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**Assignment:** Compare and contrast the Gothic subculture with other music-related subcultures (i.e. the Hippie Movement, the Punk Movement, rock-and-roll) and discuss its social impact.

The Punk Rock movement of the mid 1970's was the precursor to the Goth Rock movement in the late 1970's. Even though the two music genres were strongly related, they were distinct and remain so even to this day. In fact, Goth is one of the many heirs of Punk. Goth is a sub-genre of the post-punk movement, which was also known as New Wave music. Punk and Goth have coexisted for decades and to the less discerning eye, might look the same. But to the initiated, Punks and Goths were, and continue to be, distinct social movements built upon different music, dress and socio-political ideology.

The primary difference between Punk and Goth is that Punk was anti-establishment, while the Goth movement was more of a personal counter-culture movement. Counter-culture movements create patterns of behavior (norms) that are different from normal mainstream society (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/counterculture>). The classic example of a counter-culture was the hippie movement in the 1960's. Hippies did not seek to overthrow mainstream society, but create an alternative sub-culture within society that rejected pollution, the Vietnam War and the growing culture of greed (<http://users.rowan.edu/~lindman/hippieintro.html>). Anti-establishment movements have a different goal from counter-culture movements. Anti-establishment movements are marked by more direct opposition or even hostility to the government, institutions and conventional culture. As opposed to anti-establishment movements, counter-cultural movements provide an alternative to the current mainstream. (<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/antiestablishment>).

Punk music was anti-establishment from the start, whether the focus was the music establishment or the society at large ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk_rock)). Musically, Punk was a rejection and direct attack against the over-produced arena rock that was dominant in the mid 1970's. New York City was the birthplace of this attack (<http://punkmusic.about.com/od/punk101/a/punkhistory2.htm>). Gone were the long virtuoso guitar solos, fog machines and extravagant light shows. Punk music embraced the DIY mentality, where playing an instrument well (technique), was secondary to playing with inspiration ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk\\_rock#Early\\_history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk_rock#Early_history)). Embracing this spirit were The Ramones, who were pioneers of the Punk Rock movement in NYC. The Ramones started as a band in 1974 (<http://www.ramones.net/biography.html>). Many of The Ramones lyrics were reminiscent

of the late 1950's and early 1960's pop music, albeit with a buzz saw delivery. The Ramones retained a nostalgic flavor, often covering old surfer hits and writing new songs about dating and high school (<http://www.ramones.net/discography.html>). However, closer inspection also reveals lyrics about joining the SLA<sup>1</sup> (Symbionese Liberation Army), illegal drug use<sup>2</sup>, the CIA in Cuba<sup>3</sup>, Vietnam Veterans living on the street<sup>4</sup>, Nazis<sup>5</sup>, Charles Manson<sup>6</sup>, using US military force abroad<sup>7</sup>, effects of DDT<sup>8</sup>, the KKK<sup>9</sup>, and anti-Reagan sentiments<sup>10</sup>. The Ramones recognized the classic rock and roll simple adolescent pleasures of surfing or getting a new girlfriend, but they did not get "good vibrations" from society. The Ramones social commentary on the ills of society was more in the tradition of protest folk music in that they often hid the message with other imagery. An interesting fact is that the genesis of the NYC Punk Rock scene occurred in the same Greenwich Village neighborhood where Bob Dylan and other protest folk musicians had developed a decade earlier ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk\\_rock#Pre-history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk_rock#Pre-history) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich\\_Village](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Village)).

Whereas the Ramones anti-establishment message was sometimes obfuscated and tongue in cheek, the British Punk message was blunt and direct. Punk music developed in the UK shortly after developing in NYC, but did not take stage until the American Punk pioneers paid Britain a visit. There has been a strong tradition of popular music cross pollination between the US and the UK. For example, the Beatles (who hailed from Liverpool England) became the most popular rock band of the 1960's and listed among their most powerful influences the American artists: Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins and the early Motown stars ([http://www.liverpoolcityportal.co.uk/beatles/beatles\\_influences.html](http://www.liverpoolcityportal.co.uk/beatles/beatles_influences.html)). Like the Beatles and other 1960's British rock acts, music from the US was a critical influence for jump starting the British Punk music movement in the 1970's. The US band, The Ramones, released their first album in 1976 and played their first tour dates in the UK in July of that year ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramones#Spearheading\\_punk:\\_1976.E2.80.931977](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramones#Spearheading_punk:_1976.E2.80.931977)). UK Punk pioneers (The Clash and The Sex Pistols) were schooled by the Ramones in the summer of 1976 and the UK Punk scene began to galvanize shortly after The Ramones performances ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramones#Spearheading\\_punk:\\_1976.E2.80.931977](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramones#Spearheading_punk:_1976.E2.80.931977)).

Once the UK Punk scene took off, the movement was not quite so idealistic and its anti-establishment sentiments went well beyond the overthrow of 1950's social conventions. The UK was experiencing a post-industrial and post-colonial economic hangover with stagflation and 14 percent unemployment (Findley and Rothney, p. 301). With high unemployment and little chance for social mobility, the UK punk movement was

decidedly much more nihilistic and confrontational than the initial US Punk scene. The long entrenched British ruling class and monarchy became the easy target of this anti-establishment movement (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-establishment>). The attacks on both the British and US establishments were clearly evident in the Punk lyrics of the time. Examples include: “God save the Queen, she ain’t no human being<sup>11</sup>”; “Anarchy for the UK<sup>12</sup>”; “I was always waiting for the communist call<sup>13</sup>”; “Kick you in the head when you go down to kneel, I prey, you pray to your God<sup>14</sup>”; “You can crush us, you can bruise us, but you will have to answer to the guns of Brixton<sup>15</sup>”; “I’m so bored with the USA<sup>16</sup>”; “I wanna riot<sup>17</sup>”; “Those killing clowns, the blood money men, are shooting those Washington bullets again<sup>18</sup>”. All of these lyrics either attach the establishment directly or go after a symbol of the establishment. The focus of Punk is to critique and change society.

However, social movements have a tendency to lose momentum over time. All social movements have a life cycle that includes a decline, which is usually attributed to success, failure, repression or cooptation (Tilly, Charles. 1978. From Mobilization to Revolution. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1978). Pop movements and the Punk music scene was no exception to this cycle of increasing popularity that reached an apex and then declined in popularity. The literature and on-line resources acknowledge the next generations of Punk musicians and the post-Punk movements, but do not address why the initial Punk movement declined ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk_rock)). From the mid-1970’s to the late 1970’s, the Punk message was to change the establishment. However, the establishment entrenched itself further during this time. In the US, Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980 and he pushed a conservative agenda (Findley and Rothney, p. 302-305). In the UK, Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979 with the same anti-guarantor state, conservative pro-establishment message (Findley and Rothney, p. 300-301 and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Thatcher](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_Thatcher)). These two triumphs of conservatism (Reagan and Thatcher) were not what the Punk movement advocated. Considering the failure of the Punk message, the Punk movement decline is not surprising. The establishment was not changing in the fashion of the Punk music message. In fact, both the UK and the US were going the opposite direction.

Social movements can spawn new movements as they decline. One response to the failing Punk message was to intensify. In 1979, a Hardcore Punk scene developed in Southern California ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk_rock) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hardcore\\_punk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hardcore_punk)). The Clash sang, “I want a riot”. Los Angeles bands like Black Flag, Fear, The Dead Kennedys and The Circle Jerks started a riot (literally!) and even a neo- Nazi Punk movement developed ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi\\_punk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_punk)). In contrast to this, some

groups turned away from changing institutions and looked within. An individual may not be able to change the establishment, but they can change their music, dress and attitudes. As the Punk scene waned, Punk split into sub-groups (schisms) and reinvented itself with many new twists and names. One split was the hardcore movement that focused on violent social change. Another split was a "New Wave", which focused on changing oneself.

The term New Wave was first used in 1977 to describe a new British post-Punk band called Siouxsie and the Banshees (<http://books.google.com/books?id=ZHP-r9-eqdAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=thompson,Dave.+Alternative+Rock.&client=firefox-a&cd=1#v=onepage&q&f=false>). New Wave or (post-Punk) had many flavors (Synthpop, New Romantics, Ska, Rockabilly) and one of the most influential and longest lasting sub-genres was Goth (<http://bestuff.com/stuff/new-wave>). Goth has also been referred to as the "Dark Wave" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark\\_Wave](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dark_Wave)).

As Gothic Rock split from Punk Rock, the focus shifted from a confrontational anti-establishment focus to a self introspective counter-culture movement. Goth altered the Punk social commentary to more of an individualistic and introspective message

(<http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/his135/Events/seanweb/bauhaus78.html>) and ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_rock)). The Goth movement embraced romantic fashion and literature, as well as religious symbolism. The use of religious symbolism and supernatural mysticism separates Goth from Punk ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_rock)). Religion is generally dismissed as institutional control and mocked by the Punk genre (see Sex Pistols lyrics associated with note 14). Goth music celebrates religious symbols and icons ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_rock)). Gothic horror writing was also naturally incorporated into the movements' culture ([http://music.lovetoknow.com/Goth\\_Music](http://music.lovetoknow.com/Goth_Music)). Goth shifted the musical sound along with the message. Goth distinguished the music by adding keyboards and a slower dark sound. The Goth sound has been described as "foreboding, sorrowful, often epic soundscapes" (<http://www.allmusic.com/explore/style/d387>).

Bauhaus has been called the "Godfathers" of Goth (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=87888546>). Bauhaus released "Bela Lugosi's Dead" in 1979 and that is generally accepted as the formal beginning of the Goth music genre (<http://www.allmusic.com/explore/style/d387>). Other bands in 1979 and 1980 were also labeled gothic and fit within the Goth counter-culture of romanticism and introspection. The original New Wave band, Siouxsie and the Banshees and The Cure embraced the Goth sound, message and image

(<http://www.allmusic.com/explore/style/d387>). The Joy Division, Sisters of Mercy and Gene Loves Jezebel can also be seen as early adopters of the Goth genre ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_rock) and <http://www.darkgrave.com/>).

Gothic lyrics by Bauhaus well illustrate the genre's introspective and self-redemptive message: "Assist me to walk away in sin, Where is the string that Theseus laid, Find me out this labyrinth place<sup>19</sup>"; the teacher was feared, your parents too, then you became, the fear of you, look to yourself, climb over the wall, and see behind, that you're not so small<sup>20</sup>". In both of these songs, change is sought within the individual, rather than within institutions as was with the Punk message. Goth wants the follower to change themselves and that in turn will change the world. Other Goth band lyrics that demonstrate the gothic message include Siouxsie and the Banshees, New Order and The Cure: "Keep your heart alive with a song from inside, Even though we're all alone, We are never on our own when we're singing<sup>21</sup>"; Cast me out and save your soul, from madness rhyme and reason<sup>22</sup>; I don't know if I told you, but I'm seeking sanctuary<sup>23</sup>; You can walk, or you can run, You don't have to be someone<sup>24</sup>"; "got myself a change of life, got myself a change of style, got myself a new direction, got myself a reason why..., I just fell right out of my face one day, and I took it as a sign from god<sup>25</sup>". None of these lyrics degrade politicians, call for riots or the violent overthrow of governments as did the anti-establishment songs. The counter-culture Goth message of these lyrics was personal redemption. The message in these Goth lyrics was self-acceptance and self-help. The counter-culture message was unified through music, fashion and romantic symbolism.

To paraphrase Mark Twain, the rumor of Goth's death has been greatly exaggerated. There is a music channel fully dedicated to Goth music on the internet (<http://www.live365.com/index.live>). There are currently numerous websites dedicated to Goth (many of which were cited). Coincidentally, on April 1, 2011, Peter Murphy (the former lead singer of Bauhaus) performed live at the State Theater in Falls Church, Virginia. Two days later, the seminal Goth band Gene Loves Jezebel played in Springfield, Virginia at Jaxx on April 3, 2011 (Washington Post, Weekend Section, p. 5). Three new Goth bands are also playing in the Washington Metropolitan area over the next month (Washington Post, Weekend Section, p. 5). The Goth music movement has also melded with the "Industrial" music movement, which shares numerous characteristics and is often difficult to distinguish ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial\\_music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_music)).

In summary, The Punk Rock music movement of the mid 1970's was an anti-establishment movement. Punk Rock did create changes with the musical establishment, but failed to change the social establishment at-large

in both the US and UK. The failure of the anti-establishment message to affect changes in society created scissions within the Punk movement that eventually spawned new musical movements. One of the most long lasting and distinct break away movements was Goth Rock or the Dark Wave. Goth was build upon music, dress and socio-political ideology that was different from Punk. Goth was a counter-culture message of personal redemption and change. In the Punk lexicon, the individual must change society, in order to cure society's ills. For Goth, change oneself, and then society will follow.

#### ARTIST, LYRIC AND ALBUM NOTES:

##### RAMONES

<http://www.ramones.net/lyrics.html>

- 1) See lyrics "Judy is a Punk", The Ramones
- 2) See lyrics "Now I want to sniff some glue", The Ramones
- 3) See lyrics "Havana Affair ", The Ramones
- 4) See lyrics "53<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>", The Ramones
- 5) See lyrics "Today your love, tomorrow the world", The Ramones
- 6) See lyrics "Glad to see you go", Leave Home
- 7) See lyrics "Commando", Leave Home
- 8) See lyrics "Teenage Lobotomy", Rocket to Russia
- 9) See lyrics "The KKK took my baby away", Pleasant Dreams
- 10) See lyrics "My brain is hanging upside down - Bonzo goes to Bitburg", Animal Boy

##### SEX PISTOLS

<http://www.songlyrics.com/sex-pistols/>

- 11) See lyrics "God save the Queen", Never Mind The Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols
- 12) See lyrics "Anarchy for the UK", Never Mind The Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols
- 13) See lyrics "Holiday in the Sun", Never Mind The Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols
- 14) See lyrics "No Feelings", Never Mind The Bollocks Here's the Sex Pistols

##### THE CLASH

<http://www.metrolyrics.com/> & <http://www.theclashonline.com/music/>

- 15) See lyrics "Guns of Brixton", London Calling
- 16) See lyrics "I'm so bored with the USA", The Clash
- 17) See lyrics "White Riot", The Clash
- 18) See lyrics "Washington Bullets", Sandinista

#### BAUHAUS

<http://www.elyrics.net/read/b/bauhaus-lyrics/>

- 19) See lyrics "In the Flat Fields", In the Flat Field
- 20) See lyrics "In Fear of Fear", Mask

#### SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES

<http://www.elyrics.net/read/s/siouxsie-&-the-banshees-lyrics/>

- 21) See lyrics "Israel", Nocturne
- 22) See lyrics "Fall from Grace", The Rapture

#### NEW ORDER

<http://www.elyrics.net/read/n/new-order-lyrics/>

- 23) See lyrics "60 miles an hour", Get Ready
- 24) See lyrics "State of the Nation", Brotherhood

#### THE CURE

<http://www.elyrics.net/read/c/cure-lyrics/>

- 25) See lyrics "A sign from God", Join the Dots