COMMON CULTURE
Symbolic work at play in the everyday cultures of the young

PAUL WILLIS
with Simon Jones, Joyce Canaan and Geoff Hurd

OPEN UNIVERSITY PRESS
Milton Keynes
Contents

Preface and acknowledgements vii
Some recent statistics ix
1 Symbolic creativity 1
2 The cultural media and symbolic creativity 30
3 Music and symbolic creativity 59
4 Style, fashion and symbolic creativity 84
5 Everyday life and symbolic creativity 98
6 Common culture 128

Afterword 153
Appendix 161
Index 163

Chapters 3 and 4 were written by Simon Jones and edited by Paul Willis. Chapter 5 was written by Joyce Canaan, rewritten and edited by Paul Willis.
Style, fashion and symbolic creativity

Like high art and classical music, the world of couture fashion design has its own autonomous, elite tradition which explains itself according to the creative innovations of individual 'great men'. The exclusive products of the few top designers are comparable in financial terms to the posthumous works of great artists. Reproduction of these exclusive garments filters down selectively to mass-production level, mediated and interpreted by the fashion press, in-house department stores and designers, or reproduced cheaply by small fashion manufacturers.

The scenario is one in which fashion ideas initiated in Paris, Milan or New York are in some mediated form felt, seen and bought in department stores throughout the world. In this world a few significant shapes dominate the season and are changed according to the needs and purses of the social elite.

Couture, however, has historically only ever been a small part of the fashion industry, not its apex. Fashion designers have played a much less central role in setting fashion trends than is commonly imagined. Since World War I Britain's textile and garment industry has been progressively diminished parallel to a massive expansion in the popular retail trade in ready-to-wear clothing. The post-war period and the 1960s in particular marked the beginning of a new phase in the mass consumption of clothes, marked by a convergence of innovative design, youth fashion and the invention of synthetic fibres, under the conditions of full employment and increased spending. This convergence of influences helped overturn the previous international trickle-down effect in fashion, allowing a certain democratization of style and fashion that undermined the centrality of the designers.

The expansion in the high-street consumption of clothes has continued apace in the 1980s, the most significant development being the growth of the middle-market fashion industry, making designer-collection clothes accessible to more people through stores like Next, Principles and Burtons. Behind the altered look of the high street, however, lies another set of equally significant changes in popular fashion, clothing and consumption patterns – the impetus of stylistic creativity from below.

Clothes, style and fashion have long been recognized as key elements in young people's expression, exploration and making of their own individual and collective identities. They remain amongst the most visible forms of symbolic cultural creativity and informal artistry in people's lives in our common culture. As in other areas we have looked at, there is here a specific grounded aesthetic dynamic even in apparently passive consumption which stretches into and lies on a continuum with more obviously creative activities. We try to spell out some of this.

In presenting these forms of informal symbolic work this chapter draws from fieldwork in Wolverhampton and Birmingham and, in the case of the hairstyle section, London.

Clothes and creative consumption

Clothes shopping has been a central part of post-war youth cultural consumerism. As a cultural practice, however, shopping has tended to be marginalized in much of the writing about youth, style and fashion. Shopping has been considered a private and feminine activity and part of the process of incorporation into the social machinery.

But young people don't just buy passively or uncritically. They always transform the meaning of bought goods, appropriating and recontextualizing mass-market styles. That appropriation entails a form of symbolic work and creativity as young consumers break the ordered categories of clothes, the suggested matches and ideas promoted by shops. They bring their own specific and differentiated grounded aesthetics to bear on consumption, choosing their own colours and matches and personalizing their purchases. Most young people combine elements of clothing to create new meanings. They adopt and adapt clothing items drawn from government surplus stores, for example, or training shoes, track suits, rugby shirts, Fred Perry tops from sportswear shops. They make their own sense of what is commercially available, make their own aesthetic judgements, and sometimes reject the normative definitions and categories of 'fashion' promoted by the clothing industry.

While many of the young people we spoke to obtain their ideas about clothes from friends or from simply observing how clothes...
looked worn on other people, many also use the media to understand and keep up with the latest fashions. They get ideas about clothes from sources such as television programmes, like The Clothes Show, fashion and music magazines, or from the personal dress styles of particular pop artists. Aspects of the clothes and outfits worn by pop groups like Bananarama and Amazulu, for example, were taken up en masse by young women in the early and mid-1980s, particularly items such as haystack hairstyles, dungarees and children’s plimsolls.

Since the early 1980s, media and marketing attention has shifted towards the employed with high salaries such as the 25–40 age group and the ‘empty-nesters’. Changing economic circumstances, particularly the growth in youth unemployment and the start of what will be a long-term decline in the youth population, have made the 16-to-24-year-old market far less attractive and lucrative. This has meant that there now exists a substantial block of young people for whom the retail boom has provided few benefits. With many working-class youth now denied the sources of income which financed the spectacular subcultures of the 1960s and 1970s, the right to ‘good clothes’ can no longer be automatically assumed.

The young unemployed especially find it difficult to develop their own image and lifestyle through purchased items. For these young people, using clothes to express their identities, stylistically, is something of a luxury. With social identities increasingly defined in terms of the capacity for private, individualized consumption, those who are excluded from that consumption feel frustrated and alienated.

For many working-class young people impotent window shopping is a source of immense frustration. One young woman said that she would not go window shopping for this reason:

I don’t like window shopping very much. Especially if I don’t have the money . . . ’cause if you see something and you want it, you can’t afford it. So I don’t go window shopping unless I have money.

Remarkably, however, even young people with limited spending power still often find ways to dress stylishly and to express their identities through the clothes they wear. Young women and men still manage to dress smartly and make the most out of slender resources, buying secondhand clothes or saving up to buy particular items of clothing. For some the emphasis on presenting a smart or fashionable image is a priority above everything else and results in quite disproportionate amounts being spent on clothes. One young woman said that she bought a clothing item every week, but

sacrificed by going ‘skint’ for the rest of the week. Her rationale was that quality was better than quantity:

I’d rather buy things that’ll last me than cheap things what won’t, and you don’t get the quality in them, do you? . . . I feel better in myself if I know I’ve got summat on like expensive, instead of cheap.

From subculture to ‘retro’

The success of spectacular youth subcultures has shown particular, conspicuous, symbolic creativity in clothes. There is now a long and well-known list of youth subcultural styles, from the teddy boys and the mods, to the skins and punks, which have occupied the attention of sociologists, journalists and fashion commentators alike. The distinct styles of post-war youth subcultures have been interpreted as symbolic solutions to age and class domination, and a means of marking out and winning cultural space for young people. Such styles have been lauded for their symbolic work in borrowing and transforming everyday objects or fashion components, recoding them according to internal subcultural grounded aesthetics. Examples include the teddy’s appropriation of the Edwardian suit, the skins’ appropriation of proletarian work clothes, or the punks’ borrowing of safety pins, bin liners and zips.

While only a small minority of young people adopted the complete uniform of youth subcultures, large numbers drew on selective elements of their styles creating their own meanings and uses from them. Many subcultural styles became popularized, finding their way into mainstream working-class and middle-class youth culture. In this way, subcultures became a source of inspiration for the stylish symbolic work and creativity of all young people. Punk, for example, stimulated a move back to straight-legged trousers, smaller collars and shorter hair amongst young people of all ages. The leggings/thermal underpants first worn by punk girls—which were originally cream and had to be dyed black—were soon being made up new by young market-stall holders. By the summer of 1985 they were being produced in T-shirt cotton and a wide range of colours and had become a definitive fashion item for all women under the age of 40.

But fashion trends arise not only from the street – though always in a dialectic with it. Punk, for example, emanated as much from the art-school avant-garde as it did from the dance halls and housing estates. Many of the stylistic innovators in punk had a firm stake in the commodity market themselves. Indeed, within most post-war
youth subcultures, young people have always been directly involved in the production and selling of clothes themselves. A whole economic infrastructure of entrepreneurial activity has accompanied all the major post-war youth style explosions, creating careers for many of those involved.

Punk was perhaps the last major subculture in which there was a convergence of design, subcultural style and small innovative retail businesses. Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood’s shop ‘Sex’ (later renamed ‘Seditionaries’), set up in the Kings Road in the mid-70s, was one of the few which integrated popular street fashion with the music of the time.

Since punk the stylistic options among an increasingly self-reflexive and stylistically mobile youth have been greatly expanded with revivals of all the major subcultures occurring in the late 1970s and ‘80s. Punk itself reproduced the entire sartorial history of post-war working-class youth culture in cut-up form, combining elements which had originally belonged to completely different epochs. The wardrobes of past subcultural styles were exhumed, re-adapted and recombined in endlessly different combinations.

Since and including the punk explosion, then, one of the most important trends in youth style has been the rehabilitation and raiding of previous sartorial styles for raw material in young people’s own, current symbolic work and creativity, stylistic and cultural expression. Retro style is part of a general trend in contemporary culture which ransacks various historical moments for their key stylistic expressions and then re-inserts and recombines them in current fashion. Clothing items are worn as though in quotation marks, their wearers self-consciously evoking some past, even at the risk of stylistic mismatch and incongruity. These references to past stylistic forms have taken on a kind of iconographic status in pop culture, evoking whole periods of social history, and have been used extensively in popular music and advertising.

**Clothes and identity**

Clothes, like musical tastes, are an indication of the cultural identities and leisure orientations of different groups of young people. Young people are very adept at the symbolic work of developing their own styles and also at ‘reading off’ and decoding the dress styles of others and relating them to musical, political and social orientations. Thus, as one young woman noted, people who liked ‘house music’, dressed in the ‘house style’ – Dr Martens shoes/boots, scarves, baggy shirts, old checked jackets with long collars, baggy trousers – ‘things that don’t fit you, but look smart.’

But clothes signify more than just musical tastes. No longer are they an automatic reflection of subcultural affiliations or collective social identities. Clothes are also a crucial medium for grounded aesthetics in which young people express and explore their own specific individual identities. Young people learn about their inner selves partly by developing their outer image through clothes. They use style in their symbolic work to express and develop their understanding of themselves as unique persons, to signify who they are, and who they think they are. As one young woman put it, ‘If I find something I know I like, if I know I like certain clothes, then I know I’m that kind of person.’

Young people’s uses and choices of clothes also involve an active process of conscious, purposeful image-making. Clothes can be used playfully for the sheer pleasure of putting together a costume, or fabricating an identity. As one young woman says:

> To me, what you wear in a morning and what you wear to go out is a fancy dress, that’s all I see it as because you enjoy the clothes you wear, right? ... To me, fancy dress is everyday clothes, what you wear to college, go out to work or whatever, or what you wear to go out, it is fancy-dress costume ... I mean, you’ve got a costume on now, haven’t you? I’ve got a costume on, everybody’s got a costume on ...

Clothes can make people feel differently in different contexts. For some young people, and especially young women, the clothes they wear on any particular day will influence the way they talk, behave and present themselves. Wearing smart clothes can inspire confidence or may make some young people feel dignified or even snobbish. Wearing trousers, jeans or T-shirts was equated by others with ‘being yourself’, while wearing more feminine, ‘going out’ clothes could be equated with feeling sexy or flirtatious. Clothes can be manipulated to produce the right effect, to induce the right feeling and mood, involving subtle dressing strategies and choices of colours and styles.

Young people make clear distinctions between everyday clothes for college or work, and clothes for going out. They are used symbolically to mark the boundaries between leisure and work. Dressing to go out at night or at the weekend is an important activity which involves symbolic work and specific pleasures all of its own. Clothes are absolutely central in courtship rituals amongst young people. They are used not only to attract the opposite sex, but also to gain friends, win peer-group acceptance, and to appear different or interesting. Young people frequently put on identities...
when they go out, a process which includes not only dressing-up but also role-playing and putting on different accents. In a grounded aesthetic of the masque Joan, for example, reports that she wants to look different and to have people think that she is different when she goes out. She wanted to show a different side of her personality to that in college, which involved her talking and dressing differently:

You don’t want to look the same all day, do you, you want to look totally different when you go out at night . . . When I go out, they don’t recognize me, because I am totally dressed up, and they think that isn’t Joan, when they look at you good and proper, they think, ‘God, you look totally different’, and that’s what you want, you don’t want to look the same when you go out.

Dressing appropriately for different social contexts involves its own symbolic work, careful thought and preparation. It is something young people learn by closely scrutinizing how others dress and involves modulating one’s dress to fit with different kinds of people in different contexts. As Joan points out:

If I go to a friend’s party, I think, ‘What can I wear?’ You know you might take out all your wardrobe just to think, I wanna wear this, I wanna wear that. But really you’ve got to think of the people there and what they’re like. And you’ve got to think of their dress. You know, some of them might go in trousers, or skirts and blouses . . . You can’t go in your best suits and, when you go there, people are in trousers, because you’ll feel like a right fool. I’ve done it before and I really felt awful.

Fashion and gender

While all young people use fashion as a means of making and expressing their identities, young women invest more in working on appearance than young men. Appearance is a key means by which women not only express their individual identities and independence, but are simultaneously constituted as objects of, and for, male desire. For young women, making oneself attractive can be a tricky business since appearance can provide the basis of a young woman’s reputation. It requires that young women tread the precarious line between discreet and glamorous femininity, that they sexualize their appearance but not too much. One young woman said that her boyfriend liked her to dress in a particular way when with him, but that she liked to dress differently when with her female friends:

My boyfriend wants me to dress in a skirt all the time, but when I go out with my friends, I usually wear jeans or summat, he don’t like me wearing jeans and stuff like that . . . He’s square . . . if I’m going out with my boyfriend, he doesn’t like me looking trendy, so when I’m with my friends I like to look trendy, but he doesn’t like me looking a tart or anything, he likes me in normal going-out clothes, like jeans and high heels or a long skirt, you know. Not wearing too much make-up.

Since more is at stake for young women than for young men in the realm of fashion, it is not surprising that they embellish it with such rich significance. But young women do not dress for men alone. They also dress for themselves and each other. Particular clothing styles may be used by young women to inspire confidence. Equally for young men style and clothing can be just as much about social esteem as sexual attractiveness. For some it is a considerable investment in a particular kind of masculine narcissistic display: looking ‘cool’. It’s a strategy of which young women are only too well aware, as one young woman pointed out:

They dress to impress us women . . . Some of the guys come in [the college] in gold sovereigns, gold necklaces, smart trousers a little way out, jackets and things like that, then they are just waiting for you to say, ‘Why, you look nice,’ you know what I mean? I mean, fair enough, there’s times when I’ve done that, but I knew that was what they were waiting for.

The forms and definitions of femininity and masculinity in style and fashion are continually changing. Subtle pressures are exerted on young people to dress in particular ways by the clothing industry through models, fashion magazines, catalogues and shop layouts. However, this not only involves pressures to dress as masculine men and feminine women, but can also involve adopting styles hitherto seen as confined to the opposite sex. Here, a certain amount of unisex clothing is officially provided by some shops and marketed as such, but young women in particular also do their informal cross-gender buying of men’s clothes. Some young women felt that men’s clothes were nicer than women’s and had more style. One young woman said that she bought men’s clothes because, ‘they’re baggy, comfortable’ and ‘have a lot of wear in them’. The larger size and baggier look of men’s clothes make them suitable for all female sizes and shapes, allowing a more democratic fashion open to all young women. As consumers, young women have consistently broken down some of the gender categories used in shops, despite retailers’ attempts rigidly to separate male and female clothes and rule out cross-gender purchasing.
Black hairstyles

The grooming, cutting and styling of hair is an important cultural practice and symbolic activity for all young people. Hair has long been a medium of significant statements about self and society in which symbolic meanings are invested. Hairstyle has also been a central component in a variety of subcultural expressions: from the DA quiff of the teds to the long hair of the hippies to the crop of the skinheads.

Hairstyling practices amongst black British youth, however, are a particularly lively and creative field for particularized grounded aesthetics where young people are able to seize some degree of symbolic control in their everyday lives. Black hairstyles are popular art forms which articulate a variety of aesthetic solutions to some of the problems created by racism, for hair, along with skin colour, is one of the most visible signs of racial difference. Racism, historically, has devalued the material qualities of black people’s hair, seeing it only in negative terms. Aesthetic presuppositions have long been closely intertwined with rationalizations of racial domination – aesthetics which stem from Western codes of beauty where whiteness epitomizes all that is good, true and beautiful.

In the 1960s black liberation movements proposed the slogan ‘Black is beautiful’ to contest the hegemony of this white aesthetics with a grounded aesthetics of its own. Fully aware that such hegemony depended on the subjective internalization of these norms and values, the Afro hairstyle was adopted by Afro-Americans as an outward affirmation of an empowering sense of Black Pride. In the Caribbean context, the popularization of Rastafarian beliefs served a similar purpose. Dreadlocks became emblematic of a newly discovered sense of self. After centuries of negation, such styles inverted the binary logic of white bias to celebrate the natural qualities of black hair.

Hair has thus been a key site of semantic struggle over the significance of racial difference, a struggle to negate the very categories of racial oppression itself. In Rastafari, for example, the open signification of dreadness, through the growing of locks, transposes the difference already immanent in the acceptable attribute of dark skin into open symbolic struggle, drawing attention to that least acceptable attribute of ‘blackness’ – woolly hair.

In the 1980s, however, these forms of cultural resistance drawing on a grounded aesthetic of naturalness and authenticity have been joined by another set of cultural strategies in the medium of hair. These turn around a grounded aesthetic of artifice that works in and against the codes of the dominant culture, through hybrity, syncretism and interculturation. Innovation occurs through appropriations of elements from the dominant culture, which are marked off and differentiated by a creolizing logic of symbolic work and stylization that rearticulates and reaccentuates the meaning of those elements.

In accordance with these strategies, the 1980s have seen a whole explosion of diversity and difference in hairstyles amongst black British youth, in tune with constantly evolving and more fluid forms of black British culture. The 1980s have seen a revival of earlier, processed black American hairstyles from the 1940s and ‘50s [such as the conk and the Do Rag] as well as contemporary styles like curly perms [hair treated by steaming, relaxing and straightening] and ‘flat tops’.

Traditionally read as a sign of self-oppression or aspiring to white ideals, straightening and processed hairstyling techniques are increasingly seen as providing the materials for an open symbolic creativity rather than as inert signs of an inner self-image, or as a sign of alienation or unauthenticity. Straightening is merely one technique among others, and a means to a symbolic end. As one young woman pointed out: ‘Just because you do your hair in a particular way doesn’t alter your attitude as a black person – or it shouldn’t anyway.’

What constitutes ‘blackness’ is itself subject to historical change and negotiation. As one young black man put it: ‘The way we conceptualize Africa is based on myth, textual references. You know a lot of Caribbeans have not been to Africa.’ There is no such thing as total originality. Sources of style are always already culturally formed, already in play. Nothing is totally new. Young black people may choose and shift between many different available hairstyles, drawing on diverse sources for symbolic resources and stylistic inspiration, such as books, magazines or museums, as well as particular black stars in music, fashion, film or sport. Thus people make reference to Grace Jones haircuts (flat top), or Egyptian-style shapes to a haircut. Such references are informed by knowledges which place black hair styles in a historical tradition, a tradition in which young black people consciously position themselves.

The grounded aesthetics of black hairstyling have their own terms and criteria of evaluation. Choosing what kind of style and cut involves important decisions, beginning from that of whether or not to cut one’s hair. Dreadlocks, for example, are premised on not cutting and involve long-term cycles of growth and cultivation. Cutting and the decisions which follow on involve choosing from a
whole range of techniques and styles, as well as judgements of manageability and convenience, taste and suitability.

Black hairstyling also has its own distinct social relations. Many styles require co-operative and collaborative interaction. They involve skills exchanged between friends and family, and relations of mutuality and intimacy. Hairdressing, as one young black hairdresser comments, is also a site of ritualized communality: ‘Salons play an important social part as well. People come in, they talk, they meet their friends – it’s the atmosphere of the place.’

Hairdressing is also supported by its own economic infrastructure, with a substantial hairdressing industry. Large numbers of barber shops and salons now exist in the black community. Hairdressing is a model for ethnic business success stories. The largest Afro-Caribbean owned business in Britain is Dyke and Dyrdin, a firm that imports and retails hair-care products to a market that is more or less exclusively black.

Making clothes

Sewing, altering and making clothes are common practices amongst young working-class women. Skills and knowledges are often developed in the home, sometimes handed down from one generation to another, or learnt more formally at school, college or work. June, a young mother of 22, who has been making clothes since she was 14, had originally taken up sewing for practical purposes to make a contribution to the household economy, making dresses for her mother and herself. But this soon expanded into making dresses for, and with, her friends, buying patterns and material from the rag market to experiment with:

We just used to mess about with bits of material . . . and wrap ‘em round our heads and sew this on, and sew a hood on things . . . And we’d buy patterns and make a skirt.

There are a significant minority of young people who sew and knit their own clothes for reasons that are partly to do with pleasure in their own symbolic work and creativity as well as financial. As one young woman pointed out:

It saves you money . . . ‘Cause I mean, there’s times when I think, well, I like this, and it cost £50. When I can just go to Birmingham market, buy some material for about a pound a yard . . . and look just as good as what was in the shops. And I’m so happy.

There is a symbolic as well as practical pleasure and sense of fulfilment for young people in being able to use their own manual skills and resources to make their own clothes. Joan, for example, says that she specifically enjoys the material process of cutting up patterns: ‘What I really love about it is getting material on the table and just start cutting. ‘Cause I love cutting up the patterns and start stitching it.’

Making your own clothes enables you to have some control over what you wear. It means, above all, that you don’t just have just to follow fashion, you can make clothes that suit you personally and in which you feel more comfortable along the grooves of your own grounded aesthetics. June says that she makes her own clothes because she doesn’t like what’s on offer in the high-street shops:

I can walk around the shops, and I’m trying things on, and I can actually give up and think ‘This is stupid.’ And the actual price as well, and I look at it . . . and how it’s put together. I can look at something that’s been put together, so . . . badly, really, and they’re asking such a high price for it. I could make better myself. Like there’s certain clothes and certain styles of clothes that I can’t easily buy in a shop. For one, they may have gone out of fashion, and it might be a style that I particularly like, that suits me, and I can’t go and buy that from a normal shop.

Many young people are both driven and inspired to make their own clothes simply by the high price of clothes in the shops. As one young woman pointed out: ‘I went to a shop to buy a mohair jumper and it was 60 quid, so I thought I could make that myself. I bought the wool for £11, and made one nearly identical.’

Since the late 1970s, the rise in youth unemployment has pushed many young people into self- and semi-employment in the clothes sector of the hidden economy. For some young people, clothes-making is as much a way of negotiating the boredom of the dole as it is a source of income. Bridgette, for example, who knits colourful fashionable jumpers, says that she started knitting because she ‘couldn’t afford to go out, on the dole, so I thought I’d do something constructive, learning to make my own clothes.’

Jumble sales and secondhand clothes

Large numbers of young people buy their clothes from secondhand or charity shops, like Oxfam and Barnardo’s, or from street and rag markets. Today, more than ever before, young people are having to rely on rag markets and secondhand clothes stores for the creation of style. The 1980s have seen a revitalization of numerous urban
street markets with young people forming a major part of their constituency. Margaret is 19 and unemployed. She goes to jumble sales frequently:

I thought, why am I going into shops and paying all this money, and saving so hard for a jumper when I can get it in a second-hand shop? 'Cause if you look around, you can find a jumper that's really nice and you'll pay a couple of quid for it.

For Margaret, as for many young people, there is a specific pleasure in going to jumble sales with friends to rummage through second-hand clothes:

We always buy things we can experiment with... All types of coats, jackets that we just cut off to the waist, and things like that. You can actually make something old and quite horrible into something quite nice by just a few nips and slits and turns, you know what I mean. So, it's like, I don't know, it's good fun. That's what it is more than anything, it's just good fun... going to jumble sales, like.

Buying secondhand clothes is clearly part of a whole active process of symbolic work and creativity to do with producing appearance. Margaret again:

You can achieve a certain look, that would be difficult to achieve on such low money, and also difficult to achieve by walking in shops, because they're traditionally made for a size 10 or whatever. And yet, you can find a size-40-chest man's jacket and it gives you the look that you want, but you can't actually go into a shop and buy it... that certain look. But by turning the sleeves up, or by rolling them over, you can, you know... Like, you can get your dad's jacket out the wardrobe, and you know 'Oh, this is trendy.'

The availability of secondhand men's jackets, trousers, shirts and even shoes has radically transformed the way in which women now dress. Young women buying and adapting secondhand clothes have been at the forefront of some of the major transformations in the female fashion body over the last ten years.

The process began with punk, which helped break down some of the gender restrictions on young women's dress and on female participation in youth subcultures. The androgynous look of punk, particularly its spiky hair style, became part of a general popular feminist style in the late 1970s and early '80s. Since then, substantial numbers of young women have managed to deconstruct feminine styles through novel combinations of masculine and feminine clothing items [such as frilly birthday-party dresses, ribbons and flounces combined with heavyweight boots or Dr Marten shoes]. More recently, baggy shirts have proved immensely popular as flexible items of female clothing. Men's raincoats too have been made fashionable amongst young women, picked up at jumble sales for as little as five pounds. The sleeves would be turned up to fit the length of female arms, simultaneously revealing a high quality striped silk lining.

From secondhand and men's clothes, young women have actively created their own unfixed, fluid and constantly shifting grounded aesthetics of feminine style.

Notes
1 This section draws on Angela McRobbie's original Gulbenkian submission [see Appendix], paragraphs 2, 3 and 6 directly so.
2 This section is a condensed version of Kobena Mercer's original Gulbenkian submission [see Appendix].
3 This section draws on Angela McRobbie's original Gulbenkian submission [see Appendix], paragraphs 5 and 6 directly so. Angela McRobbie's submission was published separately and in full in a collection of essays edited by her, see Zoot Suits and Secondhand Dresses, Macmillan, 1989.