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Local scenes and dangerous crossroads: punk and theories of cultural hybridity

ALAN O'CONNOR

Abstract

Against theories of cultural hybridity and disembodied flows of recorded media, this article argues for the continued relevance of the concept of regional musical scenes. It takes as examples contemporary punk as it exists in four cities and shows that there are different local accents in Washington D.C., Austin, Texas, Toronto and Mexico City. The conclusion describes some aspects of the social organisation of cultural contacts between these scenes. The article is part of a larger project of multi-site ethnography of youth subculture and resistance to globalisation.

Introduction: dangerous crossroads

The notion of cultural hybridity seems particularly attractive to studies of popular music. After all, nothing seems to travel so easily as a musical riff, drum rhythm and subcultural style; and in the process to mutate into a musical hybrid that could be an *underground* globalisation of a kind quite different kind from that imagined by transnational corporations and the World Bank (Lipsitz 1994). Rather than rehearsing debates about world music, this article makes a case for a specifically anthropological approach to musical scenes and travelling music. This is against generalising theories of flows of people, media and ideas around the globe and accounts of cultural hybridity. It is quite astonishing to see anthropologists such as Appadurai (1996) and García Canclini (1995) abandon detailed description of the social organisation of cultural contacts and exchanges. One would have imagined this – including the history of imperialism and colonialism – to be central to anthropology.

It is no longer so unusual to argue the continued relevance of a concept of *habitus* in the epoch of 'globalisation'. Multinational corporations recognise this in manufacturing different versions of products, from soft drinks to clothing, for markets that are distinct. It is more difficult to see this in the cultural fields of music and images, which are relatively removed from structures of social reproduction. Whereas there is a close correlation between occupation (or father's occupation) and type of housing, furniture, clothing and education, it may be more difficult to trace this for musical preferences. Within the social structure, a *habitus* is a matter of correspondences between position within the social and economic field, but it has also to be described in ethnographic detail.

The term 'scene' is used here in the same way it is used within the punk scene. This is different from the definition proposed by Straw for whom a musical scene

is 'that cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilisation' (Straw 1991, p. 372). Straw is saying that the Montreal scene (for example) has a wide variety of music practices, reflecting the diversity of the city's population and the influence of many types of recorded music on the city's musicians. The notion of a 'Montreal sound' obviously makes little sense. When punks use the term 'scene' they mean the active creation of infrastructure to support punk bands and other forms of creative activity. This means finding places to play, building a supportive audience, developing strategies for living cheaply, shared punk houses, and such like. At times some cities seem to provide an environment in which this can be achieved more easily: Montreal and Vancouver have often had more vibrant punk scenes than Toronto. Punk scenes are organised in urban geographies which make it easy or difficult and which ultimately affect the type of scene that emerges. The line between the scene and non-punk musical practices is not fixed. Struggles over the boundaries of the music and style are often what is at issue within the subculture itself. For some people, punk *must* have an oppositional political practice. Others reject leftist and anarchist politics as an imposition from outside. In Toronto there is an important indie rock scene that does not consider itself to be punk even though its sound and values often overlap.¹

This article is not about the first generation of punk bands in England and the United States. Instead it focuses on punk scenes at different points in Washington, Austin, Toronto and Mexico City.² It also tries to describe some specific conduits through which punk travels and what happens to it when it arrives. These descriptions must be somewhat tentative, though they are as carefully documented as possible. Nonetheless what emerges clearly is the complete inadequacy of theories of disembodied 'flows' or generalised accounts of cultural hybridity. Instead what is needed is careful description of the social organisation of 'travelling punk'. In terms of its sound and its organisation, it is very different in each of these cities.

Washington D.C.

One of the advantages of looking at the scene in Washington is that it has been extraordinarily well documented by those participating in it. There is an excellent photographic book (Connolly, Clague and Cheslow 1988), a detailed history of the scene (Andersen and Jenkins 2001), important video documents (Small and Stuart 1983; Minor Threat 1988; Cohen and Fugazi 1999) and complete CD retrospectives exist for many bands. A key member of the scene, Ian MacKaye of Dischord Records, has given many in-depth and highly articulate interviews (see Sinker 2001). He himself speaks of a regional accent that makes the scene in his city different from others. It is somewhat more difficult to describe this accent. After fast hardcore bands like the early Bad Brains and Minor Threat, a second generation of groups starting with Rites of Spring pioneered a sophisticated and experimental brand of punk music. The tag of 'emo' (short for 'emotional') was attached and the music is typified by musical complexity and dramatic changes in tempo. It moved considerably beyond punk music of inept musicians, three chords and 4:4 time. It also developed a relationship to community politics in Washington D.C. that was often understated and agonised.

This is quite different from the explicit political statements of bands like Crass in England or the Dead Kennedys in San Francisco.

The scene in Washington in 1976 was influenced by records and magazine articles about groups in New York and London and later by the example of West Coast bands such as Black Flag, Circle Jerks and the Dead Kennedys, but was made possible by several local factors. Among these was Georgetown University's radio station, which played punk until it was closed down apparently because of its lesbian, gay and pro-abortion programming, the initial willingness of some clubs to let punk bands play, and after that the availability of art and community spaces. A local punk store was also important. There was also the existence of a younger group of punks based mainly in two schools: one a public high school and the other exclusive and private. Initially most people attracted to punk were in their early to mid-twenties, but this younger group was influenced by the charisma and manic speed of Bad Brains, one of the few black punk bands and based in Washington. This younger group actively disliked New York and was committed to creating a scene in their city. 'I realized that Boston didn't have anything like that', said the founder of the Boston band SSD when he heard about what was happening in Washington (Anderson and Jenkins 2001, p. 102).

There were a variety of punk bands in Washington including those inspired by British punk, new wave power pop and artier bands. Within this field there emerged the now-famous groups on the independent Dischord label: Teen Idles, Minor Threat, Rites of Spring and eventually Fugazi. An important factor in this is the personal integrity of Ian MacKaye, from an academic family whose parents brought their young children to peace demonstrations in the 1960s. Nonetheless he went to a public high school and worked part time jobs as a teenager. Moving out from this one would need to talk about the *contrasts* within the city of Washington: upscale club and shopping districts (place to work and buy punk records) along with poor Black and Latino neighbourhoods (cheap shared houses and community spaces to rent for shows). The ideological elements of many Dischord bands should be situated within a *habitus* that includes the personal and the social geography of the city. These elements are the philosophy of straight edge, best understood as a matter of personal integrity rather than giving in to group pressures around drinking, sex and drugs. The second is an emphasis on individual honesty, or in some cases an understated emphasis on spirituality, wrongly labelled from the beginning by a journalist as 'emo'. The third is a solid commitment to benefit shows for community institutions in the poorer part of the city. This practical assistance contrasts with a general tendency to avoid explicitly leftist politics.³ A fourth element is the rejection of the corporate rock industry. 'I think it's great', said MacKaye in the early 1980s, 'what is happening right now, this kind of local or regional music scene, as opposed to the nationwide music we've been living with all these years' (Anderson and Jenkins 2001, p. 112).

There were bands in Washington that played power pop or arty new wave. Not all bands played Dischord's genre of hardcore. As well as this, quite early on the bands had to deal with a scene that rapidly expanded beyond the initial groups of friends and did not necessarily share their values. A successful band like Minor Threat could quickly seem to be the punk establishment for new groups of musicians. These difficulties in expanding beyond an initial local scene

multiplied many years later with the success of Fugazi. Rather than shift to postmodern theory to describe this, and abandon notions of place (the Washington hardcore scene) for concepts of the 'space' of media apparatuses, it is more useful to look at the strategies that the band developed to deal with this situation. These are well-known: the refusal to sign with a major label and to give interviews to major rock magazines, the insistence on all-ages shows at \$5 or \$6, low-priced records marketed without hype, a refusal to sell Fugazi merchandise, and so on. And on the positive side there was a practical commitment to supporting scenes outside Washington and to benefit shows within the city. These strategies in concrete situations make a lot more sense than the emptiness of academic 'postmodern' theory.

Austin, Texas

Again, against Appadurai's notions of *mediascape* and *ideoscape* it can be shown that punk travels to Austin in the 1970s through quite specific conduits. These are the circulation of fanzines among rock fans, the distribution of recordings through an alternative record store in Austin and the arrival of the Sex Pistols tour to San Antonio in January 1978. As Barry Shank shows in his fine ethnographic study of rock in Austin, the existence of the University of Texas as a cultural oasis in an otherwise conservative state was crucial. Many of the initial participants in the punk scene in the city were students of radio, television and film at the university. Punk rock in Austin took a particular form, grafting itself onto clubs and a scene that was experiencing the decline of progressive country music. This social scene is depicted in Richard Linklaker's movie *Slacker* (1991) about a generation living a punk lifestyle around the university. Along with students they make up the audience – and often the musicians – for much live music in the city. The soundtrack of the film includes many Austin bands.⁴ In the liner notes to The Huns, *Live at the Palladium 1979*, drummer and songwriter Tom Huckabee writes: 'We weren't punks, we were assholes . . . Assholes are punks whose parents put them through college, pay their rent and bail them out of jail'.

Shank's book *Dissonant Identities* also has an interesting theoretical framework. He defines a scene in semiotic terms as an over-productive signifying community.

The constitutive feature of local scenes of live musical performance is their evident display of semiotic disruption, their potentially dangerous overproduction and exchange of musical signs of identity and community. Through this display of more than can be understood, encouraging the rational recombination of elements of the human in new structures of identification, local rock'n'roll scenes produce momentary transformations within dominant cultural meanings. (Shank 1994, p. 122)

This definition seems particularly appropriate for punk and punk-influenced groups such as the Butthole Surfers characterised by carnivalesque experimentation. Shank develops an interesting description of adolescent desire (not restricted to teenagers but including students and social dropouts) for an imaginary identification with a band in performance. The term is from Lacan and describes a misrecognition that cannot be sustained. Shank describes bands in which notions of personal authenticity are highly valued and which also play at the edges of symbolic intelligibility. This does seem to call for some notion of unconscious processes and clearly this is generalisable beyond this scene. In Washington, Ian MacKaye and Fugazi seem to spend an amount of energy dealing with such processes,

insisting that 'we owe you nothing'. Nonetheless, Shank's emphasis on performance and desire has the result that if a political hardcore scene like that around ABC No Rio in New York exists in Austin, it falls beneath his field of vision.⁵

Toronto, Ontario

In 1976–7 Toronto was an important venue for bands like the Ramones, Talking Heads, Wayne County and The Cramps. Many played Toronto before they got a show in New York. The Ramones played there a lot, doing a triangle between Boston, New York and Toronto. Around 1977 there was a wide range of styles with local bands including the Viletones, Teenage Head (from Hamilton), Diodes, Johnny and the G Rays, Government, The Ugly, The Curse, The Mods, The Scenics and Battered Wives. The connection with art college was important for some bands. In the Summer of 1977 the basement of the Centre for Experimental Art and Communication at 15 Duncan Street, just below Queen Street, was turned into a club called Crash'n'Burn (the subject of a 1977 film by Ross McLaren). That January the Diodes opened for Talking Heads at a gig at the Ontario College of Art. In June they played the Colonial 'Underground' but they were so noisy that the owner unplugged them. The cops were called and because of the resulting fights the Diodes were banned. Their next show was in the basement of CEAC. At that time Queen Street was an abandoned strip of Toronto. It had bars like the Horseshoe and the Beverley that were willing to put on shows. The Ontario College of Art was just around the corner. Bands started for the first time to put posters on poles to advertise their shows.

In Toronto the new wave was as much about image as music.⁶ Writing in the first issues of *Shades*, Andy Payne talked about the difficulty of going in new directions with the punk sound. He divided Toronto groups into artsy-sissy (the Dishes, the Cads) and the quasi-nihilistic (the Viletones, the Ugly). How often can you hear Nazi-Dog of the Viletones threaten to commit suicide before it gets boring? Andy Payne liked Teenage Head, a hard-rocking band from Hamilton influenced by MC5 and the Stooges. The only drawback to following Teenage Head 'was avoiding their Hamilton disciples, who entertained themselves between sets by messing up Toronto gays. Unfortunately some guy wearing an eyepatch and a black leather jacket decided I was queer and punched me in the face'.

Toronto's female punk band was The Curse. They first played on 3 and 4 June 1977 at Crash'n'Burn, opening for the Viletones. The Curse also played the Canada night at CBGBs in New York on 6 July 1977 with the Cramps, Diodes, Teenage Head and the Viletones. Many of The Curse's songs deal with sex and exploitation. Writing in the *Globe and Mail*, Kay Armitage said: 'Their sound, with its high pitched screeching vocals, is entirely different from that of the male punk bands, and that's clearly part of their appeal. Through their lyrics, appearance and performance style, The Curse present themselves as tough, strong, aggressive young women working in an idiom that's new and open enough to accommodate them'. However, an article in *The Varsity* in October 1977 said that in spite of their macho put-on, the Curse would like it known that they are not dykes.

It was not easy to sing about 'No Future' with any credibility in Canada in the mid-1970s. Unlike England, this country was enjoying a period of economic prosperity. Bands like the Ramones were an inspiration but they were ten years older than the Toronto groups and in the words of Stephen Leckie of the Viletones,

'sinfully ugly'. From the beginning, punk in Toronto was having an identity crisis. CBS records signed the Diodes and Teenage Head continued to play Queen St bars. There was a feminist campaign to force Battered Wives to change their name and they became the Wives. A gay new wave band called TBA became the darlings of the scene. A punk record store called the Record Peddler existed by the late 1970s and it was associated with a label called Fringe Records. The Toronto magazine *Shades* covered the local and international new wave scenes.

However Vancouver, with bands like D.O.A. and Subhumans, had a far more important scene than Toronto. Joey Keithley of D.O.A. explains that he moved to Toronto for a few months in 1978 because he had heard the city was a punk mecca. It was a big mistake. He explains the vibrant scene that developed in Vancouver: 'The original gigs in Vancouver weren't in bars, they were all at halls. People would rent community centres, so that it opened it up to a much wider swath of people, which made it much less like a bar scene and much more like a community scene. As well, on the political side, a lot of anarchists got involved in it, which really helped politicise things. At the same time there were a bunch of kids from the suburbs who moved in and made Vancouver their home or a place to play. There weren't a lot of groups from Vancouver itself' (Manley 1993, p. iv). Bands on the West coast also had the advantage that they could tour from Vancouver to San Diego relatively easily. D.O.A. frequently played in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

In the mid-1980s there was a relatively active hardcore scene in Toronto. The Record Peddler was open on Carleton Street and sold underground comics and zines as well as recorded music. Some punks frequented an unlicensed after-hours club called The Twilight Zone. A documentary made in 1983-4 (Taylor and Mowbray 1984) records the music scene around a bar called Larry's Hideaway with bands such as Bunchofuckingoofs, Direct Action, Jolly Tambourine Man and Youth, Youth, Youth. These were mainly fast hardcore bands. Some punks in the Kensington Market area tried to live an anarchist lifestyle. While the aggressive music and slam pits attracted some people, others developed thoughtful critiques of mainstream society and nuclear weapons in the Reagan era. The documentary was called *Not Dead Yet*.

By the 1990s, the scene in Toronto was fragmented. Venues for shows sprung up only to close months later. Some punks continued to live in Kensington Market until gentrification and rising rents in the late 1990s squeezed them out. Toronto's urban geography is quite different from many cities in the United States. There are few rundown areas that might provide venues for punk shows or low-cost housing for punks. A small straight edge scene began to emerge, mainly in the suburbs, but avoided the extremism of straight edge in the United States. It is difficult to describe a scene in Toronto because it seems more a matter of small groups of bands in relation to music and trends from the United States. One Blood in the early 1990s is a straightedge band with political lyrics. Chokehold also had political lyrics but was enormously popular with violent dancing straightedge kids in the United States. Shotmaker was part of the underground 'emo' scene and toured in the United States in the mid-1990s. (They were actually not from Toronto but had close connections with the city.) There was a minimal infrastructure, especially the Toronto Hardcore Hotline, which advertised local shows and attempted to link the different parts of the scene.⁷

Mexico City

It is estimated that today there are 5,000 punks in Mexico City and there are often two or three underground shows a week. Except for local fanzines and occasional reports, this vibrant scene has not been much documented.⁸ It may be tempting to view it simply as an example of postmodern deterritorialisation (García Canclini 1995). For example, there is a group of punks in Mexico City who all have nicknames taken from *Star Wars* movies. In itself this observation is very thin ethnography. Many punk nicknames in Mexico refer to the body as in *Flaco* (thin) or personality *Lágrima* (teardrop), or to specifically Mexican institutions such as *Radio Mil* (a popular radio station). But it is even more important to notice that just about every punk in Mexico City has a nickname whereas this is not the case in other scenes. In Toronto only street punks, who make up a relatively small part of the scene, regularly have nicknames. The difference is due to different patterns of social life in Mexico and an oral culture in which many ordinary Mexicans are given nicknames by their friends. Similarly, Mexican punks make great use of patches of bands and political slogans. In a society where much emphasis is placed on dressing neatly, punks stand out by their use of brightly coloured patches on their pants and jackets. Patches are still used in Europe and North America but mainly by the 'crusty' scene made up of street-involved punks. How should the exuberance of Mexican patches be explained? A little reflection suggests that it is an inexpensive way of altering clothing (patches sell in the El Chopo market for as little as ten US cents). But more careful observation in Mexico City shows that silkscreen equipment is easily available and quite widely used outside the punk scene for printing t-shirts, posters, business cards, etc.

Of course, punk did not originate in Mexico City. Asked about the most important punk bands in Mexico, one friend answers: La Polla Records (Spain), Chaos UK (England) and Dead Kennedys (USA). Because of important differences in social structure, the processes by which punk travels and changes are more visible in Mexico City than in Washington, Austin or Toronto. This is especially noticeable in the way punk history is told. The Sex Pistols are a starting point everywhere, but in Mexico their working class origin is always stressed. Political punks will make the connection between the Sex Pistols and the Situationists, but everybody rejects outright that they had a strong base in art schools.⁹ The connection to art school simply makes no sense in Mexico. The political statements of The Clash earn them a place in the Mexican history of punk, though they are also criticised for being on a major label and their subsequent rock star lifestyle. For some Mexican punks who prefer a more hardcore sound, the combat rock sound is also too marketable.

Language is a key factor in the conduits through which punk travels. Some Mexican punks have a basic English vocabulary learned through singing along with tapes of bands from England and North America. Visitors to Mexico can expect to spend time explaining Dead Kennedys lyrics to their Mexican friends. However internationalist the movement, there is nonetheless a strong preference for lyrics in Spanish. One popular band in Mexico is La Furia, a band from Spain with covers of early Clash songs translated into Spanish. Interviewed in the fanzine *Profane Existence* in 1998, the Spanish anarcho-punk group Sin Dios explained their relative

obscurity in the United States by the language barrier and promised to add English translations of their lyrics. Nor surprisingly, Sin Dios are huge in the Mexican scene where they have done two successful and completely non-commercial tours. There was some good-natured heckling of the *gachupines*, a mildly derisive term for Spaniards in Mexico.

Punk shows (called *tocadas* in Mexico) rarely take place in clubs or bars. Many punks come from established working-class backgrounds and in their neighbourhood can get access to a basketball court or community centre. Shows take place in these venues, usually in remote areas of the city. They start in late afternoon and end early enough so that people can make the journey home, often three hours or more by public transit. Many bands play and they usually share equipment, something that is very unusual in North America. The most usual musical style is fast three-chord punk with political lyrics. Large aggressive pits form for popular bands and the dance style (*el slam*) is the same as in California in the early 1980s. People speak about the need to release the frustrations accumulated from everyday life. A considerable number of women participate in the slam, protesting only at obvious sexual groping by drunken boys. This type of slam dancing has almost completely disappeared from the underground punk scene in the United States and Canada.

Unlike North America, bands seldom release music on vinyl or CDs. The preferred medium is tape cassettes that are sold in the El Chopo market for the equivalent of two or three US dollars. One respected Mexican punk band is Massacre 68, which plays straightforward fast punk with highly political lyrics. The band's name is a reference to the police massacre of protesting students in Mexico City in 1968. Unlike North America, the political punks in Mexico belong to collectives. These organise shows (often benefits for community organisations), publish fanzines and release music on cassette tapes. The collectives are frequently home to one or more punk bands. An example of this is the group Disobediencia Civil, which plays slightly more frantic music than Massacre 68 but has equally political lyrics. A sign of the *habitus* of Mexican punk is the complete impossibility here of Washington D.C. 'emo' style. Whereas Minor Threat is much admired, Fugazi is almost unknown. As a musical style and personal statement, in Mexico 'emo' is unintelligible to the punk scene. Attempts to explain it end in puzzlement and the suggestion that these bands have simply sold out for commercial reasons.

Conclusion

Theoretical arguments about cultural hybridity and disembodied flows of ideas and media in space are usually made against simple concepts of place, community and shared culture. There is obviously no self-contained punk culture located in the four cities examined here. The social structure and musical style of punk in Washington or Austin cannot be explained by some kind of cultural essence of these cities. But the obvious inadequacy of this position does not mean that the alternative theory of hybrids and postmodern flows is correct either.¹⁰ Most of these postmodern arguments are made with dramatic examples rather than careful ethnographic research. The argument made here is that the conduits through which musical culture flow are not random but have a social organisation. This is often difficult to document but this does not mean that the only alternative is chaos theory. The second argument is that the punk scenes in Washington, Austin,

Toronto and Mexico City are quite different. This difference can be explained by the social geography of each city as the field in which punks actively struggle to create a scene. Each city provides a different set of resources and difficulties including the availability of places for bands to play, housing, record stores and such like.

One well-documented conduit of punk is the band on tour. Bands frequently publish tour diaries and make videos. The film *Another State of Mind* documents a tour in 1982 through the United States and Canada by the bands Social Distortion and Youth Brigade. This was part of the 'positive punk' movement which tried to break with the negativity of early punk bands (Goldthorpe 1992). Early tours like this created a nexus of promoters, venues and places to stay that continues to support touring bands today. The key moments in the film are arrival of the bands at established punk houses in Calgary, Canada and Washington D.C. (Dischord house). These provide friendly supportive places for the band members in what was otherwise a difficult and stressful tour.

Another example is the two tours of Mexico by the Chicago hardcore band Los Crudos. With the release of their first 7-inch record (available on cassette in the El Chopo market), the band was enormously popular in Mexico. Among the reasons for this are political lyrics in Spanish, a frantic musical style that fits Mexican punk, the band's DIY philosophy and powerful performances by the band's singer. Nonetheless the singer's tour diary published in *Error* zine in 1995 documents sickness from food, high levels of stress negotiating the chaos of Mexico City and a very different daily life from Chicago. The band's most successful shows were in outlying neighbourhoods, sometimes organised a day or two before. A Mexican promoter organised the most problematic show of the first tour in an arena that used to be the Olympic swimming pool. It featured some local bands that had long since turned commercial. The more political Mexican punks protested at the high admission price that was enforced against the wishes of Los Crudos. When the band returned a few years later to tour Mexico a second time, they had better connections and were able to avoid this type of exploitation. However, like all visitors to the Mexico City scene, they still have to negotiate long-standing rivalries between the different local collectives.

The term 'scene' is used here in the same way it is used by punks. A scene is something that takes work to create. It requires local bands that need places to live, practice spaces and venues to play. To do this within the punk ethic of low-cost and preferably all-ages shows requires hard work, ingenuity and local contacts. A scene also needs infrastructure such as record stores, recording studios, independent labels, fanzines and ideally a non-profit-making community space (O'Connor 1999). Perhaps the most difficult matter is an audience to support bands and attend shows. The difficulty is that with a punk scene the audience should become more than that, but the exact nature of the participation is a matter of continual debate and struggle. It is obvious that Mexico City has a 'better' scene than Toronto. The scene in Washington D.C. has gone through its ups and downs (this kind of cyclical metaphor is very common). The reasons for this are complex and include the break up of bands for personal reasons, the availability of places to play, cheap housing and the social structure of each city. Within this field, groups of punks struggle to create the best scene they can in the circumstances that face them. It is this emphasis on practice and struggle that is lacking in most academic theories of postmodern hybridity. The professors aren't punks.

Endnotes

1. Bourdieu (1996) points out that some of the hardest-fought disputes within artistic fields are about their boundaries. The most notorious attempt to police the boundaries of punk was the refusal of the zine *Maximumrocknroll* in the 1990s to review music that fell outside its acoustic definition of punk sound. This gave almost instant importance to *Punk Planet* and *Heartattack* zines which reviewed the music that MRR rejected.
2. It must therefore be insisted that Hebdidge's (1979) brilliant account of punk in London in the 1970s be located in that place and time. Finnegan (1989) describes some early 1980s punk rock groups in the town of Milton Keynes, but they seem to be isolated groups of musicians. The bands described in Cohen (1991) consider themselves to have an 'alternative' sound but are not part of a politically conscious punk scene. In contrast, McKay (1996) includes a discussion of the influential English band Crass. In the United States punk subculture transformed itself and went underground. Some general accounts of this include James (1988), Goldthorpe (1992), O'Hara (1995), Goshert (2000) and Sinker (2001).
3. Not all Dischord bands avoid leftist politics. Among those with political lyrics are Beefeater whose 1985 album *Plays for Lovers* has songs about Reaganomics, native issues and right-wing religion.
4. *Cool Beans* magazine (1996) did a special issue on Texas with a CD which includes a live show by the punk band the Dicks in 1980 and also later experimental musical groups such as 3 Day Stubble and the Butthole Surfers. In some of these groups, especially the Dicks, the acoustic references to Texas blues and country music is quite evident.
5. The first generation of punk in New York City is well documented (Heylin 1993). This is followed in the mid-1980s by a hardcore and straightedge scene around CBGBs (Hurley 1989). In the late 1980s and early 1990s there is another generation of bands loosely associated with the ABC No Rio community space in the Lower Eastside. These bands include Born Against and Go and they play fast hardcore with radical political lyrics. This scene is documented in the ABC No Rio. (c.1997) video and influenced the band Los Crudos, based in Chicago.
6. The Dishes *Hot Property* 7-inch was a project of the art/performance group General Idea who also produced a (disappointing) special issue of their magazine FILE on punk. For a more substantial journalistic account, see Livingstone (1980) who insists on the regional nature of contemporary punk scenes.
7. Toronto at different times has a stronger underground film and 'zine scene. Sometimes the same people make super-8 films, organise zine fests and play in punk bands. For some recent aspects of the Toronto scene, see O'Connor (1999; 2001b).
8. In English there is an article by Quiroz (1993). For some ethnographic description of the Mexican punk scene, see O'Connor (2001a; b). Paredes Pachó (1992) and Martínez (1992) both describe the indie rock and not the punk scene in Mexico. Rock bands have a vested interest in emphasising their 'street credibility' and try to blur what in Mexico is a very sharp line between commercial groups and the punk underground.
9. The connection between punk and art school is made by Firth and Horne (1987), though John Lydon (1994) makes a very convincing case for the relevance of social class.
10. For an account of MC5 as a political intervention in the context of Detroit, see Waksman (1998). Keil (1966) is still worth reading as a skilful exploration of the relationship between music, place and politics. My own sense of an urban *habitus* follows Bourdieu (1996).

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