannia, part of the Roman Empire, which was highly influenced by Latin. He continues to mention St. George, an English patron, who “was born in Lebanon”¹²⁷.

¹²² Bragg, *From Red to Blue*.

¹²³ Bragg, *From Red to Blue*.

¹²⁴ Billy Bragg, *England, Half English* (Elektra Records, 2002), <https://genius.com/Billy-bragg-and-the-blokes-england-half-english-lyrics>.

¹²⁵ Bragg, *England, Half English*.

¹²⁶ Bragg, *England, Half English*.

¹²⁷ Bragg, *England, Half English*.

After this album, Bragg released six more albums and continues to engage in political events in the present. He is considered the most prominent pop musician in Britain representing the voice of the people when examining political issues. Since the 1990s lacked punk musicians, Billy Bragg's inclusion in the music industry enriched the decreasing punk scene in Britain. He continues to target the political issues in the United Kingdom through music demonstrating his punk identity. He also focuses on issues outside of the United Kingdom, providing his audience with global awareness. He visited Olomouc after Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution in pre-electoral 1990 to spread awareness of the post-Cold War sexuality, racism, and environmentalism. After the Cold War ended, many expected a shift in the global policy. It resulted mainly in the cultural spread and arrival of the mainstream industry. On the other hand, it reinforced the arrival of feminism into the music industry. The involvement of women in punk music allowed to focus on the position of females in the society apart from stereotyped perception, and therefore changed the perspective of females not only in the music industry but in everyday life. The British culture was thus directed into a free atmosphere. Tony Blair helped to expand this independent youth culture in the United Kingdom, which later corrupted punk for its inclusion in the mainstream industry. Mainstream shifted punk in a different direction from its former objective resulting in loss of significance of punk.

5. Contemporary Punk Music

5.1. A New Definition of Punk

The beginning of the century assumed an increase in pop, dance, and metal music genres. Surprisingly, return of interest in punk emerged with the reissued CDs published again and punk bands playing in themed clubs. However, the revival deviates from the original punk. The new bands lack frequently emphasized oppositions of politics. The music industry, on the other hand, appreciates the music of “now” rather than the counter-cultural opposition.¹²⁸ Record labels are pressured into more profitable aspects of their work as the new platforms, such as YouTube, depreciate recorded music as a product for business. Creative labor, which used to refer to collective creativity, is now considered to be rather individual due to the increase of copyright.¹²⁹ However, punk still remains to disapprove of the mainstream music business and status quo.¹³⁰ Nowadays, punk became divided into smaller but mutual groups both musically and ideologically. This resulted in a diversity of the communities around the world, attempting to revitalize the underground circles that started in the 1970s.

5.2. Brexit

In 2010, the Conservative Party leader David Cameron became the Prime Minister. For him, Britain's membership in the European Union meant damage to the country. He wanted Britain to leave the EU and its directives towards the country, especially regulations of the British laws and associations of the EU in British norms, which were unusual for British tradition. He was afraid that the EU will destroy Britain's spirit and started to consider the country's departure from the EU.¹³¹ He wanted to improve the requirements of the membership so they would satisfy the legacy of Britain. To achieve such concessions, he threatened the EU with Britain's departure from the membership.¹³² Such a strategy would later turn against him as many members of government turned into radical Brexiters without any former Cameron's ideas. They

¹²⁸ David Wilkinson, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure in Britain* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 2016) 190-1.

¹²⁹ Wilkinson, *Post-Punk, Politics and Pleasure in Britain*, 194.

¹³⁰ Worley, *No Future: Punk, Politics and British Youth Culture*, 47.

¹³¹ Rudolf G. Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2020), 49.

¹³² Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences*, 56-7.

started to build campaigns on behalf of Britain’s departure from the EU without the reform or arrangements.¹³³ Many people, just as the government, were convinced to leave the EU but did not know what would follow if they did.

After achieving few concessions in February 2016 renegotiations in Brussels, Cameron declared to convince British people to vote “remain”. The resulting concessions were insufficient, leaving British people disappointed with Cameron.¹³⁴ Still, the majority of people wanted the United Kingdom to leave the EU as one of the major factors was migration. This was the only anomaly that the campaign for “remain” lacked.

After Cameron's resignation in 2016, Theresa May was declared the Prime Minister, following Cameron’s footsteps. Her functions were to shape the Brexit structure and find a solution that would satisfy both the UK and the EU.¹³⁵ She tried to harmonize her parliament consisting of both supporters of “leave” and “remain”. It worked for some time, but later, her parliament started to resign.¹³⁶ With continuous delay of Brexit, and inability to unite the government and shape the Brexit reform, May also resigned. She was succeeded by Boris Johnson, and The United Kingdom left the European Union in February 2020 without a deal.

5.3. Multiculturalism

Rejection of multiculturalism induced by migration played a major role in the Brexit.¹³⁷ Citizens of the United Kingdom did not have any factual complaints about the membership in the EU, apart from migration.¹³⁸ The vast migration in 2015 was blamed on the EU and its Freedom of Movement. Britain had an egotistical view on this happening because they were unconcerned about the background of the migrating people and characterized them as uninvited, unregistered, and undisciplined.¹³⁹ The police fighting off the miners in the 1980s became the police fighting off the

¹³³ Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences*, 70.

¹³⁴ Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences*, 84.

¹³⁵ Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences*, 134.

¹³⁶ Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences*, 182.

¹³⁷ Richard T. Ashcroft and Mark Bevir, *Multiculturalism in the British Commonwealth* (California: University of California Press, 2019), 137.

¹³⁸ Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences*, 73.

¹³⁹ Adam, *Brexit: Causes and Consequences*, 103.

immigrants in the 21st century. The poverty of Middle Eastern and African areas driven many people to the French side of the tunnel in the English Channel connecting the two countries. The US's invasion of Iraq in 2003 was also one of the reasons for such migration in 2016.¹⁴⁰

David Cameron proclaimed that Britain failed to present a society appealing to other cultures, which resulted in many independent cultures in one society. He wanted to establish muscular liberalism, which asserts common language, culture, and values.¹⁴¹ He was trying to achieve the opposite of the original intention of multiculturalism.

5.4. Slaves band

Slaves are a band from Kent active since 2012. The band consists only of two members, Laurie Vincent playing guitar and bass and Isaac Holman singing and playing drums. Their music consists of electronic elements mixed with raw guitar and simple drumbeat. They became popular for the unique sound of their music. Their songs deal with struggles of today's society such as employment, consumerism, and upper classism but they also with love and heartbreak.

A controversy has been spread around their name. Many people are offended by the term "slaves" because they think they use it to mock the history. The truth is that the band wanted to have a name that would cause shock. They aimed for something that would sound sharp like "clash". The name is supposed to refer to the ordinary people as slaves of today's society and government.

Even though the band's electronic elements in music and mainstream success are not representing the punk ideology from the 1970s and 1980s, their approach is based on punk, which is adjusted to suit today's generation. Today's youth culture is influenced by technologies, producing perfectionist yet unachievable ideologies. Slaves offer deviation from such expectations, both musically and lyrically. Their music is unique for its fast and sharp drumbeats and raw guitar accompanied by shouted lyrics contradicting the usual pop mainstream. Even though their popularity gained mainstream success, it is a product of the modern generation's dislike of the mainstream pop culture. This contrast results from the social platforms, which are easily

¹⁴⁰ Anders and Heibutzki, *We Are The Clash*, chap.10.

¹⁴¹ Arjun Tremblay, *Diversity in Decline?* (Gewerbstrasse: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 152-3.

approachable and one of the key factors in representing a band. Their success can be attributed to the fans who are not satisfied with today's pop culture and seek difference. The difference from typical musicians of this era is through the lyrics, which mostly express political views but also deal with consumer life. Such elements are unusual today compared to the 1970s, which were filled with punk bands. Today, musicians usually sing about simpler components featuring feelings such as love, death, or material life.

Slaves signed to the label called Virgin, which signed the Sex Pistols in 1977, realizing the criticism it would follow. They explained that they admire the DIY production of music, however they need traditional moral support from the label. Slaves do not consider themselves as punk, since they are trying to produce something that has not existed yet just like punk before the late 1970s, rather than copying something.¹⁴² The band proclaims they started as a punk band influenced by The Clash but their music has changed since then. Even though their music lacks punk elements nowadays and is rather a mix-genre, both members have punk attitudes represented in some of their lyrics.¹⁴³

5.4.1. Sugar Coated Bitter Truth

The first music that the band produced is an EP called "Sugar Coated Bitter Truth". The album is presented in an underground sound with simple but sharp electric guitar. The tone of the first album is slightly different from the rest as the music is rather imprecise compared to their following albums. It is not yet focused on the electric elements compared to the rest of their production. This album introduces the true punk direction of the band, which is lacking from the rest of their work. The music is also on the contrary to the majority of the lyrics. The lyrics are focused on internal feelings rather than political ideologies formed by punk. The album focuses on many themes such as lifestyle, identity, depression, and women. It is trying to express the consequences of boredom on the lifestyle of the youth who get involved in bad habits

¹⁴² Ben Homewood, "Slaves Interview: On Punk, Their Controversial Name And Asking 'Are You Satisfied?'" *NME*, June 1, 2015, <https://www.nme.com/features/slaves-interview-on-punk-their-controversial-name-and-asking-are-you-satisfied-756746>.

¹⁴³ Nick Baron, "Some Meditations On Punk: Hanging In The Basement With Slaves," *Atwood Magazine*, October 19, 2018, <https://atwoodmagazine.com/slaves-2018-interview-acts-of-fear-and-love/>.

such as smoking. It also focuses on identity shaping in the modern society fixated on technology, which sometimes provides unachievable ideals.

5.4.2. Are You Satisfied?

The first album called “Are You Satisfied?” introduced the band into the mainstream industry. It became popular for its songs “Cheer Up London”, “The Hunter” and a song named as the previous album “Sugar Coated Bitter Truth”. While “The Hunter” is focused on the global perception of the environment, “Sugar Coated Bitter Truth” warns you about the government’s approach to the people.

The song “Cheer Up London” is reacting to a sad society perceived by the band in everyday life. The lyrics are simple using repetitions of verses. The refrain “You’re dead already”¹⁴⁴ states that people are going to die anyway, and therefore should not focus on the inconveniences of life. The verse can also refer to the state of the people of London, who are depressed and miserable about their life characterized as already dead. The beginning of the song introduces a purpose to live for every Londoner trying to “Put another 0 in your paycheck,”¹⁴⁵ trying to make more money in order to live life, not just survive it. The people are obsessed with the idea of money failing to realize their commitment to it. “Are you digging your grave yet?”¹⁴⁶ refers to the unconscious chase for money throughout their life without any pleasure. These two verses are repeated in two stanzas as if to induce it into people’s minds. Towards the end of the song, the lyrics say: “Cheer up London /It’s not that bad”¹⁴⁷ as if to encourage people to be positive. It assigns an inequality between money and positive emotions promoting that you can enjoy your life without money. In the following verse, the repeated lyrics are changed into “You’re already dead and it’s not so bad,”¹⁴⁸ which stresses that people voluntarily chose to consume their life with the idea of money, and therefore should not be miserable about the stereotype they set for themselves. The last verses of the song “Mind the gap/Thank you”¹⁴⁹ are associated with London underground, which has these

¹⁴⁴ Laurie Vincent and Isaac Holman, *Cheer Up London* (Virgin EMI Records, 2015), <https://genius.com/Slaves-cheer-up-london-lyrics>.

¹⁴⁵ Vincent and Holman, *Cheer Up London*.

¹⁴⁶ Vincent and Holman, *Cheer Up London*.

¹⁴⁷ Vincent and Holman, *Cheer Up London*.

¹⁴⁸ Vincent and Holman, *Cheer Up London*.

¹⁴⁹ Vincent and Holman, *Cheer Up London*.

words written on the pavement when entering the tube. London underground is frequently used when commuting to work, which also hints the stereotype with money as a goal. It depicts the pessimism of London people who are looking down on their feet instead of looking around.

The song called “Sugar Coated Bitter Truth” consists of two main verses repeated and chanted by the singer starting with “Don’t trust the flies, they are government spies,”¹⁵⁰ which hints the political approach of the song. This line claims that the government is controlling, which continues with “sit you down at the table and force-feed you lies,”¹⁵¹ saying that any inconvenience about the government is usually camouflaged into comforting speeches, which are usually lies. The lines continue, “Your mouth is covered, your hands have been tied,”¹⁵² clearly explaining the helplessness of the people under the intriguing government resulting in becoming a “slave to their every command”¹⁵³. The refrain repeats, “You can’t run”¹⁵⁴ as if to point out that strict politics will always be in power over the people because people themselves chose such government, calling it “sugar coated bitter truth” to reveal such a statement to the people as a harsh reality. The last verse, “Do you ever feel you’re being cheated?”¹⁵⁵ refers to the Sex Pistols’ last concert where Johnny Rotten tells the sentence to the audience. In this sense it can also refer to the political truth mentioned before.

5.4.3. Take Control

The second album “Take Control” also deals with political elements just like the previous one but includes perceptions of class division, capitalism, and modern technologies. It introduces electronic elements and lacks the raw sound compared to the previous album, however it is considered their most popular album. The song “Consume or Be Consumed”, which starts with a shout “Coca-Cola,”¹⁵⁶ indicates the

¹⁵⁰ Laurie Vincent and Isaac Holman, *Sugar Coated Bitter Truth* (Virgin EMI Records, 2015), <https://genius.com/Slaves-sugar-coated-bitter-truth-lyrics>.

¹⁵¹ Vincent and Holman, *Sugar Coated Bitter Truth*.

¹⁵² Vincent and Holman, *Sugar Coated Bitter Truth*.

¹⁵³ Vincent and Holman, *Sugar Coated Bitter Truth*.

¹⁵⁴ Vincent and Holman, *Sugar Coated Bitter Truth*.

¹⁵⁵ Vincent and Holman, *Sugar Coated Bitter Truth*.

¹⁵⁶ Laurie Vincent and Isaac Holman, *Consume or Be Consumed* (Virgin EMI Records, 2016), <https://genius.com/Slaves-consume-or-be-consumed-lyrics>.

struggle of today's society devoured in capitalism and consumerism. The whole song criticizes the sold-out society and its function for profitable purposes driven by the new technologies. The line "I've got the whole fucking scene on my dinner plate"¹⁵⁷ refers to the new trend of photographing your food and posting it to the audience on social media. The food is referred to as a "scene" in terms of art, into which food developed. The following line "imitate, intimidate and get incinerate"¹⁵⁸ describes the goals of some people in their life. Social media offer an opportunity to copy anyone but also to threaten. It indicates the dangers of overusing social media. The refrain "Consume or be consumed"¹⁵⁹ can be interpreted in a few ways. First suggest that you must consume - surrender - to a society in order to be considered a normal human being. The refrain can also be interpreted as an encouragement for people to revitalize their life themselves otherwise it will remain unchanged. The last possible interpretation suggests that the government forces us to consume their beliefs so they can benefit from it.

Another popular song called "Rich Man" deals with similar topics as the previous one, focusing on capitalism. This song deals with elements of upper-class arrogance and criticism of such an attitude. The first verse depicts the life of a rich man who has "boxes of watches that have never been worn"¹⁶⁰, expressing that wealthy people buy unnecessary objects. Indicating such deviation proves that ordinary people own only necessary goods. The refrain "Rich man/I'm not you bitch man"¹⁶¹ indicates a dominance of upper class over middle and lower class, and the relation between the classes. The phrase "bitch man" illustrates a precedence towards the minority. The second verse starts with "He keeps his money in an offshore account"¹⁶² referring to David Cameron's scandal suspecting him of hiding money. The lyrics depict the ruthlessness of rich people, who mercilessly take everything they can for their wealth, as suggested in the line: "he sucks the marrow out of blood soaked bones"¹⁶³. Such behavior also has its consequences as depicted in the line "he's got seven cars and not a

¹⁵⁷ Vincent and Holman, *Consume or Be Consumed*.

¹⁵⁸ Vincent and Holman, *Consume or Be Consumed*.

¹⁵⁹ Vincent and Holman, *Consume or Be Consumed*.

¹⁶⁰ Laurie Vincent and Isaac Holman, *Rich Man* (Virgin EMI Records, 2016), <https://genius.com/Slaves-rich-man-lyrics>.

¹⁶¹ Vincent and Holman, *Rich Man*.

¹⁶² Vincent and Holman, *Rich Man*.

¹⁶³ Vincent and Holman, *Rich Man*.

friend in the world,”¹⁶⁴ implying the arrogance of rich people. They prefer material pleasure over true relationships because they lack beneficial value.

5.4.4. Acts of Fear and Love

The last album released in 2018 under the name “Acts of Fear and Love” reveals from its name the power of emotions, which drive people’s actions. The behavior led by love is represented in the album through songs such as “Chokehold”, which deals with a break-up. The instinct of fear can be assigned to the political situation in Britain concerning Brexit as the band is known for the opposition of its results. The political statements in the album are vague because the band prefers to demonstrate their attitudes intellectually.¹⁶⁵ It, therefore, indicates that the album consists of political elements such as in the song “Cut and Run”, which is slightly hinting the presidency of Donald Trump.

One of the most popular songs on the album is the song “Magnolia”, which inconspicuously deals with advertisement and influence of the British government on the people. It starts with the line: “Do you know that 65% of UK homes contain at least one magnolia wall”¹⁶⁶ reacting to the power of advertisement. This number proves that people give in to consumerism and purchase what is presented to them. It also hints that people lack personal opinion since the options to choose from are wide because of social media. They choose to follow someone else instead of thinking for themselves. The following lines confirm this idea as they continue: “It’s a bombardment of external influence”¹⁶⁷. It also indicates that such influence is created intentionally. Advertisements intentionally attract people through different processes involved. Such processes, as mention in the following line “Call the number on the side of the bus”¹⁶⁸ illustrate that advertisement surrounds people everywhere and attracts people with an easy approach. The song continues to mock the primitive approach of people influenced by an advertisement for their conviction of its authenticity. It also represents the simplicity of human demands on their lifestyle, society, and culture. The refrain is

¹⁶⁴ Vincent and Holman, *Rich Man*.

¹⁶⁵ Baron, “In The Basement With Slaves.”

¹⁶⁶ Laurie Vincent and Isaac Holman, *Magnolia* (Virgin EMI Records, 2018), <https://genius.com/Slaves-magnolia-lyrics>.

¹⁶⁷ Vincent and Holman, *Magnolia*.

¹⁶⁸ Vincent and Holman, *Magnolia*.

repeating “do it”¹⁶⁹ to encourage people to give in to the unoriginal trend. The effect of advertising consists of the subconscious invasion of minds resulting in obeying the consumerism ideology.

The song also mentions the simplicity of consumerism with developing technologies. It allows people to purchase material and mental goods in a short period of time. The amount of time spent on the exploration of such unnecessary and sometimes virtual property, such as social media, results in loss of priorities in the reality. The song ends with the repetition of the line “I’m gon’ paint my wall magnolia,”¹⁷⁰ indicating that with rising interest of virtual status and submitting to consumerism will force everyone to modify as an act of survival in society.

Slaves’ attention on the technologies and their negative influence on people attempts to indicate the lack of authenticity of the British character. With their music approach they attempt to demonstrate the effect of originality on the creativity of people. The lacking creativity of British people, resulting from the continuous use of technologies and influence of the advertisement, blocks people’s creativity and ability to think for themselves. It has an impact on their judgment and critical thinking. It also increases envy emerging from the consumerism. People rather focus on wealth than on the moral aspects of an individual, creating a corrupted society. To demonstrate their ideas, the band uses characteristic music elements, which provoke the listener to reconsider their attitudes. The incorporation of such elements provides a new perception of the music production influenced by the modern technologies. The British citizens are also influenced by the Brexit, resulting in the division of the people, supported by the multiculturalism. It reflects their ignorance towards political events, which resulted in Britain’s departure from the European Union with unclear direction of the country’s future.

¹⁶⁹ Vincent and Holman, Magnolia.

¹⁷⁰ Vincent and Holman, Magnolia.

6. Conclusion

The focus of this bachelor thesis was to represent British punk music in connection with the political developments through the late 1970s until the present. Each period was represented by a punk band and their song analysis in accordance with political events prominent for these periods. The musicians addressing the topic of my thesis are The Clash, Billy Bragg, and Slaves, who come from the representative background for punk. It presents punk with themes of unemployment, working class, and later capitalism and consumerism conveyed from their personal experience.

The relationship between punk and politics has always been crucial since punk would be unable to exist without the political events affecting the people. Punk's emergence in both, Britain and the United States, simultaneously contributed to the cultural development of both countries. The continuous struggle of the government to support the people resulted in a reaction to create a community with independent rules and ideology. It provided a feeling of security for the people, and especially the British youth, affected by unemployment. The emergence of the do-it-yourself movement offered equality in the scene since its idea united all the social classes. Features of punk music vary from features of mainstream music, which became a representative part of the punk scene. The unusual elements of punk music were adopted by some musicians in modern music production, suggesting the influence of punk in contemporary music.

1970s Britain influenced the radical spread of punk because the position of the British industry was declining, which resulted in the resentment of the people. The election of Margaret Thatcher provoked a discontent society, which was supported with punk music. The continuing unemployment under Thatcher's government and her decision to close major industries resulted in strikes. Punk bands expressed support for the striking workers proving their commitment towards the minority of British society. Such support was also provided by the band The Clash whose lyrics illustrated the frustration with the corrupt British government. They were one of the first punk bands recognized at the time with one of their most popular songs "White Riot", reflecting the fright of British society to oppress the government. They also appealed to the American audience since their work reflected global political issues connected with the US demonstrated in their songs "Straight to Hell" and "Guns On the Roof". The connection between the two countries was assigned to the representatives of each government, Thatcher and Reagan, who shared political ideologies.

At the time of Thatcher's departure from the British government, punk was in a decline. The emphasis on the youth culture by Prime Minister Tony Blair resulted in punk's inclusion in the mainstream and therefore a loss of its former ideology. The new musicians in the punk music industry focused on the external features of punk rather than the political focus. However, the new direction of Tony Blair's Labour government received criticism reflected in Billy Bragg's "From Red to Blue". Bragg's engagement in political activism enriched British popular music by mixing the two with the dominant folk music elements. His songs deal with British nationalism prevailing in the UK represented in his songs "The Few" and "England, Half English". The focus on the British identity in his work was caused by the end of the Cold War, which caused the spread of multiculturalism.

The increase in multiculturalism reflected in the contemporary punk scene caused Prime Minister David Cameron to be concerned about the British values and traditions while remaining in the European Union. His uncertainty about the EU led to a division in British society. The inability of the British Prime Ministers to support their government and people resulted in Britain's departure from the European Union. Such an attitude is reflected in the Slaves songs "Rich Man" and "Sugar Coated Bitter Truth", which criticize the dishonest government. Their song "Cheer Up London" expresses the frustration of British society pursued by wealth promoted by social media. The new technologies and the advertisement connected to it are the focus of their songs "Consume or Be Consumed" and "Magnolia". Even though punk's ideology is increasingly fragile, Slaves' combination of electronic music and rap with punk music and political ideas proved that punk is still present in contemporary music but in modified form.

Although, the essential elements of punk are missing from contemporary punk music production, its ideology is still relevant in the present day. All the contemporary musicians represented as punk are influenced by the former ideologies of the bands created in the 1970s. In some decades it lacked inspiration, such as at the turn of the century, but politics are and will always reinforce diverse opinions, which represent punk music and keep the ideology alive.

7. Resumé

Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce je definovať vývoj punku vo Veľkej Británii znázornený v hudobnej tvorbe zvolených kapiel, v súvislosti s politickým dianím od konca roku 1970 po súčasnosť. Táto práca je rozdelená do troch kapitol reprezentovaných obdobiami 1970 a 1980, 1990 a 2000 a súčasnosť. Každé obdobie je zastúpené vhodnou punkovou kapelou, znázorňujúca ich názory spojené s politickým dianím dominujúcim v danom období. Umelci ktorých som si zvolila na znázornenie punkovej hudobnej tvorby sú The Clash, Billy Bragg a Slaves. Citát „White Riot“ použitý v názve mojej bakalárskej práce cituje pieseň od punkovej kapely The Clash. Každá z kapiel zameraných na analýzu znázorňuje rôzne smery punk vo svojom rozvoji, ovplyvnené dôležitými politickými udalosťami.

Prvá časť každej kapitoly uvádza politické dianie vo Veľkej Británii, spojené s rozvojom punkovej ideológie. Poskytuje úvod k prístupu punku k politickým, sociálnym a kultúrnym udalostiam. Zameriava sa na odozvu britskej mládeže na nedokonalosť britského parlamentu a jej premiérov. Druhá časť každej kapitoly pozostáva z predstavenia najvýznamnejších punkových kapiel a analýza piesní pre danú dobu.

Zahrnutím textov piesní do mojej bakalárskej práce by som chcela poukázať na perspektívu k politike punkových umelcov v danom období. Vysvetľujú pôvod punkovej hudby v sedemdesiatych rokoch a ich rozvoj v hudobnej sfére, ale aj punkovú ideológiu po súčasnosť. Preferencia umelcov, ktorých som zvolila, predstavuje model punkových hudobníkov, ktorí reprezentujú prvky punku v súvislosti s sociálnym ale aj politickým prostredím a hudobným zámerom pre ich poslucháčov.

Každá kapitola znázorňuje dobu charakteristickú politickými medzníkmi vo Veľkej Británii. Popisuje punkovú ideológiu, udalosti a aktivity spojené s jej vznikom. Vysvetľuje ako sa punk zrodil v polovici sedemdesiatych rokov, ako reakcia na nespokojnosť britskej mládeže s predchádzajúcimi vládami. Takisto vysvetľuje reakciu punku na narastajúci konzervativizmus. Ďalej sa zameriava na úsilie punku na prelome storočí udržať sa nie len v spoločnosti, ale aj na hudobnej scéne. Prítomnosť punku v súčasnej dobe môže byť pripísaná znepokojujúcemu politickému daniu ako je napríklad Brexit. Zvolené piesne predstavujú postoj punku k politickému rozvoju ako je napríklad nezamestnanosť, Thatcherizmus, koniec Studenej vojny, feminizmus, multikulturalizmus a Brexit.

Prvá kapitola je zameraná na punk v spojení s politikou. Popisuje vznik punku ako reakciu na populárnu hudbu, ktorá nevyhovovala ľuďom zo sociálne slabého prostredia, keďže vyžadovala finančné zabezpečenie. Punk teda vznikol ako komunita pre ľudí, a hlavne mládež, ktorí boli poznačení nezamestnanosťou. Tieto faktory boli príčinou nestabilnej vlády Veľkej Británie. Okrem sociálnej frustrácie sa punk zrodil z nespokojnosti s predchádzajúcou rockovou hudbou ale aj hnutím hippies. Oboje smery za sebou zanechali frustrovanú spoločnosť z nenaplnenia ich zámeru.

Punk teda reagoval na niekoľko faktorov spoločnosti nie len vo Veľkej Británii ale aj v Spojených štátoch amerických. Keďže punk začal v oboch štátoch približne v rovnakom období, oba si pripisujú jeho vznik. Doposiaľ sa špekuluje o jeho prvenstve v jednom zo štátov. Zatiaľ čo vo Veľkej Británii dominovali kapely ako Sex Pistols alebo The Clash, v Amerike to boli The Stooges, New York Toy Dolls alebo Ramones. Obe scény sa navzájom podporovali, keďže neboli zamerané len na politické dianie vo vlastnej krajine ale aj vo svete. Spoločne mali taktiež do-it-yourself hnutie, ktoré v doslovnom preklade znamená „Urob si sám“, zamerané na nezávislú produkciu vlastnej hudby a komodity, bez finančnej a komerčnej podpory.

Sedemdesiate roky sa vo Veľkej Británii niesli v znamení vysokej nezamestnanosti a diverzity spoločnosti. Novozvolená konzervatívna premiérka Margaret Thatcherová sa zaviazala znížiť nezamestnanosť, no počas jej vlády sa stal pravý opak. Jej ideológia o voľnom trhu zapríčinila uzatvorenie dôležitých priemyselných odvetí, čo spôsobilo nárast nezamestnanosti. Pracovníci postihnutých oblastí sa rozhodli pre štrajk, ktorý pretrvával jeden rok bez významného výsledku. Podporu robotníckej triedy vyjadrilo niekoľko kapiel. Jedna z najvýznamnejších, The Clash, ktorá sa preslávila odporom k Thatcherovej vláde a podpore robotníckej triedy. Ich zámer bol prinútiť spoločnosť bojovať proti neprospievajúcemu systému, odzrkadlenú v ich hudobnej forme. Ich presadzovanie politického utláčania nielen vo Veľkej Británii im zabezpečilo slávu po celom svete. Ich tvorba je doteraz považovaná za aktuálnu.

Nasledujúca kapitola, zameraná na deväťdesiate roky a prelom storočia sa zaoberá koncom Studenej vojny, ktorý priniesol nový pohľad na kultúru. Hudobná scéna sa začala zameriavať popularitu hudobníkov namiesto ich poslania, čo zapríčinilo nedostatok punkových hudobníkov. Punk sa teda dostal medzi populárnu hudbu vďaka hudobníkom, ktorí si osvojili prvky punku, no nie celú ideológiu. Vo svojej tvorbe vynechali politické zábery a zamerali sa len na hudobné elementy punkovej hudby.

Rozvoj kultúry v deväťdesiatych rokoch podporil aj premiér Tony Blair. Jeho Nová Labouristická strana, reprezentujúca strednú cestu sklamala priaznivcov pracovnej sily, keďže si osvojila prvky konzervativizmu. Jeho vládala bola sprevádzaná niekoľkými škandálmi, ktoré vyvrcholili jeho odchodom z pozície premiéra. Nesúhlas s Blairovou vládou vyjadril aj hudobník Billy Bragg populárny pre jeho politický aktivizmus. Bragg pôsobí na hudobnej scéne aj v prítomnosti a naďalej sa zapája do politického diania, reprezentujúc hlas ľudu.

Súčasná punková scéna vo Veľkej Británii je ovplyvnená modernými technológiami, ktoré umožňujú jednoduchší kontakt hudobníkov z ich obecnstvom, no zároveň prinášajú vysokú konkurenciu. S nárastom popularity rozličných hudobných žánrov sa punk rozdelil na niekoľko subkategórií, ktoré spájajú punk s inými hudobnými žánrami. Jednou z nich je aj kapela Slaves, ktorá tvorí hudbu spojením typických punkových prvkov s rapom a elektronickou hudbou. Ich texty sú väčšinou podané agresívne, čo vzbudzuje pozornosť publika. Ich texty sú zamerané na britskú spoločnosť ovplyvnenú modernými technológiami ale aj konzumerizmom. Takisto sa zameriavajú na kritizovanie vlády, ktorej prejavujú nedôveru a korupciu s ňou spojenú. Ich piesne nadväzujú na politickú situáciu britského parlamentu, ktorá sa od zvolenia Davida Camerona zameriava odchodom Británie z Európskej únie. Aj keď väčšina Britského obyvateľstva volila za zotrvanie Británie v Európskej únii, vo februári 2020 ju opustila.

Aj napriek tomu, že základné prvky punku sa už neobjavujú v súčasnej tvorbe punkovej hudby, jeho ideológia je aj naďalej relevantná. Napriek tomu sú predstavitelia súčasného moderného punku ovplyvnení ideológiou, vytvorenou kapelami sedemdesiatych rokov. V niektorých dobách punk strácal inšpiráciu, ako napríklad v rokoch deväťdesiatych, no politika bude vždy zintenzívňovať rozdielne názory, ktoré reprezentujú punkovú hudbu a podporujú existenciu jeho ideológie.

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9. Annotation

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The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the connection between punk music and politics in the United Kingdom from the 1970s until the present through the analysis of song lyrics. The work focuses on an overview of the political background relative to the development of punk music in certain time periods. It includes the introduction of selected artists followed by the analysis of the song lyrics relevant to the time period. The purpose of the analysis is to present the influence of politics on punk music and its reaction to the political events in works of The Clash, Billy Bragg, and Slaves.

10. Anotace

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Hlavným cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce je dokázať vzťah medzi punkovou hudbou a politikou vo Veľkej Británii od sedemdesiatych rokov po súčasnosť prostredníctvom analýzy textov piesní. Táto práca je zameraná na prehľad politického diania súvisiaceho s rozvojom punkovej hudby v určitých obdobiach. Skladá sa z uvedenia zvolených hudobníkov a následnej analýzy textov piesní relevantných pre dané obdobie. Zámerom tejto analýzy je poukázať na ovplyvnenie punku politikou a jeho reakciu na politické dianie v tvorbe The Clash, Billyho Bragga a Slaves.