SUBCULTURES INTERNATIONAL: THE GLOBAL CIRCULATION OF STYLE

University of West London
June 19th 2015

This one day symposium will consider the international flow and local configuration of subcultural styles, fashions and identities. Focusing on the development of local, trans-local and global subcultural scenes, the symposium will discuss the ways in which circulation, space and place work to create, shape and limit the nature of subcultural expression. Particular attention will be afforded to the worldwide processes of subcultural transmission and exchange, and their relation to issues of age, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality.

Speakers confirmed include Prof. Hilary Pilkington (University of Manchester) and Prof. Carol Tilloch (University of the Arts, London). The symposium is funded by the AHRC and is organised by the Subcultures Network, The University of West London, and London Metropolitan University.

For more information on the work of the Subcultures Network see www.reading.ac.uk/history/research/subcultures

This is a free event but you must register to attend.
Please email: globalfashion@uwl.ac.uk
Subcultures International: The Global Circulation of Style.
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All sessions will take place in
University of West London
Lawrence Hall
St Mary’s Road
Ealing
London W5 5RF
- PROGRAMME -

09.30-10.00  Registration and Tea / Coffee.
10.00-10.15  Welcome.
10.15-11.15  Keynote 1

Hilary Pilkington - Punk as Practice: Rethinking Punk from a Post-Socialist Perspective.

11.15-11.30  Tea / Coffee.

Marleen de Witte - From Bokoe to Azonto: How Being African Became Cool in Amsterdam Southeast.


Claire Nally - Neo-Traditional Femininities in UK and US Goth Culture.

Caroline Hodges - Luchary Gozar: The Performativity of ‘Chicha’ as Urban Popular Culture in Lima, Peru.

13.10-14.00  Lunch.
14.00-15.40  Panel B – Music, Subcultures and Localities.

Zoe Armour - Beyond Nocturnal Visibility in Late 90s UK Club Culture: Sartorial Differences at Gatecrasher, PaSSion, and Sundissential?

Karenza Moore - Cyberkids and ‘Invisible’ Trancers: 20 Years of Trance Scene Styles in the UK and Beyond.


15.40-16.00  Tea / Coffee.
16.00-17.00  Keynote 2

Carol Tulloch - Rock Against Racism: Style as Graphic Argument.

17.00 – 17.30  Closing Comments.
- ABSTRACTS -

Keynote 1

**Punk as Practice: Rethinking Punk from a Post-Socialist Perspective.**
Hilary Pilkington (University of Manchester).

This paper considers the implications for ‘subcultural theory’ of the findings of research into contemporary punk scenes in three former socialist societies (Russia, Croatia and eastern Germany). It argues that punk in these settings cannot be identified as a classic ‘subculture’ if we understand that as a discrete cultural form contained within stylistic boundaries or social groupings. However, if we shift our gaze from the question of form to that of substance of ‘subculture’, it is argued, punk continues to flourish, being experienced and enacted as a diverse range of cultural practices.

Drawing on ethnographic studies of three Russian punk scenes – in the cities of St Petersburg, Krasnodar and Vorkuta – this paper traces punk as encountered in the everyday enactment of a range of cultural practices. These practices may include ‘spectacular’, style-based practices but only as part of a broader range of everyday communicative, musical, territorial, sporting, educational, informal economy and alcohol and drug using practices. These practices are not exclusive to ‘ punks’; indeed the fact that they transcend ‘subcultural’ boundaries helps us understand how punk lives are embedded in the ‘everyday’. These shared cultural practices, it is argued further, generate affective bonds that are often more meaningful than the practices themselves; punk scenes are often described and observed as being rooted in ‘friendship’ or experienced as ‘family’. Finally, it is suggested, punk as cultural practice must be understood within the social structures and local contexts that shape the evolution and current composition of punk scenes as well as the varying significance attached on those scenes to inter-personal bonds, individual creativity and political positioning.

This paper draws on data from the AHRC-funded project ‘Post-socialist punk: the double irony of self-abasement’ coordinated by the author and the Russian case study findings published as Gololobov, I., Pilkington, H. and Steinholt, Y.B. (2014) *Punk in Russia: Cultural Mutation from the ‘Useless’ to the ‘Moronic’*, London and New York: Routledge.

Keynote 2

**Rock Against Racism: Style as Graphic Argument.**
Carol Tulloch (University of the Arts, London / V&A).

This paper looks at the style narratives of black and white contributors to the Rock Against Racism Movement in Britain between 1976 and 1981. Through the range of styles worn by RAR activists and supporters at demonstrations, gigs, carnivals and festivals, the paper considers the concept of ‘quotation’ and ‘versioning’ as presented by Dick Hebdige in *Cut ‘n’ Mix* (1987). Such a process provides space for improvisation in order to produce fresh thinking on an issue. Another consideration is, should the styles worn by contributors to RAR be placed under the heading of subcultural style if RAR is to be taken seriously as an historical moment of anti-racist activism? If these style are to be considered in this context does this lessen the historical and cultural value of RAR, and if this line of thinking is pursued then what am I saying about the cultural and critical value of subcultural style?
Panel A – International Styles / Local Identities.

From Bokoe to Azonto: How Being African Became Cool in Amsterdam Southeast.
Marleen de Witte (University of Amsterdam)

This contribution focuses on the recent emergence of an ‘Afro-Dutch’ category of self-identification among young people in Amsterdam’s ‘Black’ Southeast district. Since a few years, young Dutch people of what in official discourse would be termed ‘different ethnic backgrounds’ – ‘Surinamese’, ‘Antillean’, ‘Ghanaian’, and ‘other Africans’ – show a new sense of (and search for) a shared African heritage, and a growing desire for public exposure and recognition of their Africanness. Being hotly debated as part of identity politics, Africanness is also, and increasingly so, mobilized in the arena of lifestyle and entertainment, manifesting in, for example, (social) media initiatives, performing arts, popular culture, and bodily fashions. A great variety of cultural entrepreneurs, from fashion designers, lifestyle magazines, and dance groups to bloggers, DJs, and other tastemakers, address a growing local market for African styles. Inspired by globally circulating images and sounds of Africanness, and thriving on aesthetic appeal, design, and marketing, they invest ‘being African’ with an aura of urban cool that attracts increasing numbers of young people and provide them with the materials with which to flesh out their – often newly found – identities.

Drawing upon on-going ethnographic fieldwork in Amsterdam Southeast, this paper argues for approaching ‘Afro-Dutch’ as a subcultural style rather than a given ethnic identity. It thus calls attention to the process of becoming Afro-Dutch and the practices of self-styling that are part of this process. Discussing examples from the realms of music, dance, and fashion, the paper disentangles the different spatial levels in which young black people’s adoption of African music, dance, and fashion styles is situated: the global circulation of African popular cultural styles; the representation of Africa and Africans in the national mainstream media; and shifts in the very localized dynamics between Dutch-born Afro-Caribbeans and African postmigrants.

Peter Hughes Jachimiak (University of South Wales).

This paper is concerned with the Minets, who – according to Farid Chenoune’s A History of Men’s Fashion (1993) – were ‘Mods à la francaise’. The earliest stirrings of the Minet style was to be detected in 1962, in-and-around Le Drugstore, a café boutique on the Champs-Elysées frequented by youths from the city’s most prestigious high schools and colleges. Thus, unlike their British counterparts (who were working-class with middle-class aspirations) the Minets – raised amid the comfortable confines of well-to-do Parisian families – were resolutely upper-middle-class. Meanwhile, Eric Musgrave, in Sharp Suits (2009), noted that the ‘style provider’ for the Minets was the tailor Renoma. Utilizing patterns imported from England, Renoma introduced angular-framed, three-button suits that were fitted to the extreme. Adopting a concave template from the shoulders to the waist, a narrow-chested, boyish ‘pagoda’ silhouette was thus ushered in. As such, throughout this paper, particular attention will be afforded to subcultural circulation of style, space and place, and their relation to issues of class and gender.

With a penchant for all things English, the Minets could be seen flaunting this upper-middle-class-ness through the wearing of such narrow-shouldered three-piece suits in grey or brown flannel or navy-blue serge, houndstooth hunting jackets, and crest-pocketed, double-breasted
blazers (worn with diagonal-striped club or regimental ties). On their feet were the most exclusive of English brogues and loafers (cherishing such traditional shoemakers as Church’s, Weston’s, Bunting and John Lobb). Thus, having adopted such a ‘Frenglish’ style, the Minets could be understood to exemplify – as this paper will make explicit – the international flow, and local configuration, of subcultural styles, fashions and identities. By 1965 this Frenglish style was broadened out even further with the Minets’ adoption of US Ivy League fashions: A truly Anglo-American style, this so-called ‘Kennedy look’ was a clear example of worldwide processes of subcultural transmission and exchange which this paper aims to explore.

Neo-Traditional Femininities in UK and US Goth Culture
Claire Nally (University of Northumbria)

All her favourite rags are worn and other kinds of uniform
They kid you you’re really free
A case of individuality

In 2004, Amy C. Wilkins argued that goth subcultures represent a ‘celebration of sexuality as resources to resist mainstream notions of passive femininity’. However, I would argue gendered representations on the scene a significantly more complex, both in terms of fashion and sexual representation.

Subcultures are frequently and mistakenly represented as ‘idyllic’ spaces in which the free play of gender functions as separate and distinct from the ‘mainstream’ culture. However, as Brill (2008) and Catherin Spooner (forthcoming) have identified, this is unfortunately an idealistic critical position. Whilst goth men may embrace an ‘androgynous’ appearance, goth women frequently espouse a look which has much in common with traditional feminine values. Slippages between subculture and mainstream are frequent and often neo-traditional in their message regarding masculinity and femininity. By close inspection of UK and US subcultural magazines – Gothic Beauty (US) and Unscene and Devolution (UK) – I would argue women’s goth fashion and body image often (but not exclusively) represents a hyperfemininity, which draws more from conventional ideas of womanhood than many members of the scene may openly acknowledge.

Luchary Gozar: The Performativity of ‘Chicha’ as Urban Popular Culture in Lima, Peru.
(Caroline E. M. Hodges, Bournemouth University).

Lima is increasingly represented by the urban popular; a fusion of Andean, Costeña, Amazonian and urban culture within an increasingly global marketplace, which gives rise to new struggles over representation. The city’s socio-cultural composition has been reconfigured by the ‘nuevos Limeños’ who, from the 1950s, arrived in the capital in search of better opportunities. Today, the cultural presence and agency of these communities is reflected in varied cultural practices and forms of expression – including music and visual design, contributing to a compendium of ‘sub-cultures’, which manifest as a fusion of unexpected mixtures produced when global, local, rural and urban influences, identities, practices and resources come together. Conceptually, Peruvian academics have come to think of this process of hybridity in terms of ‘achichamiento’ or a producing a ‘Chicha’ aesthetic (Quispe, 2004; León, 2008). ‘Chicha’, the name traditionally given to a fermented or non-
fermented beverage typically made out of corn found in Central and South America, is a highly contested term within Peru. This paper will focus specifically on ‘Chicha’ as ‘grafica popular’ and, in particular, the biographies of a small group of first and second generation protagonistas both agents who manoeuvre tactically within a constrained field of power and active producers of aesthetic objects. Through their varied stories of creative struggle, I will explore ‘Chicha’ in performative terms as the “manifestation of an intersection of varied and particular cultural scripts and practices” (Gregson and Rose, 2000: 433) with regards the social and symbolic meanings of ‘Chicha’ as vernacular/folk art and its position within contemporary urban popular culture in Lima. I will also consider how through creative labour such meanings are continuously being modified and transformed.

Panel B – Music, Subcultures and Localities.

Beyond Nocturnal Visibility in Late 90s UK Club Culture: Sartorial Differences at Gatecrasher, PaSSion, and Sundissential?

Zoe Armour (Leicester de Montfort University)

This paper explores a small sample of articulated personal experiences that create a sense of the individual and collective identity of the ‘clubber’ (Thornton, 1995) whose preference for electronic music often existed in a context outside the traditional frame of the free party DiY (Do-it-Yourself) ethos. DiY emphasised not only the freedom to party, but also to have fun without the need to exploit and/or monetise the dance event for personal gain. In this instance, I refer to a ‘second wave’ in which a commercially oriented underground clubbing scene, was generally accepted and populated by a late post boomer/ early echo generation who gathered at these legal venues. They attended what I call ‘official club spaces’ where many of these individuals found a regular home at the weekend, despite the emphasis on revenue as the main intention of the club owner.

For the purpose of this analysis, a comparison between clubbers re-remembered experiences are drawn from a series of interviews in which memories are illustrated from the following club nights: Gatecrasher, Passion, and Sundissential. Here the notion of ‘DiY’ is reinserted into the debate on club culture as the meaning of ‘underground’ is addressed through the impressions of individuals who found a sense of identity and group belonging through their participation in commercialised clubbing events. These were experiences of ‘socialisation’ that co-existed alongside an intrusive mediatisation of the event that failed to capture the significance and subcultural value of these chosen leisure practices.

Cyberkids and ‘Invisible’ Trancers: 20 Years of Trance Scene Styles in the UK and Beyond.

Karenza Moore (University of Lancaster).

Trance is a globally popular electronic dance music genre and subcultural scene with trans-local and local elements. I present an account of UK trance styles – incorporating music, clothing and drug fashions alongside bodily demeanours – over the last 20 years (1995 - 2015). In the mid-1990s UK trance scene, a highly visible subcultural style which came to be known as “cyber” emerged. Cyberkids actively defined themselves against the classed styles of ‘chavs’ or ‘scallies’. By the late 1990s/early 2000s cyber was itself denigrated as a stylistic marker of trance scene participation, with the trance brand Gatecrasher attempting to ban cyberkids from their flagship weekly trance night as the ‘fluorescent excess’ of cyber
increasingly became associated with recreational drug use and in particular the consumption of ecstasy (MDMA). Drawing on partial insider knowledge, participants’ personal accounts, mediated representations and the work of key subcultural theorists, I explore processes of transmission and exchange of trance styles during this period and analyse how social class, gender/sexuality and national identities were enacted through stylistic markers to include/exclude people from the trance scene and more broadly delineate dance music scene borders.

As global post-rave electronic dance music culture has developed, it is argued that participants have become somewhat less immediately identifiable. Contemporary trancers engage with an amorphous global, trans-local and local subcultural trance scene which has few definitive identifiable stylistic markers, but which remains differentiated according to immediate context, inclusionary/exclusionary practices, and the extent to which people are subject to the surveillance and securitisation practices of the modern neoliberal State. For scholars of the global circulation of subcultural styles – notably those interested in subcultures in which ‘moderate’ illegal recreational drug use is largely acceptable – it is relative stylistic invisibility which may lead to the downplaying of the significance of participation in dance music scenes going forward. Further, relative stylistic invisibility has other important implications such as for the targeting of ‘real-time’ drug harm reduction information.

**Indietracks Ain’t Noise Pollution: The International Indie-pop Underground Converges on a Rural Railway Museum near Ripley, Derbyshire.**

(Pete Dale, Manchester Metropolitan University)

‘Indie pop’, today, connotes different things to different people. Within a long term international underground subculture, however, indie pop is quite a particular scene. The earliest exponents of the subculture would probably be the Television Personalities, the Pastels and the groups associated with the Postcard label (in particular, Orange Juice). Within the UK, the high water mark is around 1986-7 when a whole generation of ‘cutie’ indie groups combined influences from key Sixties groups (the Byrds, the Velvets, etc.) with the melodic/romantic end of punk (Buzzcocks, Undertones and so forth). In the US, meanwhile, Beat Happening and their label K records spearheaded a correlative scene which became known as ‘twee pop’ in the Nineties. The Riot Grrrl scene also extended elements of indie pop in the Nineties. By the Noughties, significant scenes for this overall subcultural movement had developed in Spain, Sweden, France and elsewhere.

Since 2007, an annual festival called Indietracks has created an unusual space for the international tendrils of this indie pop subculture. Taking place at a rural, open air railway museum near Ripley in Derbyshire every July, Indietracks attracts around 1,500 indie pop fans from all over Europe and America for three days of live music and DJs. The selection of bands typically includes a mixture of Eighties ‘legends’ (Edwyn Collins or the Pastels) and obscurities from the Nineties alongside younger and older contemporary bands which seem to fit the indie pop template. Although somewhat restricted in ‘ethnic’ terms and arguably somewhat bourgeois in character, the festival is interesting not only for its sexual and gender politics but also for its pan-generational appeal. Focussing primarily on the latter elements, this paper suggests that Indietracks maintains a fascinating space for an underground subculture which has proved surprisingly resistant to being subsumed within mainstream pop culture.

Ruth Adams (King’s College, University of London)

This paper considers expressions of local, national and globalized identities in Grime, a subculture based around a type of electronic music, often featuring rap vocals, which emerged from East London in the early 2000s. A cultural manifestation of contemporary London as a post-colonial, multicultural city, Grime vividly expresses socio-linguistic and cultural developments in post-war, post-colonial, and arguably post-multicultural London. It articulates new types of identity, novel manifestations of being a Londoner, of being English, and is indicative of an apparently paradoxical combination of global cultural horizons, and often very restricted geographies.

Grime draws on a wide range of influences, including hip-hop, reggae, dancehall, jungle/drum’n’bass and UK Garage. The music and the vocal style of Grime reflect the ‘polyglot of hybrid sounds and voices found in London and other major cities that have experienced large scale migration and settlement’. It asserts a very English but truly hybrid identity. It demonstrates, like Les Back’s ethnographic studies, ‘a process whereby lexical terms filter through into a shared speech community’. It reflects a culture, ‘irretrievably “creolized”: mixed, impure, to the point where […] it becomes impossible to establish an authentic, definitive original…’

This globalized, postcolonial indeterminacy is contrasted, or perhaps compensated for by an intense localism. MCs identify themselves with particular parts of London, often very specifically by postcode. These narrow geographies reflect the reality of the lives of many young working-class people, particularly boys and young men. Their ‘ends’, suggests Ben Gidley, are ‘charged with a powerful ethical significance’, and this is one reason for the ‘symbolic importance of the image of the post-war council estate in grime music’.
How to get to the St Mary’s Road building

Walking from Ealing Broadway Tube – c. 20 mins:
Turn left outside Ealing Broadway tube
At the junction with The Broadway, cross over the road, and turn right, walking past HSBC, Barclays, Marks and Spencers, and following the road round into High Street.
Keep walking past Wagamamas, As Nature Intended, Oxfam, Starbucks
Carry straight on down the road with Ealing Green on your right, past Ealing Hammersmith and West London College, past Ealing Studios, past Casa Roberta
Arrive at the University of West London St Mary’s Road Building.

By bus from Ealing Broadway Tube – c. 10 minutes, buses every 9 minutes or so
Turn left outside Ealing Broadway tube and wait at bus stop F
Get the 65 Bus
Alight at Warwick Road/St Mary’s Road, stop B
Turn right and walk down to University of West London St Mary’s Road Building.

Walking from South Ealing Tube – c. 8 minutes
Turn left outside the tube, and cross over the road. Carry on walking down South Ealing Road, past the petrol station, taking the right fork into St Mary’s Road.
Walk past St. Mary’s church, and keep on walking past Munson’s until you reach the University of West London, St Mary’s Road building.

By bus from South Ealing Tube – c. 7 minutes, buses every 9 minutes or so
Turn right outside the tube, and wait at bus stop J.
Alight at Warwick Road, St Mary’s, stop L.
Turn right, cross over the road at the zebra crossing, and arrive at University of West London, St. Mary’s Road building.

Walking from Premier Inn, Ealing – c. 20 mins:
Turn left outside the hotel, past Ealing Town Hall
Carry on walking until you reach the junction with Pret a Manger and Marks and Spencers.
Turn right into High Street.
Keep walking past Wagamamas, As Nature Intended, Oxfam, Starbucks
Carry straight on down the road with Ealing Green on your right, past Ealing Hammersmith and West London College, past Ealing Studios, past Casa Roberta
Arrive at the University of West London St Mary’s Road Building.

By bus from Premier Inn, Ealing – c. 15 mins:
Turn left outside the hotel, past Ealing Town Hall
Carry on walking until you reach the junction with Pret a Manger and Marks and Spencers.
Turn right into High Street.
Outside Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre wait at Stop L for the 65 bus.
Alight at Warwick Road/St Mary’s Road, stop B
Turn right and walk down to University of West London St Mary’s Road Building.
Getting a cab:
Text CAB to 60835*, and you'll receive two licensed minicab numbers and one taxi (black cab) number straight back to your mobile phone by text. Uses GPS to determine location. 35p per enquiry.

Places to eat and drink in Ealing Broadway:
There are lots of places to choose from to eat and drink on Ealing Broadway, on the High Street, and on St Mary’s Road.

Santa Maria
Italian Pizzas
15 Saint Mary's Road, London W5 5RA
020 8579 1462

Turtle Bay
Caribbean Food
16 The High Street, Ealing, London W5 5DB
020 3067 0007

Limeyard
American classics
Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre, 8 High Street, London W5 5DB
020 8567 9056

The Grove
Gastropub
The Grove, London, Ealing W5 5QX
020 8567 2439

New Leaf
Chinese
35 Bond Street, London W5 5AS
020 8840 0788

Carluccio’s
Italian
5-6 The Green, London, Ealing W5 5DA
020 8566 4458

Côte
French brasserie
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