

Going Underground? Gender and Subcultures

Day Symposium at the University of Northumbria

Friday 7th September 2012

The notion of 'subcultures', articulated most prominently by Dick Hebdige in his 1979 seminal work, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, has undergone much revision in recent years. However a critical engagement with gender remains absent within the majority of work on 'subcultures'. Indeed, Angela McRobbie's (1980) 'Settling Accounts with Subcultures: A Feminist Critique' provides the cornerstone of our symposium, in terms of interrogating how gender is articulated in 'underground' cultural and social environments. The question of whether 'subculture' is still a valid term and how far 'subcultural' manifestations are reductively incorporated into the mainstream are relevant topics on the academic agenda. However research of girls and women's subcultural productions and engagements from queer, feminist and transgender scholars (e.g. Jack Halberstam, Doreen Piano, Susan Driver, Elizabeth K Keenan, Mary Celeste Kearney and Kath Browne) carve out a new territory for understanding the 'subcultural'. Given this reevaluation, it is timely to re-engage with how 'subcultural' genders (both femininities and masculinities) are represented in alternative society and discuss how far this can be politically subversive. For instance, the revival, nostalgia and popularity of rockabilly style, burlesque, roller derby, Slutwalks, Ladyfests, fanzine/bloggging networks, Suicide Girls, Guerilla Girls, riot grrrl and the participation of girls in underground music cultures all point to the need for an academic engagement with strategies of cultural resistance to dominant identities and norms.

Proposals of 200 words on subjects dating from the twentieth century onwards, are invited in but not confined to, the following areas:

- Commodity, mass culture and globalised cultures.
- 'Bedroom cultures': fanzines, magazines, gaming, social networking, blogs.
- Gender and 'Urban Tribes', 'Neo-tribes' and 'scenes'.
- Youth culture, activism, ageing, politics and resistance.
- Fictions, films, archives, photography and art.
- The body: identity, fashion, aesthetics, tattooing, piercing and body modification
- Music: jazz, hip-hop, heavy metal, punk, goth, rockabilly, riot grrrl
- Sexual representation: queers, lesbians, gays, non-monogamy, straight, fetish.
- Underground/amateur sports: roller derby, baseball, football, softball, rounders.
- Race and racial identities.

We would particularly welcome contributions from literature, film and television, art, photography, cultural studies, theatre, gender studies, psychology and sociology, history and politics. Performance proposals and innovative presentation methods are encouraged. We intend to publish a selection of papers submitted to the symposium.

Proposals should be sent to claire.nally@northumbria.ac.uk and rosemary.white@northumbria.ac.uk by 1st April 2012.