

Call for Papers

Hipster Culture: A Reader

Eds. Heike Steinhoff and Eric C. Erbacher

Twenty-first century popular culture has given birth to a peculiar cultural figure: the hipster. Stereotypically associated with nerd glasses, beards and buns, boho clothing, and ironic t-shirts, hipsters represent a (post-)postmodern subculture whose style, aesthetics and activities have increasingly become mainstream. While the hipster's roots are frequently traced to the mid-twentieth century, when the term first emerged in the context of African-American jazz culture (Anatole Broyard) and the white counterculture associated with the Beat Generation (Norman Mailer), the contemporary hipster, emerging at the beginning of the new millennium, owes many of its characteristics also to 1990s indie culture.

In *What Was the Hipster? A Sociological Investigation* (2010), Mark Greif defines the hipster as young, white, urban, college-educated, and middle-class. According to Greif, hipsters are 'rebel consumers' who define, acquire and possess ever new insider knowledge of goods and styles to continually distinguish themselves from the mainstream. While hipsters are often regarded as largely apolitical, their conventionally privileged background provides their lifestyle, their consumption preferences and their creative expressions with a specific social, ethnic and cultural perspective. Greif claims that the hipster "aligns himself *both* with rebel subculture *and* with the dominant class, and opens up a poisonous conduit between the two" (9). This is evinced, for example, in their eclectic cultural appropriations and their frequent association with gentrification processes that implicate the hipster in some of the most contentious contemporary phenomena. As vintage cafés, vegan restaurants, DIY culture, urban gardening, a nostalgic industrial style, etc. have become key components of a dominant popular culture of hip, the hipster has also been increasingly charged with both selling out as well as being responsible for the commodification of past and marginalized cultures. Furthermore, the

seemingly constant search for ‘authenticity’ and difference from the mainstream has frequently turned the hipster into a figure of public ridicule. Yet, whereas some have declared the death of the hipster, hipster culture seems to be very much alive in global urban centers and in the popular cultural imagination.

Studies on the hipster and particularly hipster culture are strikingly rare. Apart from Greif’s seminal volume and a few articles that have mostly followed his collection of essays in taking a primarily sociological approach, hipster culture has largely been ignored by academic studies and remained a topic of feuilleton articles and blog entries. *Hipster Culture: A Reader* seeks to fill this research gap by approaching the hipster and hipster culture from a variety of Cultural Studies perspectives. Inviting papers that discuss the hipster and hipster culture from the perspectives of Gender Studies, Queer Studies, Critical Race Studies, Class Studies and a number of other approaches in Media Studies, Literary Studies and Popular Culture Studies, we suggest to reflect on the hipster not primarily as a sociological figure, but foremost as a powerful cultural discourse that takes shape in representations in movies, novels, TV shows, music, web pages, comics, and as a lifestyle and aesthetic that shapes specific practices, products and places, such as barber shops, restaurants, urban gardens, arts and crafts products, fashion, etc.

We also call for papers that challenge or add to some of the existing paradigms of ‘sociological hipster studies’: The hipster has, for example, been charged with being an inherently apolitical figure. In which different ways, however, can we also think of the hipster and hipster culture as political agents? Whereas the hipster is often imagined as male, we are interested in papers that specifically discuss the female hipster and female hipster culture. Little has so far been said about the hipster’s sexuality, therefore we ask for papers that explore aspects of sex and sexuality, particularly hipster culture’s appropriations of or overlap with queer culture(s). Whereas hipsters are conventionally regarded as intricately linked to whiteness, we also ask for papers that deal with non-white hipsters (e.g. “blipsters” (Black Hipsters), “mipsters” (Muslim Hipsters), Asian Hipsters, Hispanic Hipsters, etc.). At first perceived as a specifically American phenomenon,

the hipster today not only populates 'hip' neighborhoods in New York, Los Angeles or Portland, but urban centers around the globe, such as Berlin, Tokyo, Melbourne or Buenos Aires. Papers that take a transnational perspective or focus on hipster culture in non-western cultures are particularly encouraged.

Topics for papers may include, but are not limited to:

- (self-)representations of hipsters in movies, TV series, magazines or literature (e.g. films by Wes Anderson or Noah Baumbach, TV series like *Portlandia*, *Girls* or *Search Party*, literature by Dave Eggers or Miranda July that represents hipster culture while also being a product of hipster culture)
- hipster websites or websites about hipsters (e.g. dadsaretheoriginalhipster.tumblr.com, <http://unhappyhipsters.com>, etc.)
- hipsters and technology (e.g. digital and analog, use of social media, photography, vinyl records, singlespeed bikes, etc.)
- hipsters and gender (esp. female hipsters)
- hipsters and sexuality / hipster culture and queer culture
- hipsters and race/ethnicity (incl. the white hipsters, blipsters, mipsters, etc.)
- transnational hipster cultures and transnational cultural comparisons of hipsterism (including non-western cultures)
- hipsters and class (e.g. class privilege, creative class, poverty)
- hipsters and age
- hipsters and politics (e.g. environmentalism, liberalism, feminism, etc.)
- hipster bodies (e.g. beards, hairstyles, tattoos, etc.)
- hipster fashions and style (e.g. vintage and ethnic fashion, appropriation of hipster fashion by mass-consumer labels)
- hipster aesthetics (nostalgia, pastiche, eclecticism, etc.)
- hipster food cultures (e.g. food trucks, food festivals, veganism, etc.)
- hipster DIY culture and arts & crafts (e.g. urban gardening, craft brewing, bee-keeping) and their marketing (e.g. Etsy, arts and crafts markets, etc.)

- theoretical reflections and (re)definitions of the hipster in the context of postmodernism, neoliberalism, cultural appropriation, (neo-)bohemia, governmentality studies, subcultural studies, etc.
- hipsters and reconfigurations of spaces/places (e.g. gentrification, changing neighborhoods, shops, streets, restaurants, websites, etc.)

If you have any questions regarding the suitability of possible topics and material for inclusion in the volume, please do not hesitate to contact the editors.

Submissions

We invite **proposals of ca. 300 – 500 words** including a tentative title and a short biography of the contributor(s). The deadline for abstract submissions is **June 30, 2017**. Please send your proposals to both Heike Steinhoff (heike.steinhoff@rub.de) and Eric C. Erbacher (eric.erbacher@wwu.de). Accepted contributors are expected to submit their full chapters of 6000 – 8000 words by October 1, 2017. The edited volume will be submitted for publication to a major academic publisher in early 2018.

About the Editors

Heike Steinhoff is Junior Professor of American Studies at Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany. She is the author of *Transforming Bodies: Makeovers and Monstrosities in American Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) and *Queer Buccaneers: (De)Constructing Boundaries in the PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN Film Series* (Lit Verlag, 2011). She has also published articles on representations of the body, gender, sexuality, and space in American literature and film.

Eric C. Erbacher is Lecturer in American Studies at the University of Muenster, Germany. He is the co-editor of *Rereading the Machine in the Garden. Nature and Technology in American Culture* (Campus, 2014) and of the forthcoming *Exploring the Fantastic: Genre, Ideology, and Popular Culture* (transcript, 2018) as well as the author of articles on representations of urban space and gentrification, popular TV series and subcultures.