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Youth Culture of the Nineties and their effect on the Fashion Industry

By

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I am primarily assessing the effects of two of the 90's cultures, the New Age Travellers and the Ravers upon the world of fashion. In the last ten years the grounds upon which this system operated have undergone serious re adjustments. Coined the "Bubble Up" the clothes of High Street fashion shows are watered down versions of street style designs largely created by today's alternative cultures.

In Chapter One I address the issue of recycling before World War 2. In the light of the advent of mass consumption I am concerned with the effects mass consumption has had on the growth of youth cultures in the last 40 years, providing the basis in which alternative styles and a new wave of recycling have originated. Because I am dealing with the concept of youth cultures I also address the theory of youth cultures as seen by Dick Hebdige in "Subculture and the meaning of style" (1976). In the 1980's Hebdige and other theorists felt that they had failed to fully comprehend the issue of what they termed subcultures.

In Chapter two I take a look at the culture of the New Age Travellers in the 90's. From the assumptions made by Hebdige and Angela McRobbie in the 80's and 90's I will consider the cultures in the context of youth or alternative cultures, as opposed to "sub cultures". Addressing the growth of their fashion styles and the "Bubble up theory", Ted Polehmus in his book "Street Style" (1994) examines the new structure of the fashion system whereby

designs in the High Street no longer dictate styles for the mass market but use "Street Style" for their sources. There has been a restructuring in the cycle of fashion industry originality, due to the effect, of mass production since the 50's. Through discussion and illustration, I present the evidence to back up this new "Bubble Up" theory.

In Chapter 3 I look at the culture of the Ravers. Born in the same context as the New Age Travellers, I address the issue of how "Ravers" have reacted to the pressures of the 90's in comparison to the New Age Travellers. In this chapter I take an in depth look at this culture and its use of the drug "Ecstasy". Essential to understanding the development of "Rave Fashion", "Ecstasy" and its effects, is the induced atmosphere within which the culture has grown. As with the New Age Travellers I will present illustrative evidence in order to examine the "Bubble Up" theory of the "Rave" style into High Street fashion and then back down into mass consumption.

In Chapter 4 I take a look at the effects of both of the cultures on the fashion industry as a whole: how they have affected designers, people and fabrics. In this chapter I introduce a number of designers who, influenced by High Street Fashion and to a certain extent the two cultures, have incorporated these influences into their body of work.

In my conclusions I point out the ironies of the fashion system since the 1950's and the advent of mass production. In this chapter I allude to an apparent symbiosis between mass production, High Street fashion, rag markets and youth cultures.

CHAPTER 1

In this chapter I will address the inventiveness of recycling in pre 1945 style, made obsolete by the growth of capitalism and the ideology of mass consumerism in the 1950's. This also saw the development of the "trickle down" theory of High Street designs into mainstream designs, being redesigned in an attempt to counter act the above with a "trickle across".

Although this resulted in the concept of recycling being unnecessary, it also indirectly created a surplus of garments which later became fundamental in the growth of second hand ragmarkets and sub cultural styles.

Before 1945 people used to recycle garments out of necessity. Then, despite some developments in industrial machines in the way of button holes and blind stitching machines, the fashion industry was still very much a skilled labour craft. Availability of garments was dictated by the "trade of the tailor". Some "ready to wear" clothes were available but indicated a lower class status. Garments were made to measure and to last; clothes were not discarded once out grown but re used.

When a garment was bought, usually for the eldest in a family it invariably was handed down to the next child and so on. When it eventually out lived its wearable ability, it was re used in a number of ways. Patch work quilts were made from old remnants of clothes,

bed sheets, and curtains. Rag-rugs were made when patches were too small to use, simply by weaving strips together that were made from old clothes as well.

When garments could not afford to be cut a method known as "to turn a garment" was used. This involved picking up every stitch and using the reverse side of the fabric. Shoes went through the same hand-down process as the clothes whether they fitted or not.

Fabric was also recycled. When scraps were of no use they would be sorted into piles and then soaked in water mashed into a pulp and turned into a felt material known as shoddy. From this the term "shoddy appearance" originated because the fabric was generally used by the lower classes. Another innovation in regard to re use was with bed sheets. When they were worn in the centre, the sheet would be cut up, the centre and the two outer edges would be sewn together to create a new un-worn centre.

The reason why I make a point of this recycling is because today in the 1990's the New Age Travellers have adopted the same attitude to their life styles.

But, after World War 2, the need for recycling was made redundant. With it the professions of travelling weavers and tailors who used to move around the country staying a few days at a time in houses recycling garments for families became obsolete as well.

The 1950's in Europe saw the growth of mass marketing. This was to change the face of fashion forever and invariably resulted in the fashion system we have today. It also

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resulted in the two areas I am most pre occupied with in this thesis, the growth of “alternative” fashion styles in the way of youth cultures and the “bubble up trickle down” theory.

THE 1950's & POST WAR MASS CONSUMERISM

The 1950's represent an indiscriminate drive on behalf of capitalists to create a “modern” market capable of consuming mass produced commodities. To do this fashion designers saw that the lower class women, with an increase in income, had greater disposable spending powers. Through mass-media, an education of the lower class took place with advertisements and weekly magazines on how to be stylish. The attempt was to create a classless consumption market whereby everyone irrespective of class would be satisfied. In a sense it was as Angela Partington states the “Manipulation of the Consumer” (Partington *Chic Thrills* pp. 147). No longer dictated by the trade of the tailor, the 1950's witnessed a boom in the availability of garments on a mass produced level. The result was the development of the “throw-a-way society” based on the theory of “obsolescence” where by clothes were no longer bought to be worn forever. Deployed by leisure based industries, the policy was to make profits for the capitalist system. In an attempt to create a market that could be satisfied without the necessity of a “trickle down”, (Partington *Chic Thrills* pp 150) the 50's fashion tried to create a “trickle across” (Partington *Chic Thrills* pp 150) to cater for mass production on a wider level.

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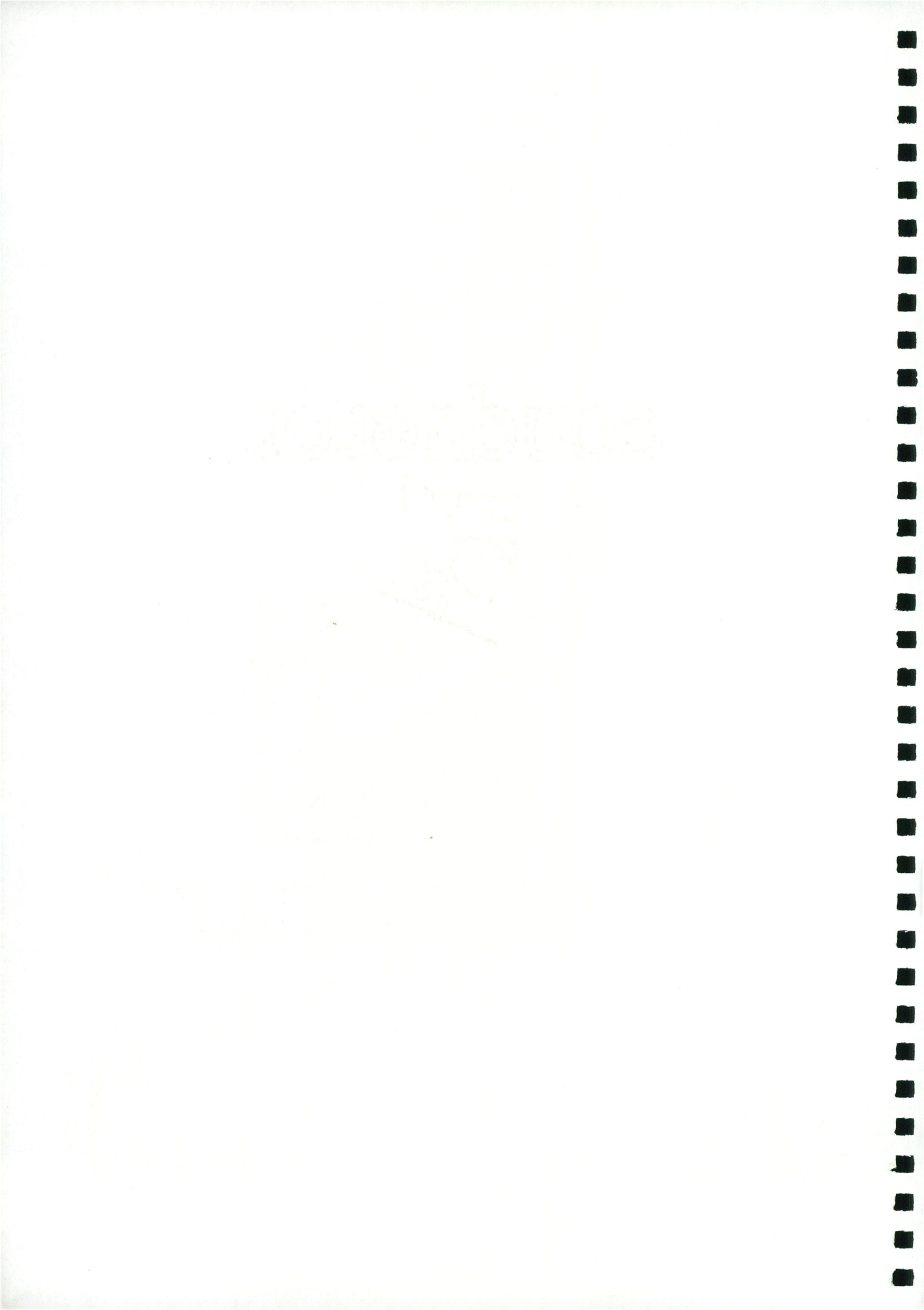
The trickle down was based on a class system that was in evidence well before the war. It deals with the notion of popular fashion in the form of mass consumption. The theory suggests that fashion inventiveness starts with the higher classes, and over a period of time, works its way down through the socio-economic class structure to the lower class providing a watered down cheap version of the original. This process led to the development of the fashion cycle. By the time consumer products became available to the lower class, the high class would be adopting another new style and so the knock on affect of the fashion system thrived.

What is very interesting about this system, is that in the 1990's the trickle down has been replaced by the "bubble up-trickle down". A complete reversal has taken place with innovation starting on the street, not on the catwalk.

In deploying the policy of "trickle across", which began to emerge in the 1950's, the fashion industry was attempting to diffuse the class emulation to higher status by creating equal commodity amounts for each class, turning class structure into one big market. What is important to note here is "simultaneous adoption does not mean identical design", (Angela Partington). Establishing the trickle across process, leisure industries re invented the system of seasonal dressing thereby establishing a mass market with the desire to consume. They also ensured that a variety of designs were always available for an ever increasing growth in demand choice. Mass media was also essential because through it the

chosen market segments could be informed of what styles should or should not be in fashion. Advertisements appeared with good taste in cooking beside good style in clothes. Although the trickle across was successful in creating greater profits for companies, instead of breaking old class structures in fashion, it resolved in the creation of new ones. For instance, because of the development in synthetic rayon, these became popular amongst the lower class due to price, colour and disposability. There was a move on behalf of the higher class to preserve natural fabrics, cotton and wool, which were originally lower and middle class fabrics. New connotations of class became evident as a result of mass production, retail, fabric, style and label, which are still prevalent in today's fashion industry.

This new alignment in the fashion world on behalf of the 1950's capitalists and designers resulted in the growth of surplus mountains of garments. As the dictators of the fashion industry changed fashionable garments season by season clothes were simply discarded. This New Age of obsolescence, despite eradicating the recycling necessity of the pre 1945 industry, laid the foundations from which sprung the second hand markets of the 1960's, 70's 80's and 1990's. Vital for the growth of pre 1990's "youth cultures styles", rag markets have been at the forefront in creating today's "alternative styles", providing young adolescents with a wide variety of styles to choose from with which to stand out from the norm by way of the mainstream. Because markets have played such an important role they have also indirectly had a part to play in the development of the "bubble up" process.



Without the 1950's policies of mass marketing and conspicuous consumption, the throw-away society would never have come into being and neither would the styles that have gone into shaping today's alternative fashion and the indirect affects on the fashion industry. Because these fashion styles are created mainly through youth cultures, it is important to understand the theory behind such cultures.

YOUTH CULTURES

In this study of sub cultural theory and its development, I am going to focus my attention on the work of Dick Hebdige and Angela McRobbie. My reason for doing this lies in their work in relation to "sub cultures" since the 1970's. Both feel their assumptions were in retrospect too tunnel visioned and lacking in an over all complete picture. In the first half of this study, I will be addressing Dick Hebdige's study of the Punks in the 1970's. This is followed by the arguments McRobbie in her present studies feel were over looked. From these points of developments I will extract the basis upon which I will look at the "alternative" life styles of the 1990's.

In his treatment of sub cultures in 1979 Hebdige, through an analysis of styles which emphasises the importance of symbols and signs in clothing, assesses the concepts behind rebellious youth, which he terms "sub cultures". In his assessment, Hebdige tries to close

the gap that had divided previous studies on this subject. This divide centred around the definition of "culture". The meaning of culture had over the decades adopted two different meanings. On one hand "Culture" as understood by Arnold (1868) went back to the past and looked upon "Culture" as a true appreciation of the arts, literature, music, opera. On the other hand a notion of culture as understood by Raymond Williams looked towards the future and referred to "a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour".

In Williams's explanation the bias towards the necessity for education in the arts was also coupled with an necessity for an appreciation of ordinary behaviour. By looking at the style of a sub culture, i.e. with the "Punks" the bleached hair, the clothes ripped and dirty, Hebdige, following on from Williams, attempts to extract what he calls the "graffiti" of the "sub culture". The reason why he calls sub-cultural style graffiti is because it is only understood by the sub culture. Through this study Hebdige realised the importance of "semiotics". Semiotics deals with the meaning, message or content of any work of art, design, or popular culture. In this case the style of the Punk culture, dressed in all its decadence, gives out a sign which can be read as containing a number of meanings.

To understand the reason why the sub culture came into being Hebdige gives us an explanation of the atmosphere of London in the summer of 1976. For him the connection between the environment and its economics play a huge part in shaping the "direction" a sub culture is going to adopt. By direction, I mean the "view, attitude, style of any sub

culture". It is important for us, the reader to understand the economics and atmosphere of London at the time as well because it gives us an understanding of the context in which Hebdige is basing his study.

The summer of 1976 was much welcomed in England because it was hot. Poor economy, rising unemployment and riots between miners and the police painted quite a bleak atmosphere. The "Sun" as Hebdige remarks was "like a ray of hope in a time of no hope". But, by August the much welcomed sun had become a "drought": foundations in houses were cracking. Combined with the rising unemployment, crumbling economy and depression, in an Anarchic state of unrest, the "Punk" phenomena was born.

To explain why "Punk" was a "sub culture", it is important to understand the difference between the dominant and the subversive. In this case it was the Punks versus authority. Hebdige makes the point that although the Punk movement was a reaction politically motivated by disgust for all law, it did not actually engage in political action but instead subversion was "dramatised" in their clothes.

To stress the power of the images that "Punk" adopted into their outward expression of style, Hebdige compares Punk and its style to the Book "The Thief's Journal". In the book Genet was found by the police to have a jar of Vaseline in his possession and is immediately scorned by the police. The jar of Vaseline is taken by Genet from its original context and in its new context it became a symbol of "homosexuality". In the same way, the

Punks adoption of the safety pin, the toilet chain, the bin liner, bondage gear and face masks etc., gives secret meaning to ordinary items which become show pieces of outward disgust.

Hebdige explains this form of expression and the method involved as a "Bricollage" and compares it to the Dada and Surrealist art movements where their styles represented chaos and the collage method of "cutting up" is seen as destructive. Through their Bricollage the "Punks" used "subjects borrowed from the most sordid of context" (Hebdige pp 107), which juxtaposed in a new discourse, constituted a different message. The safety pin, lavatory chains, cheap trashy P.V.C fabrics long discarded by previous fashion, brings us back to the influence that the 1950's had on providing future sub-cultures with a choice of styles.

Hebdige points out in reference to the Punks, that even their use of the Swastika as a symbol of "Fascism" was taken from its original context and worn because of its then lack of meaning in their culture.

"Punk signified chaos in every sense". The clothes they wore
"swore" "lacing obscenities" into record notes, publicity
events and songs "Clothed in chaos they produced noise in
the calm orchestrated crisis of 1970." (Hebdige pp 114)

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Hebdige points out that in regard to the “Punk” movement, despite their outwardly chaotic visible style, they still had an infrastructure. This is explained through the idea of Homology, first applied by Paul Willis (1978) in his study of Subcultures to describe the

...“Fit between the values and life styles of a group, its objective experience and the musical forms it uses to express its facial concerns.”... (Hebdige pp 113)

Between the symbols produced and the life styles lived there was an “order” to make the sub cultures successful, in the case of the Punks it was “ordered chaos”....

Hebdige saw the relationship between the “trashy cut up clothes, and spiky hair, the pogo and amphetamines, the spitting, the vomiting, the format of fanzines, the poses and the soulless frantically driven music”, as consistent with the Homology theory. Their life styles were one with their fashion styles.

The end of the “sub culture and its styles” came for Hebdige through the mainstream mass market, mass media. Through “diffusion” into a sellable commodity, the rawness and original incentive of any sub culture is dissolved.

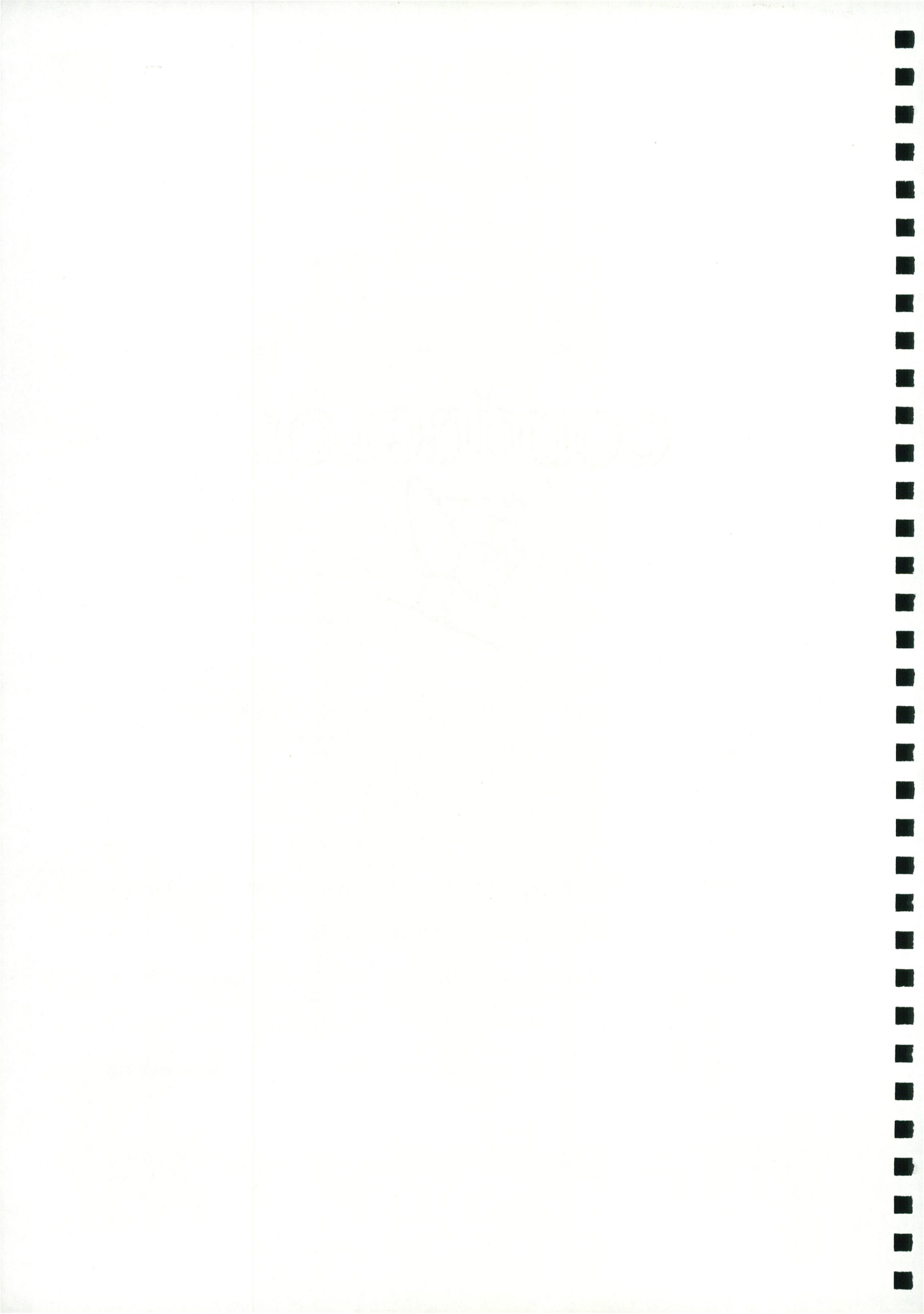
“ the diffusion of youth styles from sub cultures to the fashion market.....
versions of artisan capitalism.....
situate the dialect of commercial manipulation....” (Clarke, pp. 95)

The media played a huge role in the growth of bias and opinions which the sub culture and the dominant power, i.e. police etc., sometimes agreed with. By manipulation of the media, High Street fashion eventually gained control over the sub cultures and through continuous representation normalised the issue, diffused it into the realms of normality.

The Punk movement born in a time of chaos, represented its political distaste through clothes in a raw original manner. In Hebdige's view the combination of Semiotics, Bricollage and Homology, which he saw as fundamental to the analysis of subcultures, was by 1977 available through "mail order" and in September 1977 *Cosmopolitan* ran a copy of a collection by Zandra Rhodes which was influenced by Punk. In Hebdige's eyes this is the end of the pure "sub culture". No longer used as its original intention of "making a statement", the sub cultural style becomes a fashion statement.

This manipulation also points to one of the first post war build ups to the catwalk which in Chapter 3 and 4, I will be explaining as the norm in the 90's.

Hebdige's study of the Punk movement centred on the meaning of style. The way in which the clothes ripped and covered in collage writing is a sign of the chaos of the 70's. From the images created and adopted he derived an understanding of sub cultures as a "whole" including Skins, Mods, Hippies etc. In his view the diffusion of the sub culture back into mainstream fashion and media was the moment when a sub culture loses its footing in the struggle for identity from everything else. Through the very opposing dominant force



which sub cultures strived to dislocate themselves from, Commercialised and re conditioned, their “sting” came in the form of mainstream consumerism.

Today, though, Hebdige and others such as Angela McRobbie, who studied the role girls played in 1970's sub cultures, have acknowledged the fact they concentrated too much on one side of the story. Hebdige strived to find the “pure essence of sub culture” through formulation of style with “Bricollage”. McRobbie concentrated on the role of females marginalised within sub cultures. In the late 1980's and early 1990's the appreciation of the “hidden economy” within all sub cultures undermined the grounds upon which a sub culture is justified, being something smaller, an “otherness” within the constraints of something greater. When the “hidden economy” (McRobbie pp. 175) is accepted as an integral part in the growth and essence of what was considered a sub culture, it opens up a whole new concept worthy of discussion as no longer the victim of commercial consumption and diffusion the Punks and other alternative groups, skins, Mods, and today's New Age Travellers actually manipulate the mass market instead of being manipulated themselves.

In my study of sub cultures, I am going to, as Hebdige did with the Punks of 1970, assess the environment with in which the New Age Travellers and the “Ravers” have emerged. In the same way Punks came into being in a time of “unrest” which they dramatised in their clothing, I will assess the issues dramatised by the 1990's sub cultures if any at all. In doing this I will look at their life styles in relation to the “resistance” as McRobbie suggested at

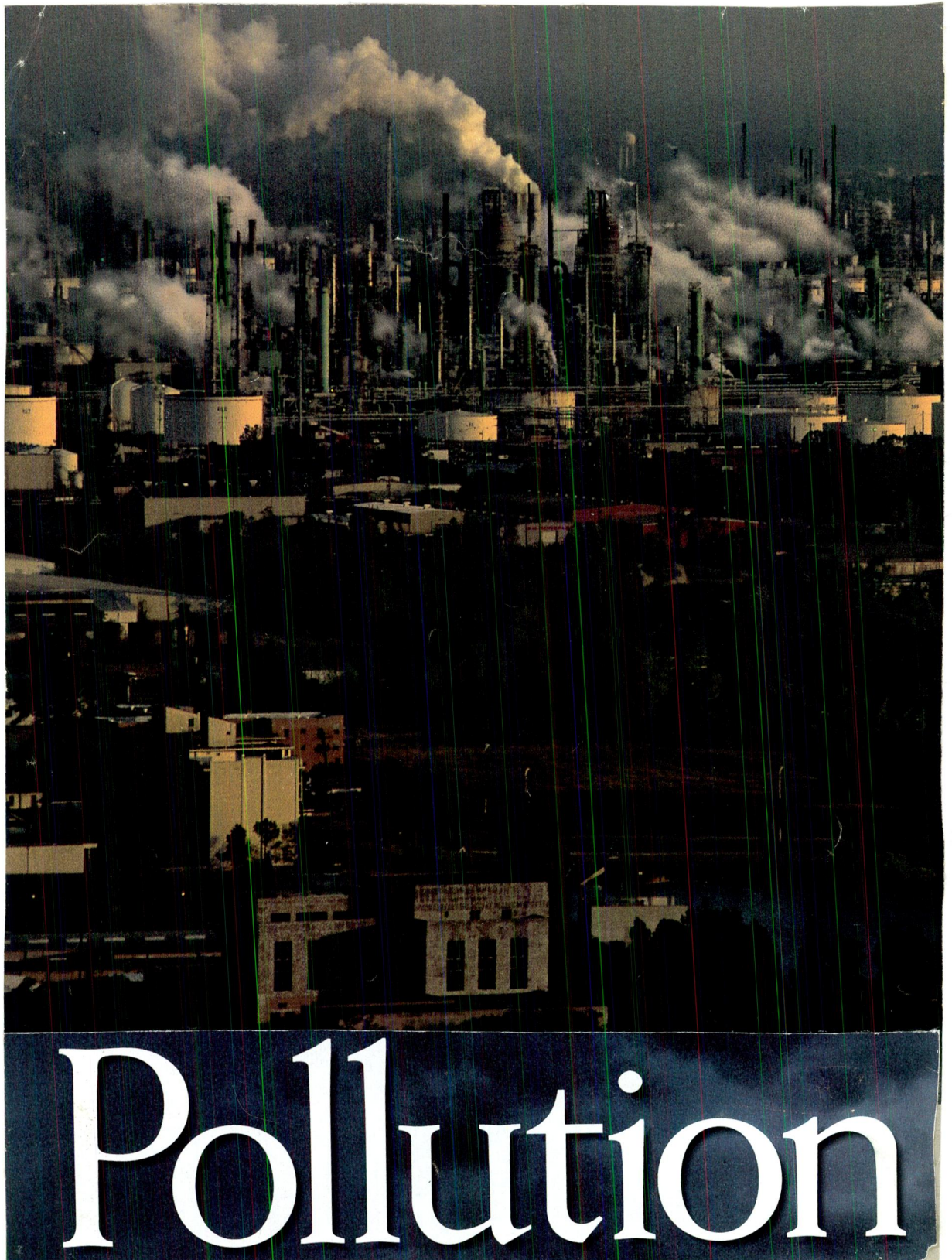
the level of mundanity - choosing to live your life in a certain way. In light of the cultural studies acknowledgement of commercial consumerism as an aid to youth cultures as opposed to a threat, I will assess the infrastructure of the fashion styles of each. In doing so I will explain and develop the theory of the "trickle down" in the fashion system and its progression into a "bubble up/trickle down". I will also be assessing the continuing importance of the rag market in relation to both of the sub cultures.

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter I will assess a youth culture of the 1990's the New Age Travellers. As Hebdige did for his study of the Punk culture of the 1970's, I am firstly going to address the atmosphere within which this youth culture has originated. In doing so I will also be developing and giving examples of the "bubble up trickle down" theory, (*Polehmus, Street Style*). I will also be addressing a question Angela McRobbie raises: "How young people, male and female, experience the society around them and how they in turn express this experience ?" In light of the realisation that 1970 sub culture theory "failed to pay little attention to the selling of a subculture", as a youth culture of the 1990's, I will be taking a look at the life styles of the people involved, their aims and philosophies.

As with the birth of the Punks in an atmosphere of uncertainty there are many comparisons with the birth of the New Age Travellers in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The dominant culture has found itself as the subject of environment changes in the last ten years, namely Pollution. In the wake of the industrialised era through development of mass produced commodities and waste, pollution which accumulated over the years has begun to take its toll on the environment (Plate 1). The onslaught of pollution awareness sparked the same dooms day fear evident in the summer of 1976 in London: polar ice-caps melting, coastal areas beginning to sink, smog, holes in the ozone layer, cancer on the increase and the end

Plate 1 Pollution and Mass Production



Pollution

conductor

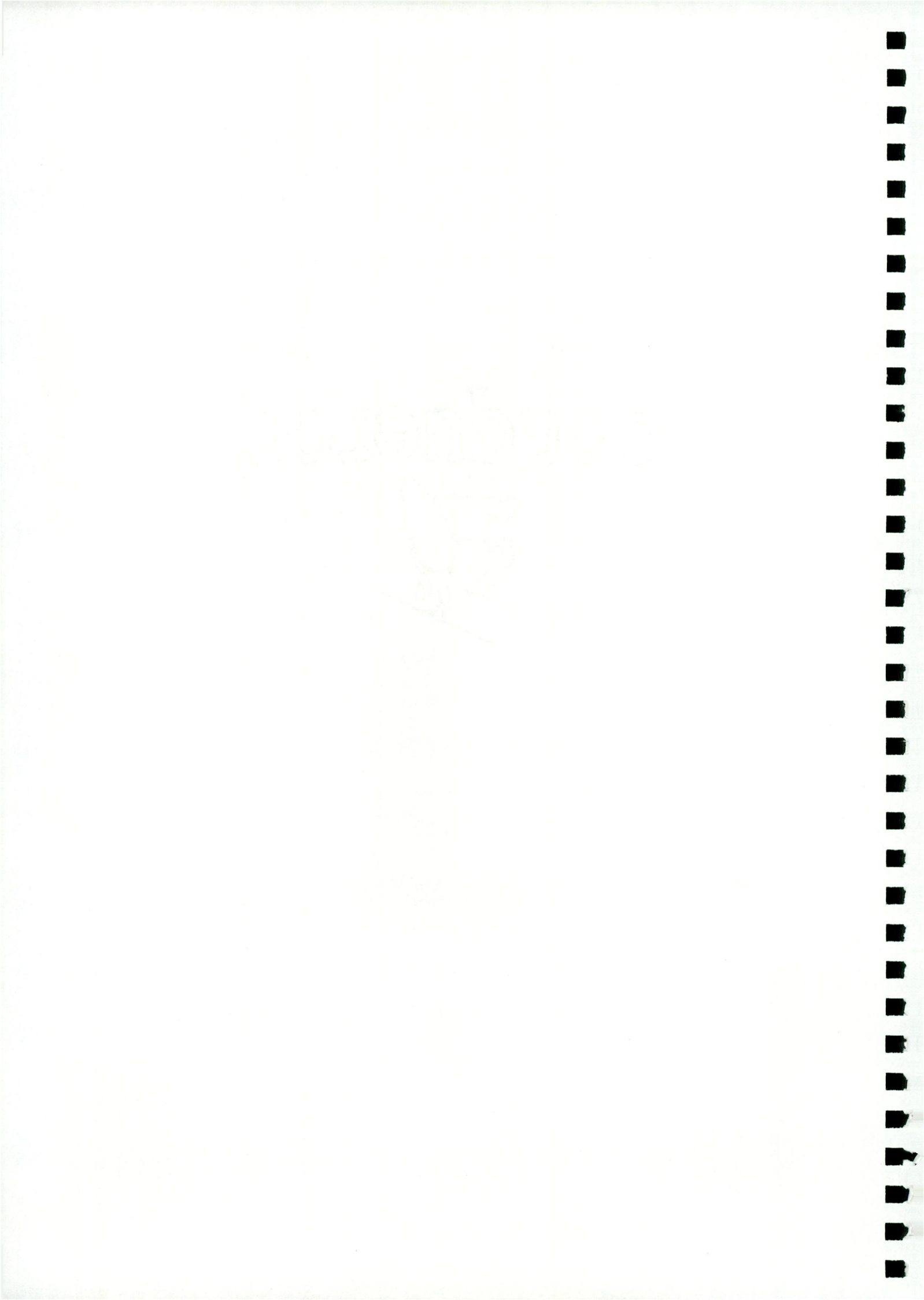
1877

1878

of civilisation due to man's misuse of nature. Predictions of increasing world temperatures and tidal floods echoes the cracking foundations of the houses in London in 1976. An atmosphere of unrest coupled with rising unemployment, increasing violence and the threat of an Aids epidemic symbolised a dominant world of capitalism rotting from the inside out. In the pandemonium of the doom and gloom the "New Age Travellers" were born. Born it would seem from the same womb as the Punks, this culture was not to dramatise the sordid mess of the 1990's as the Punks did in the 1970's. Instead, their style dramatises what McRobbie refers to in terms of "passive resistance": "the choice of living a separate life", in opposition to life within the norms of capital enterprise.

Dedicated to saving the planet through a retreat from the dominant world, as a youth culture the New Age Travellers are composed of many sub groups all dedicated towards environmental goals Green Peace, ECO Warriors, Mutoid Waste Company, Rainbow tribe, Spiral tribe are but a few outlets for this growing culture intent on "going back to go forward" (*Evening Herald*, January 12th 1995). The New Age Travellers reject all that is based around conspicuous consumption, choosing to live a life that is purely self sufficient.

Earlier in this thesis, I introduced the concept of recycling prior to World War Two, which was made unnecessary by the advent 1950's consumerism. Today as a result of the force that had eradicated it, "recycling" as a chosen necessity is being given new status in the life styles of the New Age Travellers. The inventiveness prior to 1945 is being intentionally resurrected as an alternative to obsolescence. The irony once again of the 1950's is that not



only providing the source from which youth cultures create alternative fashions from rag markets, it also in the 1990's has resulted in the recycling of "recycling".

New Age Travellers although originating in the mid 1980's have become an established 1990's youth culture, although in light of the growth of this culture "youth" in the sense of young people only make up a small proportion of the culture. Many of its members are well over their "twenty something's" and heading more towards their middle age. As a culture the New Age Travellers are more of a community than a youth movement. They see themselves as "peace seeking rebels" (*Life Magazine*, Feb. '95), dedicated to protecting the environment. Their motive for leaving behind "city life" is to educate and create their own utopia where "greed and waste" are a thing of the past. As with all alternative cultures at the margins of the dominant world, they see that tabloids have, "tainted" any depiction of the culture, labelling them as "anarchists, violent, lawless mob" (*Life Magazine*, Feb. '95), and the true intentions of its members are relatively unknown.

The life they lead to them is seen as the "DIY Life Style"; rules outside of protecting the environment - man, animals, and nature do not exist. Everything they have is re used or recycled in some form. In the same way pre 1945 saw materials stretched to the limits of recycling, in the wake of New Age Travellers, innovations in the re use of materials have once again become a way of life. Rural areas are the preferred environment in which this culture goes to recuperate. In Ireland, Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway, Donegal all have travelling communities.

In Cork one such site was described in the *Evening Herald* as living in “deprived conditions”. But the Travellers themselves see it as a challenge and a better alternative to “rotting on the dole”. Accommodation on this site ranges from cars, vans, wooden huts to the more authentic Benners (Plate 2). This is like a wigwam structure covered by found water proof materials usually tarpaulin from trucks. Heating inside these huts is provided by a pot belly stove in the centre of the floor. Running water is obtained by siphoning fresh water springs. On this particular camp are “shit pits”, the alternative to outdoor toilets. Michael Hobbs (Plate 3) is a long term member of this community. In reference to the “shit pits” he says :-

“You think doing it in a field is disgusting and I think doing it in your home is really disgusting...Shit goes into the ground, you put ashes on it to kill the acid and you have got the best soil. You flush it down the toilet and it goes into the sea.”

More than just wanting to recycle they live “recycle”. It is more a religion to the above, recycle unto others as you'd have them recycle unto you. They are the skip scavengers of the 1990's, the “New Frugalists” (*Irish Independent*, 2/10/94).

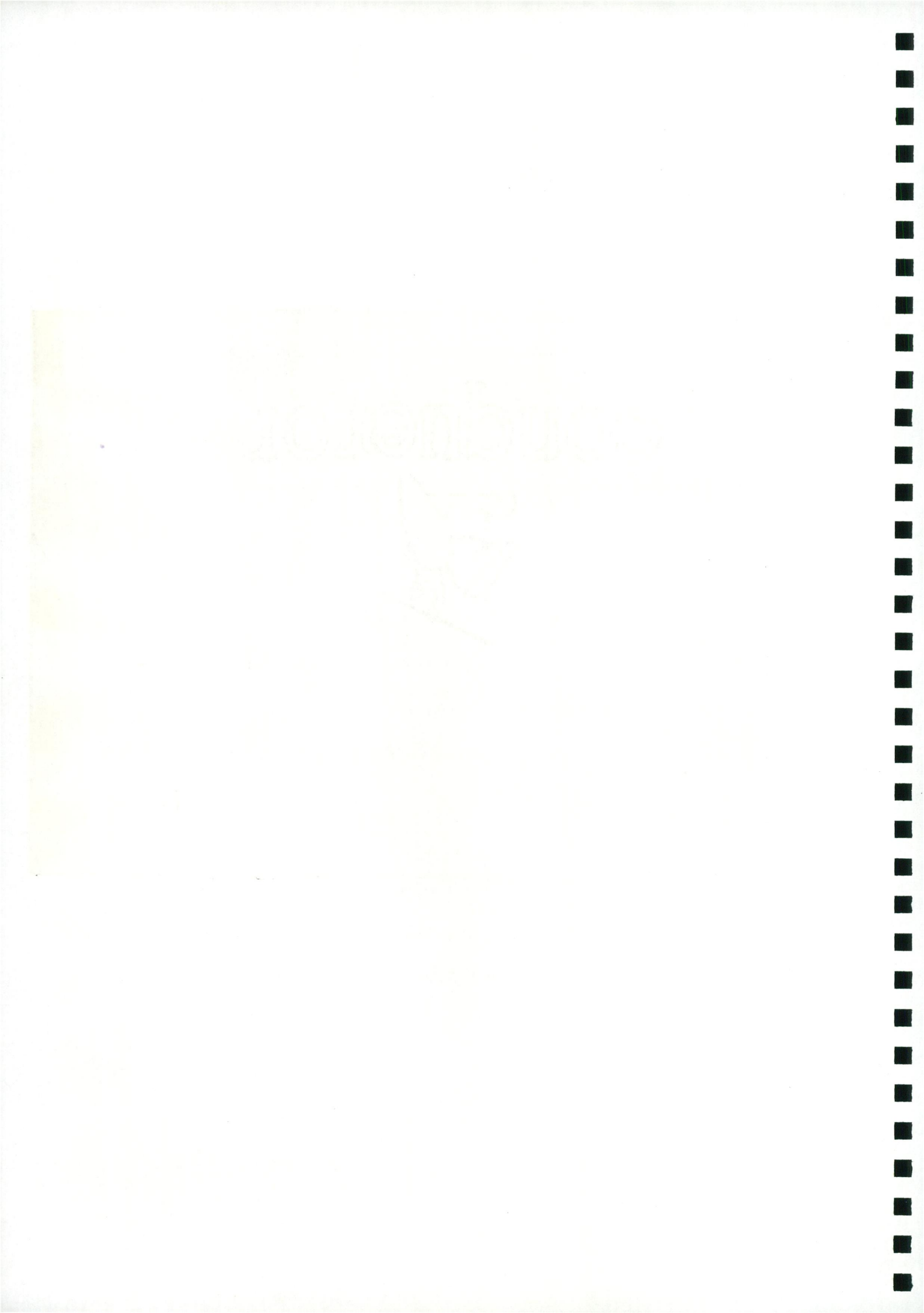


Plate 2 "Benner"



□ One of the New Age huts which dot the hillside.

Plate 3 Michael Hobbs, Long Term New Age Traveller



□ Michael Hobbs with his pyramid greenhouse.

Despite still living off Social Welfare, the absence of a weekly wage is seen more as a positive issue than a negative one: "the precariousness its absence creates serves to underline the foolishness of materialism" (*Life Magazine*, Feb. 95). Cottage industries in weaving, bracelets, rings, wood turning, patch work quilts have sprung up with the New Age Travellers. In reference to McRobbie this is just one of a number of issues not dealt with in sub cultural studies. More than just providing identity and in the case of the Punks "a means to make noise", these cultures offer an education of sorts that equips them with skills otherwise forgotten by the dominant education system.

The Rainbow People (*Life Magazine*, Feb. '95) are another group of New Age Travellers who advocate the preservation of the environment. To get food for the "community", they scavenge from skips and food is gathered from the throw away of vegetable markets. This is an example how the New Age Travellers live their lives not aggressively against the dominant world, but around it as have all sub cultures since the 1950's.

Innovations in recycling involve "making pedal powered washing machines" by combining an old bicycle with the drum of an old front loader (Plate 4). Green houses are made from wood in the shape of triangles covered by plastic. Schools and community centres are also provided by the culture but if a child wishes to go to school advocating formal modern education there is no stopping the child.



Plate 4 Recycled Washing Machine



□ Seren (9½) and Petra show off the pedal-powered washing machine.



Despite being dedicated to “saving the planet”, New Age Travellers also consider festival celebrations an integral part of their life style. Tribal celebrations through music and dance bind the different sub groups together at specific dates in specific places during each Summer and Winter solstice, which are seasonal celebrations. Sites such as New Grange, Stone Henge, and Glastonbury are where New Age Travellers meet in recognition of their existence.

Because of this element of their beliefs many “pseudo New Agers” began to appear. People who do not know if they are travellers, Crusties, Grunge or “Ravers”, join these festivals purely for the party. In relevance to “Grunge” it is important that I clarify some points. “Grunge” originates from Seattle, influenced by bands such as Pearl Jam, Nirvana, etc. The Grunge fashion is associated with a care free attitude, baggy denim jeans, loose shirt and an unkempt scraggy appearance. Because of the similarities with New Age Travellers many fashion magazines and designers credit the Grunge over New Age Travellers in terms of style influence. In Ireland Grunge is more New Age Travellers than American in appearance. Our weather does not allow such loose a style. When I come to describe the bubble up of New Age Traveller style, I will point out how “Grunge” has been wrongly labelled instead of “New Age Travellers”.

Crusties are also mistaken to be New Age Travellers. Representing the city equivalent they do not take a life of abstinence rather they indulge in large amounts of alcohol and plenty of drugs. The brew crew is a part of young “travellers” not New Age. This is where New Age

© 1991



Travellers become mistaken as a drunken lawless mob. The brew crew brew beer, take drugs and in general fall apart due to abuse.

Despite being “peace seeking rebels” with a primary interest in saving the planet, New Age Travellers have invariably become entangled in fights over land ownership, animal celebrations, cruelty to animals etc. Unlike the Punks born in the same circumstances, the New Age Travellers do become involved in political sabotage. Although they do not feel they have “Enemies, only confused friends”, (*Life Magazine*), they can disrupt fox hunts, road building, stop forests being cut down, and glue pad lock gates shut, etc. Freedom is the chosen life of the New Age Traveller, learning to re evaluate ones life and the reality of necessity, luxuries of hot water and electricity are not popular.

The reason why I have given an account of the way the New Age Traveller lives is to comply with the theory of homology as explained. Dress styles and attitude are relative to life styles. Life styles are relative to dress styles and attitude. It is the connection between the dramatisation of Life Style and clothes that are a reflection of each other.

In their style New Age Travellers do not dramatise the struggle and anger they feel but the plausibility of a “free life” where conspicuous consumption is absent. In describing the average looking “New Ager”, I am also describing the source from which the “bubble up” in the fashion world comes from. Their style is pure “Bricollage” and garments from the

last forty years of obsolete styles are used. Two issues mould the New Age look, "recycling and practicality".

Thick woolly jumpers, combat boots for both male and female, thick woolly socks, layers upon layers of clothes, shirts, tee-shirts and scarves. Choice in the way preferences for "colour or cut" have no relevance, style is indiscriminate of "taste". Interviewed in The Evening Herald, Michael Hobbs, (*Evening Herald*, Jan 12th 1995) a long term New Age Traveller, wears clothes that have been knitted on the site, or brought from a second hand stall. The practicality of the garments is very evident. The heavy dirty looking over coat provides the perfect cover required for living in the country side in Winter. The thick chunky woolly jumper synonymous with this style is also there. Even the manner in which Michael Hobbs has closed his coat is an example of how life style comes through into style. Instead of using a belt he uses a found "neck tie". The rejection of capitalism and the reverse of obsolescence pushes the New Ager to re-use all he can. The comparisons to pre-war are obvious. The style of hair is another symbol reflective of the New Age Travellers. The unkempt, untidy, dirty look is not a representation of how unhygienic he is, but of his disregard for the necessities of appearance. The New Age look is as far removed from the business look as is possible. In the same way Punks took items of clothing long discarded by the quality end of fashion/so too do the New Agers. But the style is more than just practicality, when the Punks "wore" the "Swastika" it was completely out of context. The coat Michael Hobbs wears as a New Age Traveller is also brought out of context, portraying more than just a look, but a parody of class appearance. This coat probably

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, appearing as a faint, mirrored impression.

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, appearing as a faint, mirrored impression.

entered the fashion world as a High Street design and yet, here it is on a New Age Traveller in a field. Boots are the item that symbolise more than any other the New Age Traveller, old Army boots bought second hand are worn by all. The reality of living in the country side makes them a practical necessity.

On women these boots also represent the death of "good taste" inherent to the conditioning of women to be stylish. The "classic", "nice", "feminine" "soft", "elegant" footwear of the style conscious female is literally, "stomped" into posterity by the presence of the "big boot" on female New Age Travellers.

Boots last, obsolescence becomes obsolete, nothing impractical is bought by the New Age Traveller. The obvious difference between male and female style in this culture is also broken down.

Cosmetics are used more primitively in the way of face paint, rather than make-up.

Adornment of the skin, like the Punks, vulgarises pre-conceived concepts of "earrings" into nose rings, lip rings, eyebrow rings, nipple rings etc. Accessory items are worn not for their value in terms of dominant markets i.e. gold, silver, diamonds, but for their objective aesthetic recycled value, symbols of rejection. (Plate 5) is of two New Age Travellers who are activists from the "environmental tribe". It is understandable when you look at their appearance how McRobbie made in reference to "Crusties" although her description is of New Age Travellers calls it, "Ecological Dirt" accompanied by the decrepit, though much

Plate 5 Two New Age Activists



Dongas: activists from the enviro
stop the building of the M3 bypass
travelling the festivals this summer



loved mongrel. But when you consider the benefits and reasons for their appearances the latter is incorrect. This picture, taken in Summer means that the heavy overcoat, woollen jumpers etc. are not there. But the richness of the New Age culture is. These girls look “primitive”, nomadic, tribal. Their attire are walking advertisements of contempt for obsolescence. The ripped sleeves on both their sweat shirts, dirty old well used, knotted, straggly hair, the hats, the face paint, the earrings, the primitive recycled beads and spoon, the patch work trousers, the 80’s dress, the layers of dirty and at times, colourfully splashed garments are excellent examples of clothes representing life style. Colours for the New Age Traveller do not follow seasonal preferences, instead personal choice counts. Colours taken from sun, rainbow, and reggae are quite common. The New Age style involves wearing the environment you live in. The very dirt you pick up is not stains that need to be washed, but the make-up of the style. Well worn thread bare garments is defiance towards “new garments”.

This Bricollage of style could be seen by some as “thieving” from already finished styles, but I see it as more of a creative innovation, a recycling of designs without the constraints of “taste”, a cul de sac of style.

From this formulation of style the bubble of the new fashion system based on a “trickle down” was evident long before 1945. George Simmel, (1904) addressed the issue of class standards in the fashion system. As a garment design descends through the ranks of class it would invariably loose its authenticity as cheaper makes to suit a cheaper income would be

made. The origins of the "fashion circle", whereby styles move in trends has direct links with the class difference. As a garment style moved down the classes until it reached the lower classes to become their style the higher classes would be wearing a new style and so the cyclical pattern was repeated. Before the war some styles would last for up to a decade with one style prominent all of the time. But in the 50's with the development of seasonal styles with designers like Dior, Lacroix this system changed. The advent of a youth market which primarily owed a lot to the 50's by way of youth styles began to change the structure of the fashion system. In "Subculture and the meaning of Style" Hebdige tells us that by 1978 Zandra Rhodes had a cat walk collection influenced purely by the Punks. The gap between what was considered to be outside the fashion system and the High Street was beginning to close.

Today in the 90's the High Street fashion designer no longer dictates change and trends, but anticipates the change on the streets. The anti fashion of sub cultures has changed the attitude of designers "in bad taste you can always find a certain beauty" (Jean Paul Gaultier) in relation to the growth in "alternative styles". What bubbled up from the wave of the New Age Travellers was at times wrongly named "Grunge". But through all of my New Age Traveller examples one can see how powerful an influence the New Age "ethic" has had on the High Street fashion world. Grunge fashions as we know it is more reminiscent of the New Age Travellers. (Plate 4) is an example of how designers turn to the anti fashion of a youth subculture. They take elements they like and water them down for the High Street then on to mainstream. It is another irony directly related to the growth of

mass production since the 50's. It only provides the clothes, the people; it now reverses the system of dilution from the top down, now styles dilute from the bottom up. For example, design by High Street designer Anna Sui are her "rainbow collection" named "Poor Boy". Quite evident from (Plate 6) is the influence of knitted garments in relation to the New Age Travellers. The colours as well, which the designer uses; "the colours of the rainbow", are directly taken from those preferred by the New Age Travellers in celebration of nature. Through the design one can see the way in which the ambience of the New Age

Traveller movement is incorporated. The boots for one are directly used because of their wide spread popularity on the streets. The very act of leaving the laces undone is an affect, an attempt to reflect the care free "I don't care about conformity" attitude of the New Age Travellers. For a High Street design the big boots and laces left dragging along the ground do summarise and dilute the "anti fashion" of the culture. The way in which the accessory belt pack is designed, is shaped and cut is done to echo the way in which a top might be tied around the waist. In (Plate 3) of the two girls, the girl on the left has her top tied. In her design Anna Sui has noticed this common trait and subtly suggested it through good design.

Plate 6 The "Bubble Up"



Anna Sui, ribbed "poorboy" halter dress and matching sleeves from Spring 1993 "Rainbow Grunge" collection, 1992. Photo: AP/Wide World. *Esquire* magazine, March 1993, with Roseanne and Tom Arnold on the cover.



Another very good design feature is how Anna Sui tries to capture the essence of the second hand well worn look of the New Age Travellers. The manner in which the sleeves of the dress are purposefully left separate to the rest of the garment are a design feature as opposed to a trait of production. The hat and hair of the model are also taken from the common look of the New Age Traveller. The long scraggy hair is making its presence felt. Even the necklaces worn by the model is reminiscent of primitive, basic, earthy design, (Plate 5, the girl's necklaces). The name of the collection "Poor Boy" is subtly incorporating the adventurous look of the 90's New Age Traveller. Worn by a female and named "Poor Boy" insinuates poverty to an extent, and also a harder, stronger woman as opposed to a "nice girl".

Not all designers are influenced by the same aspect of a culture, different issues bubble up. For instance (Plate 7) is an example of High Street design which has focused on the natural.

7

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Plate 7 Recycled Hessian High Street Design





The bubble up to the High Street is a revolution itself. Many ironies come to light as the study of youth cultures develops with the roll ragmarkets as one of the greatest ironies recycled element of the New Age Travellers. The design and feel of the photograph powerfully depicts a lack of niceties; make-up, clean clothes, a hair brush, and the fabric is coarse, rough Hessian suggesting a lost and found edge to the design. The very act of tying the garments to the body with string also suggests the essence of innovation in recycling. The comparison between this and the method in which Michael Hobbs tied his coat shut is obvious. The aged well worn look is again suggestive of the life of abstinence chosen by the New Age Travellers. Again the hair incorporates the wild and well worn look, suggesting the complete disregard for "taste" in the way of style. Likewise (Plate 8) bears evidence to the fact that High Street fashion of the 90's is subtly created by the bubble up, trickle down theory. This design conjures up the same recycled earthy look, grass tied round the arm of the model, the top looks like it is hand crafted from a natural fabric. The element of primitive dress is particularly strong. The hat as well as a simple wrap of Hessian, no styling, no fuss over shape, just natural. The girl in (Plate 8), as well as wearing recycled fabrics and design, also looks pure, honest, and guilt free. The way in which the bubble up incorporates styling is also very obvious in (Plate 9). This collection is aptly named "Tinker Tailoring" a pun on the life style of the New Age Traveller life style.

1405-1410

1411-1415

1416-1420

Plate 8 Influence of Recycling





Plate 9 Styling and "Tinker Tailoring"



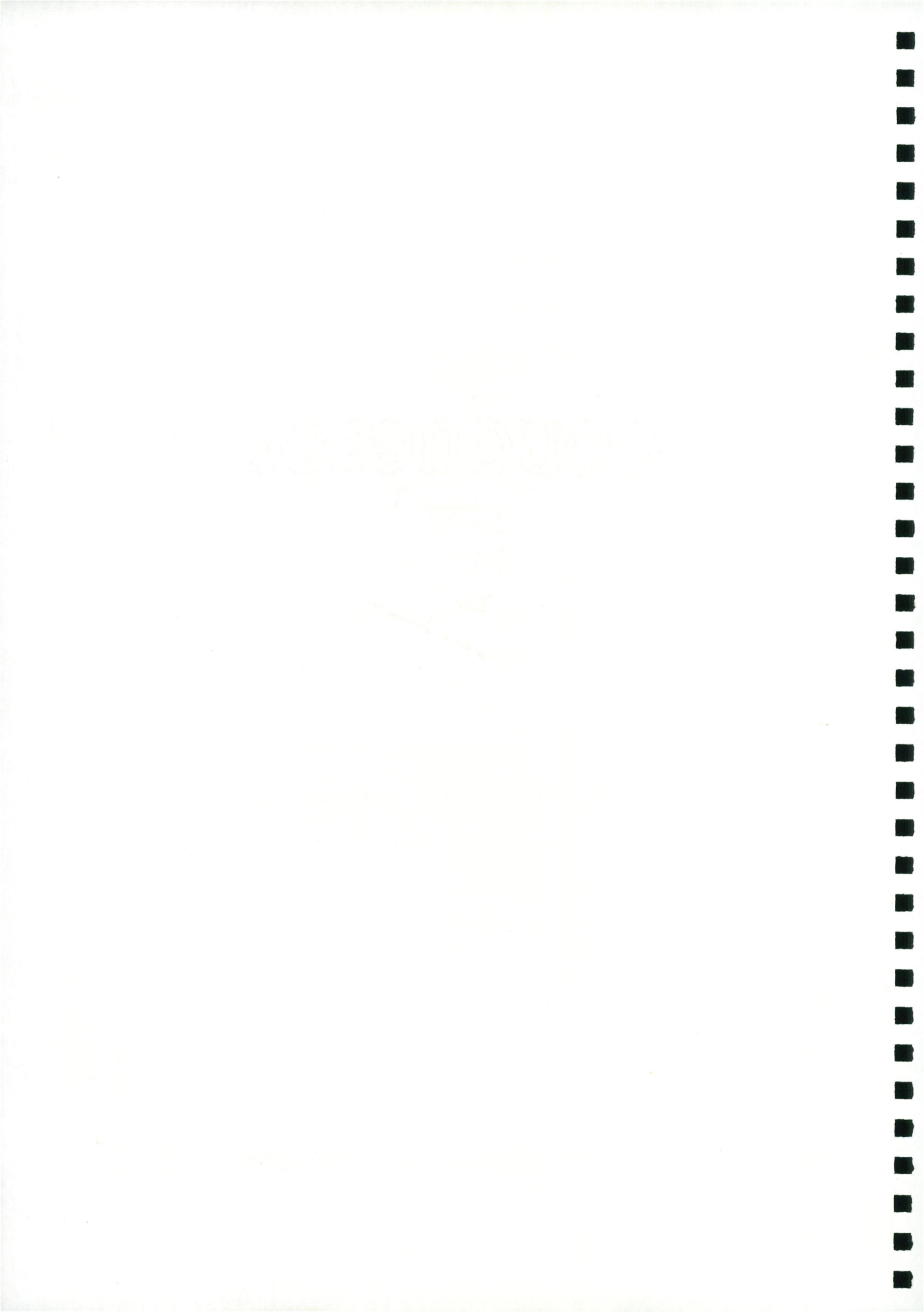


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In this picture the model seriously looks like she lives on the streets, no shoes, dark, foreboding eyes, the essence of abstinence.

makes itself apparent. Representative of what McRobbie refers to as the "hidden economy", in the case of the New Age Travellers they play a vital role. Without rag markets the New Age Travellers would have had to go begging from door to door for clothes as opposed to buying second hand cheap garments. What it is so ironic is that the clothes in rag markets today came from the effect of the 50's. It is not just lower class people who throw away clothes, the higher classes do as well. As a result many of the clothes in rag markets are of quite good quality.

From the heaps of clothes the youth culture stops to pick up items. In the case of the New Age Travellers price and practicality determine the choice. What is so ironic though is that the garments thrown away, today through redesign, are "bubbled" back up to the designers and trickle back down. The very essence of the fashion system today lies, to a large extent, in the hands of youth cultures and rag markets. Without ragmarkets there would be no diversity of youth culture style, without the 50's there would be no ragmarkets. More than just providing the markets with which youth cultures cross dress retro styles, rag markets also provide a means of alternative education in the exploitative capitalist world. The very act of selection and selling involves skill in marketing and production. Successful markets work to a certain extent, just like High Street shops. Selection and choice provide the right clothes for the right era.



CHAPTER 3.

A second major culture of the 90s is that of the "Rave" scene. In this chapter I will look at its reactions to the 90s. In light of how the New Age Travellers reacted, the Rave culture has adopted a different approach. I will be giving a detailed look at the drug "Ecstasy".

Understanding the drug and its affects are vital to understanding the culture and indirectly its fashion design. In light of the society Rave seeks to avoid I will be assessing McRobbie's enquires about how young people react to society around them. Giving a detailed account of the lifestyle of the average Raver, I will assess the validity of "Homology" within this culture in relation to style. I will then look at the extent of the "bubble up, trickle down" theory in relation to the Rave scene.

In the same way as New Age Travellers came of age in the mid 80s to early 90s, so too have the Ravers. Both are born in the same atmosphere, and yet both cultures have reacted very differently to the doomsday fears. Unlike the "New Ager"s, "Rave" as a culture has opted out of becoming engrossed in the problems of the environment. Rather than leaving the scene of the crime the "Ravers" have stayed put in the technocratic urban jungle.

McRobbie in her study of the culture in relation to the pressures of today feels that Rave follows a "text of avoidance". It is as though young Ravers simply cannot bear the burden of responsibility they are expected to carry.....drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, un-protected sex, violence, rape, ecological disaster.....to be responsible to find a job,...a living partner....that

rave turns away from this heavy load headlong into a culture of avoidance and almost pure abandonment” (McRobbie, pp 172).

How Rave as a culture has managed to do this in the midst of all of the social mayhem is with the use of Ecstasy or M.D.M.A. For the Ravers “E” has become their antidote to pressure. Understanding “E” is vital to understanding Rave. Ecstasy is the fulcrum point around which the “hidden economy”, DJs, flyers, parties, fashion design & second hand shops, records, and radio stations of the Rave culture have developed.

Ecstasy was first synthesised as a chemical in 1898. In 1914 it was patented by a company as an appetite suppressant but removed because of odd side affects. It became quite popular again in the 1960s hippie movement, but was eventually banned as a class A drug in 1974. In the human brain there are over 50 neurotransmitters. Ecstasy affects the release of one of these. The chemical is Serotinine, lots of Serotinine makes people very happy. The more Serotinine there is in ones brain the happier and more positive one feels. In the medical profession it is noted that people with low levels of Serotinine are prone to depression and suicide. Ecstasy creates massive doses of Serotinine, hence the exaggerated effect.

As a result of this people who do “E” feel very happy and relaxed. There is a compulsion to dance, to express emotions, to be friendly, to communicate, and mix. The reason for this is a part of the Serotinine is geared towards stimulating repeated actions. This is why “Rave” dancing involves so much repeated energetic movements (Plate 10). Any feelings

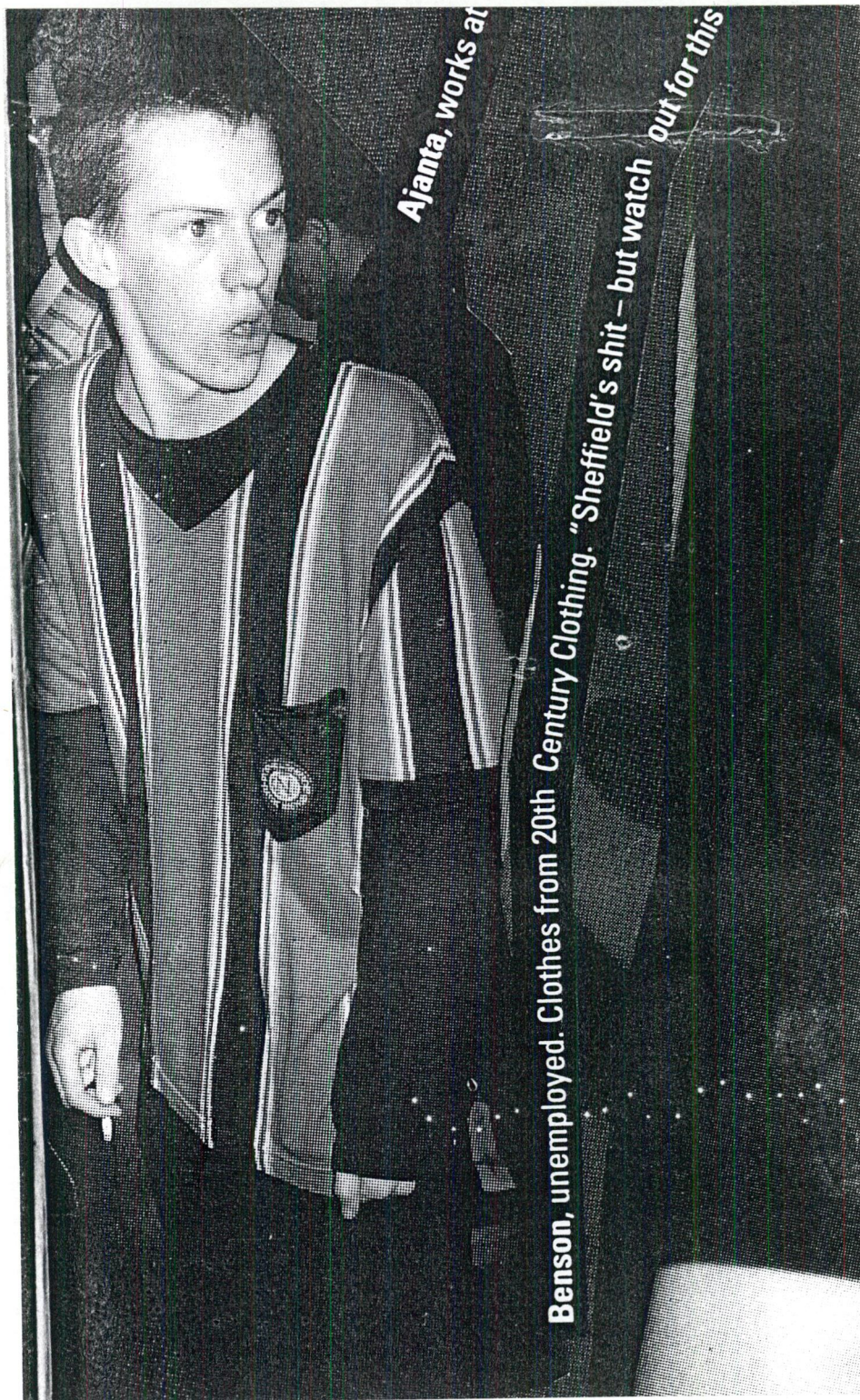
Plate 10 Dancing Associated with Rave





of ambiguity dissolve under the influence of the drug. The drug, as I will explain, has had a major influence in affecting the style of Rave fashion. Because "Ecstasy" is a banned drug controlled experiments on M.D.M.A. are not founded. This is one of the greatest dangers of the drug. Rave culture is immersed in a drug problem. Because the drug is illegal much of the Ecstasy available on the streets of Dublin today contains "about 2% pure M.D.M.A." (Big Issue) the rest is mixed with Amphetamines, Codeine, Heroin, Barbiturates and other substances (Big Issue; 19th February, 1995). While M.D.M.A. may not be physically addictive, heroin is. What tests have been done on the side affects do show potential for what two long term users labelled as "the E generation with brains like cabbages and eyes sunken in", (Plate 11 & 12). "E" can kill, though only through dehydration; an effect of the drug is that warning systems in the body stop working. Some people in the past have literally danced till they dropped dead.

Dr. Tom Fahy said "there is strong evidence that Ecstasy irreversibly destroys important receptors in the brain" (Big Issue; 19th February, 1995) which he believes can cause psychiatric disorder. Despite these well known fears thousands of young people, male and female do "E" every week, some nightly. "E" offers this generation of young people an "escape" from reality, it gives them happiness for "8 hours" for about £15.00. The reason why Rave culture has reacted so differently to the atmosphere in the 90s is because Rave has created its own atmosphere within the constraints of its "parties". It is this atmosphere







which becomes dramatised in the visual styles of the clothes. The images are all drug induced. The atmosphere of the Rave culture is one of positivity and joy.

The pressures of the "AIDS threat" McRobbie feels is one reason why Rave legitimises physical abandonment without losing control. Both male and female Ravers in the atmosphere of the dance feel free to sample the joys of "touch and flirt" without the hassle of a relationship. The atmosphere is one of constant "buzz", music coupled with the "E" and dancing brings on "rushes" of happy emotion exaggerated by the Ecstasy. This induced atmosphere has shaped the whole Rave scene. Clubs not only play music, inter-net computers display huge visuals on walls, free lollies and ice pops to cool down are available, coloured lasers add to the ecstatic inducement of the drug. The Rave culture offers to the adult the equivalent of an "Alice in Wonderland", reality becomes a surrealist dream. Because the drug creates so many superficial situations so many new options for fashion are made available. Within the Rave scene "laddishness and aggro is replaced by friendliness, the atmosphere is one of unity, of dissolving indifference in the peace and harmony of the Ecstasy", (McRobbie, pp 168).

Male pride is taken away, and, because people like to dance, they feel more in tune with their bodies. Male and female do not care what anyone thinks of how they look. With men "colours" have seen a dramatic rise in the Rave atmosphere, the decrease in animosity has given Rave style an explosive multi-styled fashion sense. (Plate 13)

Plate 13 Multi Styled Fashions





One of the biggest issues that has influenced the shape and style of the fashion scene is that of "comfort". Because of the repeated dancing, over-heating and perspiration are major problems for the Raver. As a result clothes for men are baggy, jeans very loose, easy to move in, are worn with a T-shirt. Girl's fashion has expanded greatly with the advent of the Rave culture. (Plate 14) are examples of how diverse styles at a Rave can be.

Hats, belly tops, jeans, glasses, loose, baggy, fitted Rave style permits any style. It would be impossible to talk about every style that has been developed with the growth of the Rave scene, but it is possible to pin-point a certain style and, when I come to assess the bubble up of the Rave scene into High Street fashion I shall be focusing my attention on the growth of sports wear tops, bottoms and trainers in relation to this culture.

The concept of Bricollage in the 90s is once again validated by the Rave scene. In the same way the New Age Travellers and the Punks adapted certain objects into new meanings so has the Rave scene. For instance the "back pack" has become a symbol of Rave culture, used because of the necessity for carrying a spare T-shirt, walkman and deodorant to the Raves. Also Vicks Menthos inhaler has been taken from its original status as "cold medicine" and become a "rush enhancer". As a result of this Face Masks used on building sites have also become synonymous with the hard core Raver providing a means through which Vicks can be breathed. Soothers and Ice Pops brought back from childhood use, are given new life combined with the "E". Objects otherwise associated with other

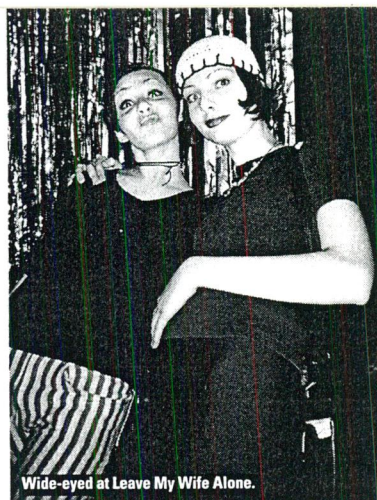
Plate 14 Diversity of styles at Rave



Chi Chi at Yes Jude.



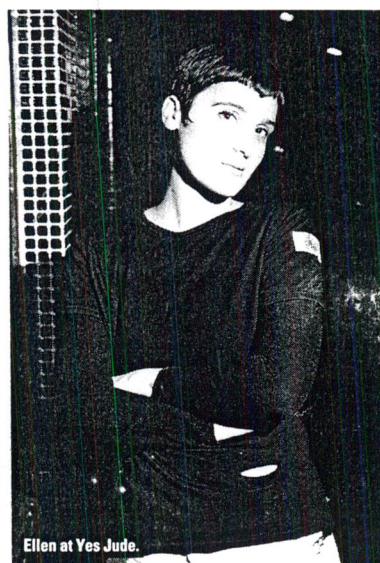
Clayton Marcus, singer, at Yes Jude.



Wide-eyed at Leave My Wife Alone.



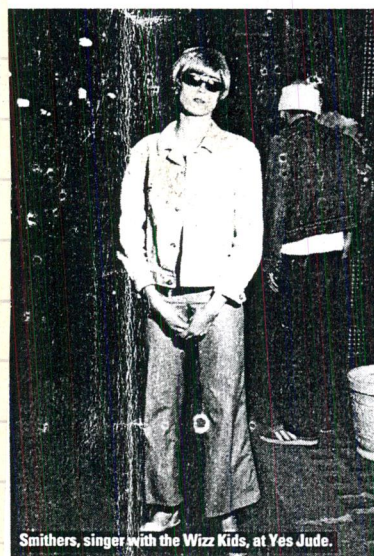
Ed, doorman at Yes Jude: "I'll let you in if you pay."



Ellen at Yes Jude.



Leave My Wife Alone!!



Smithers, singer with the Wizz Kids, at Yes Jude.



Jill at Yes Jude.



Keiko at Leave My Wife Alone.



meanings, for instance a sports whistle, are re-used like the safety pin of the Punks and given new meaning.

In her study McRobbie sees the "Rave culture as an 'unconscious pre-Oedipal', attempt to return to childhood days" (McRobbie, pp 168), with popular tunes such as "The Magic Roundabout, being re-released. "Masquerading in childhood innocence, primary colours, ice lollies, dummies & whistles" (McRobbie pp 169). In "Deep Ecology" mentioned earlier, Paul Shepard in suggesting how to "encourage maturity", criticises society at large today for the pressure it puts on people:

"The visual admonishment in our culture to "have fun" is somewhat shallow if not impulsive. I must have fun or something is wrong with me" (Devall/Sessions 188).

This constant pre-occupation with always having to be happy would give some indication of why Rave culture, as an alternative lifestyle, attracts so many people. Under the drug induced atmosphere of a Rave the lasers and the rhythm of the music coupled with the effects of "E" a sense of "being" is provided.

The induced child-like element in the Rave scene has opened up fashion design to countless styles; T-shirts, mini skirts, 70s retro styles, knee length boots, platform shoes, belly tops. The effect of the scene has also resulted in an explosion of synthetic fabrics: Rayon, Plastic Rubber and Latex in bright psychedelic colours.

The effect Rave has had on the fashion system likewise has seen the gap between High Street fashion and what was considered low street disappear. The bubble up has been as natural as it was with the New Age Travellers.

The greatest influence Rave has had on fashion design has been in popularising “sports wear” and by that I mean PE Adidas track suit tops and bottoms into High Street design. Because of the comfort element that made itself aware to the first Ravers in '85 track suits bought second hand in rag markets slowly became incorporated into the fashion of the Ravers. Like most street style it started as an anti-fashion. The growth of footwear in the way of trainers (Plate 15 & 16) grew in popularity for their obvious comfort. The result has been an explosion of popularity in sports wear “go fast stripes” into all forms of clothing. (Plate 17) is an example of sport-club-wear worn in clubs these days. The incorporation of the stripes up the side of the skirt and around the sleeves of the “top” on the left is an example of how much influence the original Adidas Jacket has had on fashion design. Notice as well the runners worn by the girl on the right and the “bareness” of their outfits, perfect for dancing in the hot atmosphere of the club. Also evident is how stylish the Raver look is. From this wealth of style, top designers have, as they did with New Age Travellers borrowed and adapted from the growth of the sports gear look. (Plate 18) by Chanel is a classic example of how the Rave has influenced the High Street. This outfit captures the classy style of the female Raver look. The cashmere cardigan incorporates the “stripes” but, with the price of this garment being £2,295, this serves as an example of how exploitative top designers are. (Plate 19) is a classic example of the bubble up to High

SNEAKERS

Golden fake leather shoe with stack heel. **CHIEPIE**.

Opposite: Clockwise from top left—
Stack-heeled classic basketball sneaker, **CONVERSE ALL STAR**,
leather cyclist-style slimline shoe, **MARITHÉ & FRANÇOIS GIRBAUD**,
running shoe with neoprene inner lining and heel impact pad, **NIKE**; "Gazelle"
oldschool trainer, **ADIDAS**; laced and strapped sneaker-style clog, **FORNARINA**; patent leather sneaker, **CHIEPIE**.

PHOTOS: Tommaso Sartori
PRODUCT RESEARCH: Gloria Salvador

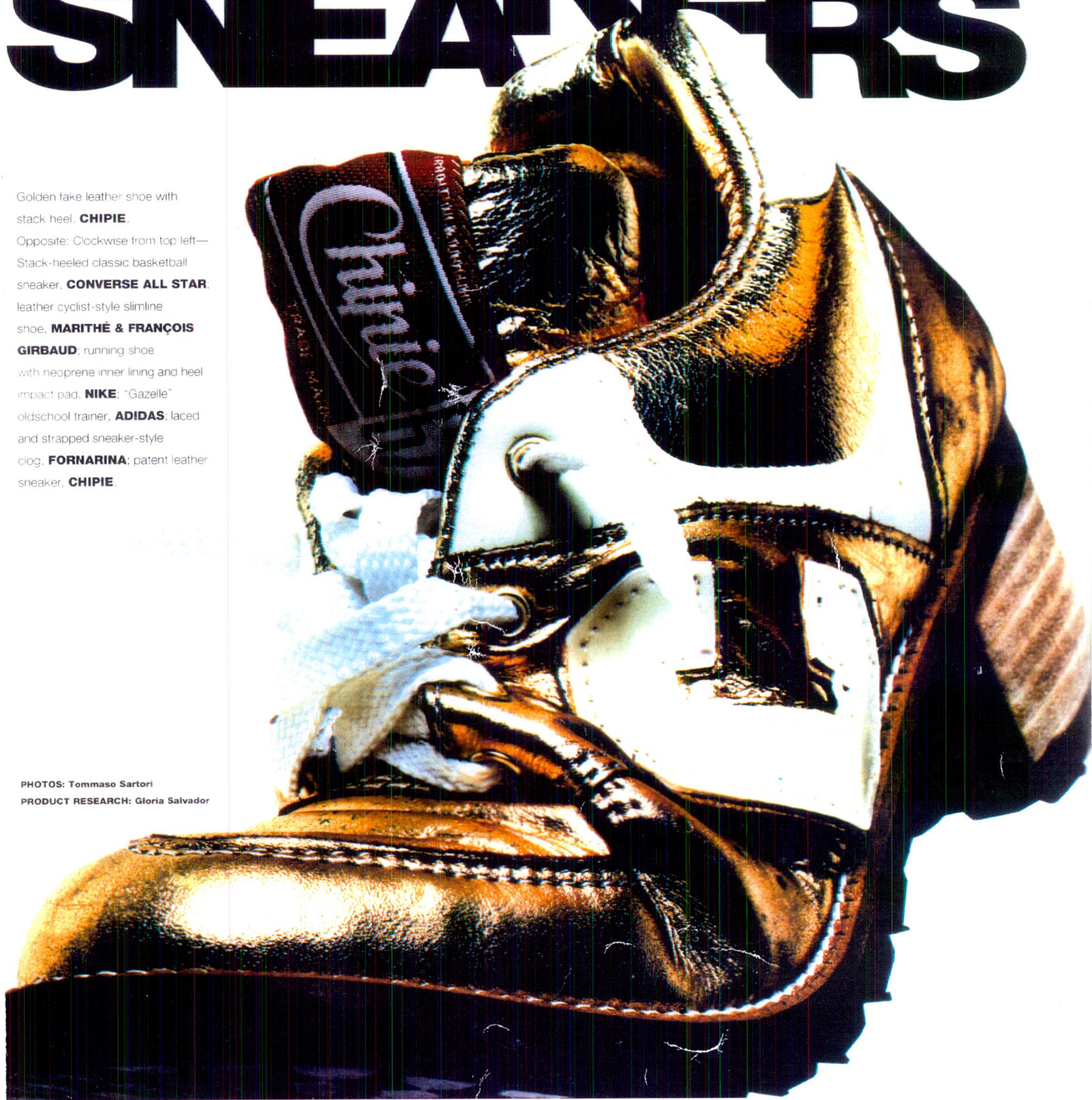




Plate 16 Styles of Runner



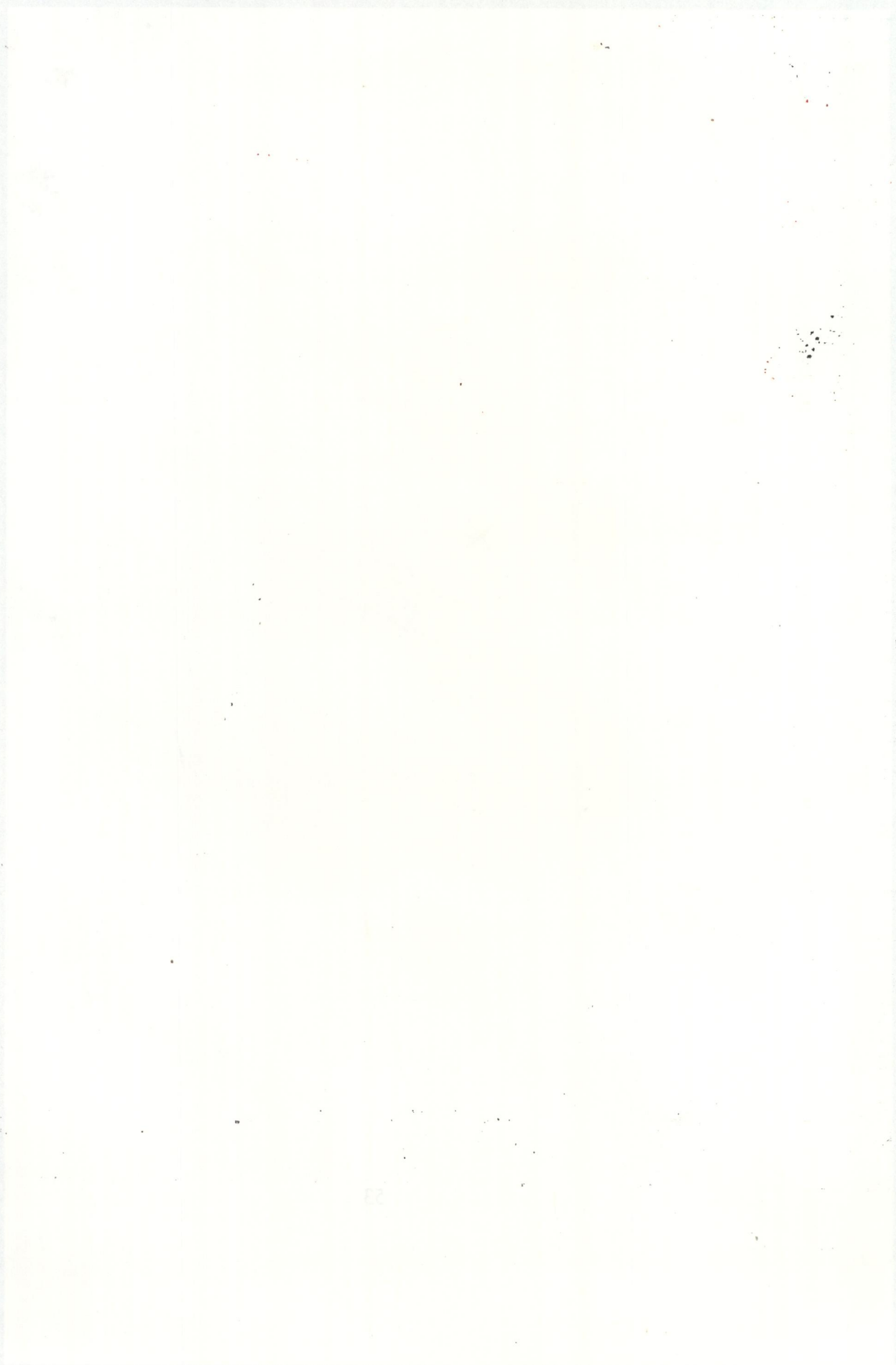


Plate 17 Go Fast Stripes and the Rave style

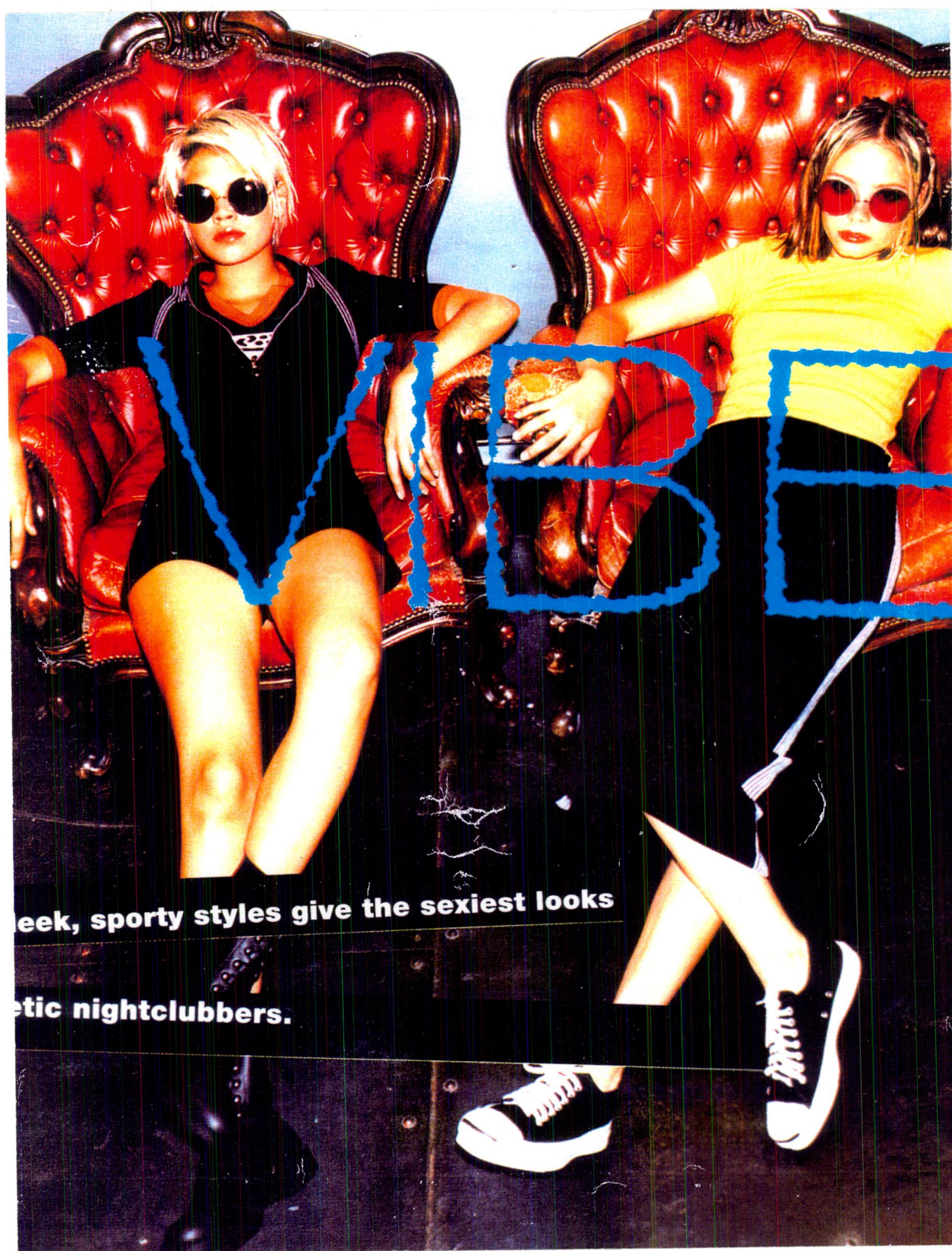




Plate 18 "Bubble Up" the High Street



Plate 19 Diffusion of sports wear





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Street design. This design incorporates the Lycra/Wool fabric of track suits but into a very stylised fit. The mini-skirt was popular with the glamorous Rave scene long before it was on the cat walks. This design even includes the tracksuit zip up at the centre of the Jacket. The shoes as well follow the sports wear influence. (Plate 20) has taken the hooded easy feel of the Ravers and is also a subtle version of a bomber jacket minus the sleeves. The boots and skirts are both influenced by the Rave scene.

(Plate 21) is an example of how the style of Vogue (September, 1994) has used DJ earphones as an accessory with the clothes to capture the attitude and ambience of the Rave scene. From these High Street water-downs of the original, mainstream then adopts versions of the original look. (Plate 22) is an example by Ralph Lauren. The two outfits contain the runners, and the girl's jacket is reminiscent of Puffa Jackets associated with sportswear.

The development of "sneakers" has perhaps been the most innovative and exciting influence Rave has had on High Street design and mass consumerism, (Plate 16). Originally associated with "sports" or "PE", runners were always at the low end of the fashion system, expensive enough to buy but not to be seen as formal day-wear. In the 80s they gained considerable popularity along with Jeans and bomber jackets. But the influence of Rave has done away with this lower class stigma. (Plate 15) is an example of how developed the runner design has become. This style made from fake leather incorporates the high block heel of the female Rave footwear. (Plate 16) is a range of runner designs that

Plate 20 The “Hoodie” top look





Plate 21 D J Styling





Plate 22 Commercialisation into mainstream





have worked up to the High Street to be sold to the mainstream. The high-heeled runner is by Adidas and is an example of just how far runners have come since the days of "PE".

CHAPTER 4

Today in the 90's huge changes have taken place in the fashion industry. Fabrics of the past have been coupled with technology resulting in new and exciting fabrics. Designers themselves have been affected by issues of pollution and, seeing the richness of street style, have turned their backs on High Street fashion today and the gap between High Street and Low Street markets has virtually disappeared. Recycling has emulated up from the culture of the New Age Travellers and green awareness in the fashion industry has resulted in concerted efforts to find more environmentally friendly methods of dyeing and cleaning fabrics. This green awareness has also resulted in the arrival of the concept of DIY couture. Rave with its drug induced influence on style, cut and colour has encouraged the arrival of much more adventurous styles. The combination of both Rave and New Age Travellers has meant that designers have had to think harder to please a more knowledgeable and demanding market. New guide lines and requirements have been set by the Ravers and the New Age Travellers, and equally satisfied by the community of the fashion system.

Helen Storey is one of a new breed of designers influenced by the environmental awareness of the 90's. Originally just a mainstream designer trying to meet the demand of a seasonal market, Storey always felt that she was merely adding to an already growing surplus mountain of clothes. Motivated by her environmental concerns and the clever initiative to

see that the bad economy in the 90's and rising unemployment meant a consumer spending less. In a bid to combat this problem, in 1991 Storey set out to design and produce a range of recycled clothes available at cheaper prices. In her efforts to fulfil this Storey keeps consumer costs between £9.00 - £30.00. Her first collection was a range of jeans and tops with a recycled beaded top. The top was favoured by female Ravers and according to Storey was "still selling five years later".

Something that is very interesting about Helen Storey, and is the same for the other two DIY designers of the 90's I am going to discuss, is that she hates the conditioning of the High Street fashion. She herself refuses to become what she calls a victim of the fashion system. Never dressing up and always wearing jeans and jumpers, Storey sees herself as more of an artist than a fashion designer. In effect she is a member of a small culture within the dominant culture of high fashion designers who, rather than becoming conditioned, work their own way to avoid the establishment of "normal work procedures".

In setting up her DIY range of clothing, Storey started a partnership with Abel Damussi who owns the second hand shop "Flip" in Covent Garden. This enabled her to have access to a huge variety of garments. Labelled under the name "Second Life", her designs entail sewing numerous pieces of old clothes together much the same way as the Punks constructed their styles through Bricollage, (Plate 23) is an example of her "Second Life" range. Although Storey has had much success from this recycling it still only makes up 65% of her annual collections. Storey realises that the reality of recycling, irrespective of

Plate 23 Helen Storey and DIY Clothing



pollution is not compatible with the fashion system, "to be 100% environmentally friendly, now I might as well just shut down the business" (Helen Storey).

A product of the 90's Helen Storey, is an example of the influence economy has on designers. Aware of environmental issues, and inspired by design traits found in New Age Traveller philosophy i.e. DIY, Storey has started to develop in second hand clothes, but she is also fully aware and dependant upon the greater economy of the system; bills, fabrics, studio space, fashion shows are all interwoven necessities, influenced by the greater intricacies of the world of capitalism.

My next DIY Designer, Lamine Kouyate, more commonly known under the label "Xuly Bet", is a 29 year old male former architecture student who has taken the fashion world by storm with his "anti-fashion" tailored garments. He is the epitome of the new DIY designers. Set up in a studio along side jewellery artists, and stylists, he is a partner in what is now the disused radiology ward of "L'Hopital System" in the 18th Arrondissement. A practitioner who hates the fashion system, Lamine says that is why he cuts up and slashes his clothes, (Plate 24). Influenced by the concept of recycling and the "chic look" of the 90's influenced by Rave, his clothes are more sculptured than designed in the formal sense, i.e. pattern around the body. In his latest collection which took place in "l'Hopital" models wore, "Belted Cardigans, Evening Dresses and Tailored Jackets shrunk to fit the tightest bodies. He Loves the flea markets and bargain bins because of the variety of contrasting fabrics. He can find nylon, wool, and Lycra in shades of yellow, red, black or any colour.

Plate 24 Xuly Bet





Again, we see that the influence of the New Age Travellers of the 90's have a strong affect on the designers of the 90's. Even more interesting is the development that has come from this fashion designing. Not content with recycling the fabrics of the surplus mountains, designers have turned to using other throw away fabrics. Sculpture, weave and design have all come together to create garments. The 90's has enhanced an atmosphere of intense material recycling. Madame Judith Fournay has rejected cut up cardigans, she has produced clothes made of sardine tins, medical detritus; her latest is a wedding dress consisting of hoops and syringes (Plate 25). Some of her other clothes include materials such as bandage underwear, bottle tops and artificial lawn. She is an example of the 90's innovations in design. Other designers are using video tape, safety pins, and cellophane. In San Francisco Estelle Akomine originally a trained weaver rummages through the two tons of garbage dumped every day, making clothes from bubble wrap, paper, or venetian blinds. The list of designers dedicated to recycled designing is endless. The New Age Travellers, a product of mass pollution and other corporate enterprises, have encouraged and influenced to a certain extent the ever anticipating world fashion in the potential of second hand clothes and designs. Their influence incorporates, and is incorporated into a system that re-uses and rejuvenates all of the time.

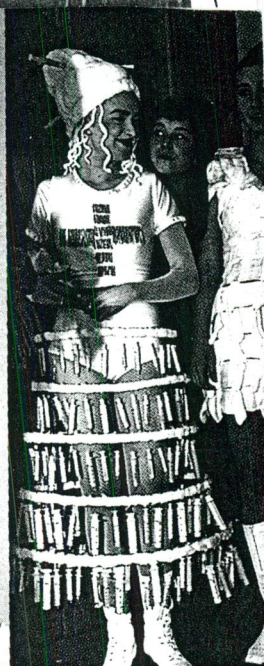
This same influence has also affected fabrics as producers try and create biodegradable synthetic fibres. The recycling of Cotton is also being developed. "Cashmere" is now returnable for recycling, the wool can be re shredded and re-knitted even Cashmere that are over 40 years old. The label "Fake", London, are making clothes from recycled Cashmere.

Plate 25 Garbage Couture

Waste sizes:
Yoshiki
Hishinuma's
video and audio
tape capes



Thierry Beghin



Haute garbage:
syringes and bottle
tops from Judith
Fourny; straw mats,
shoelace sleeves
and paraffin-
wool pants from
Billie Mertens

These innovations are a positive sign in the 90's that consumers are rejecting obsolescence and unnecessary waste.

Developments in new synthetic fibres has expanded considerably. Ravers using second hand rag markets for clothes picked up old cheap fabrics like Lycra and Rayon Plastics. From the use of these styles and the "Bubble up" tendency, the fashion world today is a blaze once again with synthetic fibres (Laminated Cotton gauze, Polyester and stretch satin) long discarded by the fashion industry.

...“After years of wallowing in fashions bargain basement, man made fibres have become the toast of the design circuit”.... (*W-Magazine*, Oct., 94)

Coloured Lycra, Lurex, Sequined Wool, Rayon, Acetate, Spandex, Fake Fur, Plastic Neoprene, Luminescent Greens, Yellows, Blues and Pinks are all old and new fabrics develop purely as a result of the Rave scene. Stretchy fabrics in particular have been given popular status. What is ironic about this though is when synthetics were first mass produced in the 50's plastic, Rayon etc. were associated with the lower class. Now, forty years on and because of the Rave scene having a preference for bright and shiny fabrics, these materials have through "Bubble up" become High Street choices. (Plate 26) is an example of High Street design and the use of Lurex and Nylon.

The growth of sports wear directly affiliated with the Rave scene has had huge influences on the development of sports wear fabrics as day-wear, fusing the quality and aesthetic of

Plate 26 Influence of "Techno" Rave Fabric on High Street Design





old fabrics with technology. New fabrics that are breathable, wind proof, fire proof, stain proof and rain proof; Gortex, Thermojoint, Rubberised Satin, Shiny Nylon, Arnolittec are only a few of the new sports wear fabrics employed in leisure wear because of Rave in the 90's.

Two young designers who owe their success to the influence of Rave are Mia Manners and Richard Sharp, both are holographers. What they have managed to do is transfer kitsch holographic images into "Techno" 90's holographic fabric. Starting out by making iron-on holographic tee-shirts for the Rave band "The Shamen", the pair managed to work out what I.C.I. fabric developers have been trying to do for years. Their first collection was aimed towards club wear for the Rave scene. The reflective, metallic, shiny fabric would be perfect for the atmosphere of the "Rave" (Plate 27) launched under the label, "Space Times" it consisted of bomber and Bike Jackets, tee-shirts, Baseball Caps and Skirts all in 3D reflective, oil fabric. Already approached by two leading High Street designers Montana and Klein, the designers say the potential uses of the fabric are never ending. "The first fashion to embrace the "Techno" futurism of the scene" I-D the development is an example of how powerful an effect the Rave culture has had on fashion outside of the bubble.

The fashion system of the last 40 years has in the 90's, been turned upside down. The influence of the Rave and New Age Travellers has been encouraging in design development. Although the development of synthetics is producing more pollution at least

Plate 27 Holographic Fabric





With increasing ECO awareness, High Street designers are researching better alternatives. Outside of the initial bubble up influences the two cultures have provided new avenues for designers to work in. As Ted Polehmus remarks in reference to the Catwalks, designers agree to disagree. Variety is a positive thing, the fashion of the 90's is ablaze with innovation and choice combining practicality and comfort with ECO awareness.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

In concluding this thesis it only seems right to return to the theory of mass production.

Throughout the last 50 years of fashion, the relationship between mass production, High Street fashion, rag markets and youth cultures has spawned many ironies.

Mass production created the system of obsolescence which indirectly created rag markets from which youth cultures have created their fashion styles.

New Age Travellers, in presenting their future of the environment, seem to have overlooked their own future. Scavenging through skips and living off the land may be ecologically correct, but as old age pensioners, living in a Benner in a field seems to ignore the inevitability of old age.

Ravers, by choosing to ignore the pressures of the present, will inevitably have to face facts. Coupled with the potential harmful side effects of drug abuse, they are creating their own future reality of greater pressures.

In an attempt to dislocate themselves from the "norm", youth cultures are indirectly dependant on the norm. The "norm", i.e. the commercial end of the fashion system sell the garments bought to be thrown away. The creation of seasonal looks has invariably created

alternative looks. The occurrence of the "Bubble up" theory means that the clothes thrown away in the commercial end, used by youth cultures, are being employed once again by High Street fashion.

What initially seems like separate sections working against each other, are in fact integral elements in a greater, indefinable system. The dominant world, the fashion economy, youth cultures and all forms of style, work off each other in the same way "Punk" worked as an "ordered" chaos. "Reuse, abuse, regenerate, mass produce".

The fashion of the future is developing with new ironies; already today in Norway an anti-recycling theory is gaining prominence. After years of environmental support, a backlash is now starting, this in itself is an example of how unpredictably the fashion system works.

Continually evolving and elaborating influenced by differing issues, the fashion system moves on into the future. This anti-recycling theory could easily spill over into something greater. Possibly an alternative youth culture will adopt the same attitude after the 90's "continuous environmental awareness". The clothes they would adopt would be futuristic, industrial, the high street fashion market would adopt the aspects it likes and water them down into mainstream. And the process goes on.

The frontiers of the fashion system are all rolled into the one ball of economic illusion. The High Street shops, retailers, consumers, the designers, tag markers, youth cultures are all affected by each other.

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