

Lecture Eleven: Identities

The End of Western Civilisation?

1. Hipsters My Ass!

"At some point in the last few years, the hipster changed. Or at least its definition did. What was once an umbrella term for a counter-culture tribe of young creative types in (mostly) [New York's Williamsburg](#) and London's Hackney morphed into a pejorative term for people who looked, lived and acted a certain way. The Urban Dictionary defines hipsters as "a subculture of men and women, typically in their 20s and 30s, that value independent thinking, counter-culture, progressive politics". In reality, the word is now tantamount to an insult."

<http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2014/jun/22/end-of-the-hipster-flat-caps-and-beards>

"You're a full-on hipster. The whole, highly punchable package. Stop pretending to be "a nerd" when you're actually quite good-looking. And take those oversized geeky glasses off, you've got perfect vision. Yes, we know you were into quizzes way before everyone else, you tedious tosser." <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/the-filter/10383674/Quiz-are-you-a-hipster.html>

"Comrade Stalin once observed that "Quantity has a quality all its own", and the sheer quantity of dickheads now wandering bemusedly around the world represents, in my view, a big shift in cultural dynamics."

<http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/09/will-self-awful-cult-talentless-hipster-has-taken-over>

"While the US hipster uniform merchant shrouds itself in ethical credentials – anti-sweatshop, pro-gay – Charney is cited in multiple sexual harassment lawsuits. But those sweet "legalise gay" t-shirts are enough to make many of us, myself included, turn a blind eye to everything going on beyond the cool, minimalistic storefronts."

<http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2014/06/dov-charney-terry-richardson-and-misogynistic-truth-about-hipster-cool>

On Sunday, the Observer asked, "Could it be that the flat-white-drinking, flat-cap-wearing hipster will soon cease to exist?" And in the Telegraph, confessing that you drink a flat white will score you three out of a possible four points in its Are you a hipster? quiz. Elsewhere in the Telegraph, Olivia Goldhill not only equates flat white drinking with being a hipster, but questions whether the drink actually exists: "Just keep on following the herd and pray you're never given a taste test between a flat white and a latte." <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/australia-food-blog/2014/jun/25/hey-hipsters-hands-off-my-flat-white>

Hipster café under fire for complaining about stabbing victim spilling blood on its floor in 'CSI Clapton' tweet

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2658883/Hipster-caf-fire-complaining-stabbing-victim-spilling-blood-floor-csiclaption-tweet.html>

Hirsute men have been warned their attractiveness to potential partners may fade as facial hair becomes more prevalent, in a scenario researchers have called "peak beard". Research conducted by the University of NSW finds that, when people are confronted by a succession of bearded men, clean-shaven men become more attractive to them.

<http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2014/apr/16/fashion-conscious-men-warned-we-may-have-reached-peak-beard>

Does it Get Any More Hipster Than This?

<http://cheezburger.com/8248690432>

2. Ad-Busters

Assimilating oneself into an external image of the good life – and submitting to a collectivity – is a perfectly ordinary form of alienated existence in the existing society. The delinquents are mistaken to associate this state of affairs with autonomy, excitement, shrewdness and freedom. They may purchase some fragile self-esteem, kicks and acceptance. They may even secure some precarious means of survival. But they pay for them with the usual currency of self-alienation. <https://www.adbusters.org/article/consumable-youth-rebellion/>

But after punk was plasticized and hip hop lost its impetus for social change, all of the formerly dominant streams of “counter-culture” have merged together. Now, one mutating, trans-Atlantic melting pot of styles, tastes and behavior has come to define the generally indefinable idea of the “Hipster.” <https://www.adbusters.org/article/hipster-the-dead-end-of-western-civilization/>

<http://www.bryanboy.com/>

### 3. What is Social Media Production?

“The terms used by the founders of a new form of cultured life will consist largely in borrowings from the vocabularies of the culture which they are hoping to replace” (Rorty, 1989, p. 56).

“The promise of this new media environment raises expectations of a freer flow of ideas and content” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 18).

Perhaps it’s best to ask: **who are the social media producers?**

### 4. Web 2.0

“Web 2.0 makes it easier for ordinary people to organise themselves, instead of having to do so under the control of hierarchical, often authoritarian, organisations” (Tapscott, 2008, p. 40).

### 5. Subcultural Analysis?

For Hebdige subcultures are not an inherent characteristic of urban life but rather a distinct milieu defined by style – teddy boys, punks, skinheads, and so on – craved out of contingent socioeconomic circumstances.

Against the notion that the social life of subcultures develops in deviant isolation from status quo institutions (such as the state or the nuclear family), Hebdige’s book *Subculture* shows how these internally vexed groups are composed through mediating forces which shape their place in the larger contexts of the city and nation.

“Media literacy is (and needs to be approached as) a dynamic phenomenon, as a process of communicative interaction between different agents in a rapidly developing environment driven by user experience and technological ambition” (Celot, 2009, p. 5).

“All in all, technology has outpaced politics.

- Either you actively engage in the world of IT, or you don’t exist anymore.
- You can, therefore, you ought.
- You can be online; therefore, you ought to be online.
- If you are offline, you cease participating in reality. As simple as that” (Bauman & Donskis, 2013, p. 51).

The question is, what do we do with ourselves in this remaining non-reality?

“Everything is permeated by ambivalence; there is no longer any unambiguous social situation, just as there are no more uncompromised actors on the stage of world history” (Bauman & Donskis, 2013, p. 5).

“Media literacy may be defined broadly as an individual’s capacity to interpret autonomously and critically the flow, substance, value and consequence of media in all its many forms” (Celot, 2009, p. 4).

“Any focus on researching digital literacies as critical awareness must recognise the diversity of contexts in which these play out, the conventions [that users] are aware of and that it is the intersect of their contexts and technical expertise that deserves attention” (Beckett, 2009, p. 17).

“When external control is rejected, the problem becomes that of finding the factors of control that are inherent within experience. When external authority is rejected, it does not follow that all authority should be rejected, but rather that there is need to search for a more effective source of authority” (Dewey, 1997, p. 21).

Is Hipsterness about:

- Rejecting Masculinity?
- Rejecting Capability?

- Rejecting Social Status?

## 6. Postmodernity

“The passage from the ‘solid’ to a ‘liquid’ phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behaviour) can no longer, because they decompose and melt faster for them to set” (Bauman, 2007, p. 1).

“A life so fragmented stimulates ‘lateral’ rather than ‘vertical’ orientations. Each next step needs to be a response to a different set of opportunities and a different distribution of odds, and so it calls for a different set of skills and a different arrangement of assets” (Bauman, 2007, p. 3).

## 7. Identainment

“For all practical intents and purposes, ‘identity’ is fast turning (at least in our part of the world) into ‘identainment’: it is moving from the theatre of war of physical and spiritual survival on to the stage of entertaining recreational play, turning into a concern and one of the favourite pastimes of homo ludens rather than homo politicus” (Bauman & Donskis, 2013, p. 33).

*Homo Ludens* or "Man the Player"

### Are You A Hipster? | Idea Channel | PBS Digital Studios

You're probably a hipster? We all hate hipsters, right? They seem so smug and arrogant, with their ray bans and scarves and ironic t-shirts. Even those who CLEARLY ARE hipsters still recoil at the label. Embracing irony over earnestness, the key to hipsters is not just what they enjoy, but how they enjoy it. Borrowing from other subcultures, (see: Handlebar mustaches and flannel shirts), hipsters reappropriate these fashion elements as their own. But don't we all do that? Our own fashion came from SOMEWHERE, and certainly has been refined. Do we all have a little bit of hipster blood in us? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3xe-Wxio1o>

“Imagology, the art of marking sets of ideals, anti-ideals and value-images that people are supposed to follow without thinking or critically questioning, is the offspring of the media and advertising” (Bauman & Donskis, 2013, p. 71).

### Being a Dickhead's Cool

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVmmYMwFj1I>

## 8. Identity as Performance

“Dramaturgical Discipline. It is crucial for the maintenance of the team’s performance that each member of the team possess dramaturgical discipline and exercise it in presenting his own part.

I refer to the fact that while the performer is ostensibly immersed and given over to the activity he is performing, and is apparently engrossed in his actions in a spontaneous, uncalculating way, he must none the less be affectively disassociated from his presentation in a way that leaves him free to cope with dramaturgical contingencies as they arrive” (Goffman, 1990, p. 210).

<http://swisslips.com/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2FParozEpQY>

“The kind of control upon the part of the individual reinstates the symmetry of the communication process, and sets the stage for a kind of information game – a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery. It should be added that since the others are likely to be relatively unsuspecting of the presumably unguided aspect of the individual’s conduct, he can gain much by controlling it” (Goffman, 1990, p. 20).

“It is now left to individuals to seek, find and practice individual solutions to socially produced troubles, and to try all that through individual, solitary actions, while being equipped with tools and resources that are blatantly inadequate for the test” (Bauman, 2007, p. 207).

“What binds societies together are common vocabularies and common hopes. The vocabularies are typically parasitic on the hopes – in the sense that the principle function of the vocabularies is to tell stories about future outcomes which compensate for present sacrifices” (Rorty, 1989, p. 86).

What are the hopes and sacrifices represented by Hipster Cats?

“It becomes possible... to see re-description as a tool rather than a claim to have discovered essence” (Rorty, 1989, p. 39).

“We latecomers can tell the kind of story of progress which those who are actually making progress cannot. We can view these people as toolmakers rather than discoverers because we have a clear sense of the product which the use of those tools produced. The product is our conscience, our culture, our form of life. Those who made it possible could not have described the ends to which their work was a means. But we can” (Rorty, 1989, p. 135).

### How is Myspace Being Repositioned?

<https://myspace.com/>

### 9. Summary

“The self, then, as a location whose fundamental fate is to be borne, to mature, and to die, is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited” (Goffman, 1990, p.245).

“How technological and economic change has brought on a new wave of lo-fi creativity – a special report”

<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/dec/06/do-it-yourself-culture>

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