

DIVERSITY READING LIST PRESENTS:

# CLASS, STATUS, AND AESTHETICS

A DRL READING GROUP BLUEPRINT BY QUENTIN PHARR AND CLOTILDE TORREGROSSA

FUNDED BY THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF AESTHETICS

LEVEL: EASY-INTERMEDIATE

---

## INTRODUCTION

When it comes to how class and status structures might shape our aesthetic preferences, as well as how such structures might be challenged or reinforced by our interactions with various aesthetic objects, there are a number of questions to explore. Typically, these questions are treated separately in such disciplines as: sociology, critical theory, cultural studies, or art history. But, in large part, they have not been discussed together, let alone discussed all that much within analytic aesthetics. Through this blueprint, though, our hope is to introduce intermediate philosophical readers to a range of topics which bear on class, status, and aesthetics in order to illustrate the roles that aesthetics can play in both class and status structures, and vice versa.

---

## CATEGORIES

- Aesthetics and Culture
- Aesthetic Evaluation
- Rights and Culture
- Social Phenomena
- Culture and Cultures

---

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

<https://diversityreadinglist.org/blueprint/class-status-and-aesthetics>

## 1. HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

SHINER, LARRY. *THE INVENTION OF ART: A CULTURAL HISTORY*

2001, University of Chicago Press

**Difficulty:** Easy-Intermediate

**Fragment:** Chapter 5: 'Polite Arts for the Polite Classes', pp. 75-98

**Abstract:** With *The Invention of Art*, Larry Shiner challenges our conventional understandings of art and asks us to reconsider its history entirely, arguing that the category of fine art is a modern invention—that the lines drawn between art and craft resulted from key social transformations in Europe during the long eighteenth century.

**Comment:** This text is very useful in showing the often problematic contingencies behind the establishment of the modern art practice and, consequently, attempts to define art. Looking at how the historical development of the concept traced power relations within and between societies, should help us to become more sensitive to those relations and their influence on art theory, and notice the assumptions behind the modern classificatory attempts. This should inspire a discussion on the aims of the project of art classification at large.

BILTON, TONY. *SOCIAL CLASS*

2002, In *Introductory Sociology*, 4th ed. Palgrave Macmillan

**Difficulty:** Easy-Intermediate

**Fragment:** pp. 96-111

**Abstract:** This welcome new edition builds on the strengths of its predecessor in its thematic coherence, clarity of exposition and analytical depth. It is carefully structured to cover all the main substantive topics studied at an introductory level within a framework that engages with exciting contemporary debates about modernity, globalization, and social identity. Key features of the new edition include: a completely new chapter on the media; extended coverage of social divisions to include disability, youth, old age, class, gender and race; and clearer treatment of social theory, incorporating discussion of work by such contemporary theorists as Habermas, Giddens, and Beck.

**Comment:** Social theorizing is at the heart of any discussion of class and status. Accordingly, it will help to have a basic understanding of how sociologists have tended to think about social stratification, be it along social class, gender, race, or social status. Both historical and conceptual, this selection provides such a basic understanding for the readings to come.

---

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What is the distinction between social class and social status - for instance, can they come apart and, if so, when?
2. What sort of social strata and stratifications can readers identify in their own social environments?
3. How do these strata intersect with one another, if at all?
4. To what extent, if at all, is the distinction between "fine" arts and other arts or crafts historically based in status and class prejudices?
5. To what extent, if at all, is the distinction currently based on such prejudices?

## 2. DISTINGUISHING AESTHETIC OBJECTS: HIGH ART AND LOW ART

### KING, ALEX. *HIGH ART, LOW ART, AND THE STATUS OF AESTHETICS*

2014, *Aesthetics for Birds*, November 18, 2014 [Blog]

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Abstract:** In this blogpost, King introduces the distinction between high art/highbrow and low art/lowbrow things both in terms of historical and social underpinnings. However King suggests that the distinction need not be cashed out simply in terms of what kinds of objects we choose to experience (e.g. fine wines vs. beer), but should also be understood in terms of the mode of appreciation or engagement we choose or endorse when experiencing certain objects. For instance, we can have a highbrow mode of appreciation towards an object usually considered lowbrow (and vice versa).

**Comment:** A short and illuminating blog post on the distinction between low art/high art, as well as lowbrow/highbrow, which could serve as a helpful introduction or background to the general debate, but also as background on the mechanics of appropriation, as King shows that this distinction doesn't merely rests on a historical or social categorization of objects, but also on our own modes of appreciation: one object could be considered lowbrow by an audience, yet be appreciated (or appropriated) by another audience as highbrow (and vice versa).

### EATON, A.W.. *A LADY IN THE STREET BUT A FREAK IN THE BED: ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN EROTIC ART AND PORNOGRAPHY*

2018, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 58 (4): 469-488

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Abstract:** How, if at all, are we to distinguish between the works that we call 'art' and those that we call 'pornography'? This question gets a grip because from classical Greek vases and the frescoes of Pompeii to Renaissance mythological painting and sculpture to Modernist prints, the European artistic tradition is chock-full of art that looks a lot like pornography. In this paper I propose a way of thinking about the distinction that is grounded in art historical considerations regarding the function of erotic images in 16th-century Italy. This exploration suggests that the root of the erotic art/pornography distinction was—at least in this context—class: in particular, the need for a special category of unsanctioned illicit images arose at the very time when print culture was beginning to threaten elite privilege. What made an erotic representation exceed the boundaries of acceptability, I suggest, was not its extreme libidinosity but, rather, its widespread availability and, thereby, its threat to one of the mechanisms of sustaining class privilege.

**Comment:** Eaton argues that what really matters in the distinction between pornography and erotic art, has little to do with artistic or aesthetic features, value, or function. Instead, the distinction follows social power structures along the class line: the privileged reserve art status (and positive value) to works available only in an exclusive 'private iconic circuit' but are otherwise no different from those available in the 'public iconic circuit' and labelled pornography (and evaluated negatively). Eaton likens the distinction to that between two kinds of prostitute: a 'courtesan' and a 'whore', suggesting that in both cases the distinctions originate in class divisions and serve to reinforce them. The text can serve as a great case study in the debate surrounding the distinction between low and high art, as well as a sceptical argument against the classificatory project altogether: could all attempts to distinguish art from non-art be just expressions of discrimination along various lines of privilege?

---

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What artistic media do you enjoy?
2. Do you think that these media can be classified as high/highbrow art or low/lowbrow art?
3. If so, why? And, if not, why not?
4. Is the distinction between pornography and erotic art based in what is, respectively, less aesthetically worthwhile and more aesthetically worthwhile, or is it based in status, gender, race, or class prejudices?
5. What do you think that your own conceptions (if you have them) of high/highbrow art or low/lowbrow art tracks: what is most beautiful to you, what is most appreciated by your friends or family, what is most appreciated by a social elite...

### 3. DISTINGUISHING ARTISTIC CONSUMERS

BOURDIEU, PIERRE. *DISTINCTION: A SOCIAL CRITIQUE OF THE JUDGEMENT OF TASTE*

2015, Richard Nice (trans.), Routledge

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Fragment:** Chapter 5: 'The Sense of Distinction,' pp. 257–93

**Abstract:** No judgement of taste is innocent - we are all snobs. Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* brilliantly illuminates the social pretensions of the middle classes in the modern world, focusing on the tastes and preferences of the French bourgeoisie. First published in 1979, the book is at once a vast ethnography of contemporary France and a dissection of the bourgeois mind. In the course of everyday life we constantly choose between what we find aesthetically pleasing, and what we consider tacky, merely trendy, or ugly. Taste is not pure. Bourdieu demonstrates that our different aesthetic choices are all distinctions - that is, choices made in opposition to those made by other classes. This fascinating work argues that the social world functions simultaneously as a system of power relations and as a symbolic system in which minute distinctions of taste become the basis for social judgement.

**Comment:** Bourdieu's discussion of taste and its relation to different social strata - especially, class - is one of the most prominent in all of sociology. Grounded in a sociological survey from France in the 1960's, readers will find that those surveyed and with the same social status and class seemed to align in terms of their aesthetic preferences - that is, they appeared to have the same tastes. It will be interesting for readers to see some of these findings, but it will also be important for them to consider these findings within their own social contexts. Another important contribution from this selection is in what sense culture can act as a form of capital within different social and class strata, and how different tastes can come to be seen as dominant over others, based on their corresponding status and class affiliations.

HOOKS, BELL. *ART ON MY MIND: VISUAL POLITICS*

1995, The New Press

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Fragment:** Beauty Laid Bare: Aesthetics in the Ordinary,' pp. 119-24

**Abstract:** In *Art on My Mind*, bell hooks, a leading cultural critic, responds to the ongoing dialogues about producing, exhibiting, and criticizing art and aesthetics in an art world increasingly concerned with identity politics. Always concerned with the liberatory black struggle, hooks positions her writings on visual politics within the ever-present question of how art can be an empowering and revolutionary force within the black community.

**Comment:** How we "consume" and why we "consume" certain aesthetic objects, as well as value them, is under critical scrutiny in this selection from hooks. She is particularly worried about conceptions and the consumption of what is beautiful when both are heavily influenced by negative social environments, such as pre-established standards based on classist, sexist, or racist power structures. She is also concerned with pointing out that, when we abide by certain power structures in what we consider beautiful objects and worthy of consumption, we often miss out on a great deal of beautiful things which are right before our eyes in everyday circumstances. In light of her discussion, we would do well to think about what might be influencing our conceptions of what is beautiful and how and why we consume beauty as we do.

---

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Think of Bourdieu's selection: to what extent do you think "tastes" are based in social status or class?
2. Do you think that you fit into anyone of the "tastes" that his survey has identified?
3. To what extent, if at all, do you think your taste is the product of negative social environments?
4. Can beauty be found anywhere?
5. If so, why? And, if not, why not?

#### 4. TYPES OF CONSUMPTION

HOOKS, BELL. *ART ON MY MIND: VISUAL POLITICS*

1995, The New Press

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Fragment:** Altars of Sacrifice: Re-membering Basquiat,' pp. 35-48

**Abstract:** In *Art on My Mind*, bell hooks, a leading cultural critic, responds to the ongoing dialogues about producing, exhibiting, and criticizing art and aesthetics in an art world increasingly concerned with identity politics. Always concerned with the liberatory black struggle, hooks positions her writings on visual politics within the ever-present question of how art can be an empowering and revolutionary force within the black community.

**Comment:** Social circumstances often change how we interact with or consume different aesthetic objects. In this selection, hooks worries about types of consumption which are emotionally superficial and Eurocentric. Thinking of Basquiat in particular and black artists in general, she roots her aesthetic appreciation of them - her consumption, so to speak - in her emotional interaction with them through their artistic expressions. But, equally, she also roots it in an understanding of the social circumstances surrounding the production of their art - class, race, gender, etc. So, she is not only advocating and displaying a particular conception of aesthetic value, but also trying to show how her more expansive conception of such value ultimately allows for a greater appreciation of the works of Basquiat and other black artists who have had to traverse Eurocentric and white artworlds and who have tried to challenge such artworlds by making their own works unavailable for such consumption. Both her conceptions of aesthetic value and of worthwhile consumption are important for understanding how some forms of consumption are in competition with each other and why some of them are better and worse, depending on the artist and their social circumstances.

VEBLÉN, THORSTEIN. *THE THEORY OF THE LEISURE CLASS: AN ECONOMIC STUDY OF INSTITUTIONS*

2009, Oxford University Press

**Difficulty:** Intermediate

**Fragment:** Chapter 4: 'Conspicuous Consumption,' pp. 49–69

**Abstract:** In his scathing *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Thorstein Veblen produced a landmark study of affluent American society that exposes, with brilliant ruthlessness, the habits of production and waste that link invidious business tactics and barbaric social behavior. Veblen's analysis of the evolutionary process sees greed as the overriding motive in the modern economy, and with an impartial gaze he examines the human cost paid when social institutions exploit the consumption of unessential goods for the sake of personal profit. Fashion, beauty, animals, sports, the home, the clergy, scholars--all are assessed for their true usefulness and found wanting. Indeed, Veblen's critique covers all aspects of modern life from dress, class, the position of women, home decoration, industry, business, and sport, to religion, scholarship, and education. The targets of Veblen's coruscating satire are as evident today as they were a century ago, and his book still has the power to shock and enlighten.

**Comment:** Veblen's discussion of conspicuous consumption put this concept on the sociological map. Whether it is ostentatious charity, luxury spending, or what have you for the sake of enhancing one's social prestige or highlighting one's position in society, Veblen's conception will likely apply. And, nowhere is this more true than in luxury spending on aesthetic objects and the dominance that wealthy consumers still hold within aesthetic domains, both in terms of production and consumption. As such, this reading and the conception of such consumption that it offers will be essential for understanding various behaviors - for example, how consumers stratify and distinguish themselves and others - as well as why this form of consumption is pernicious in reinforcing status prejudices and inequalities associated with class, race, gender, sexuality, and so on.

2021, *The Guardian*, 7th September 2021

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Abstract:** Close friends of artist Jean-Michel Basquiat have spoken out against the advert from jewellers Tiffany which features Beyoncé and Jay-Z posing in front of one of his paintings saying it was “not really what he was about”. Basquiat’s 1982 work *Equals Pi* sits behind the couple in the campaign as Beyoncé wears a 128.54-carat yellow diamond, the first black woman to have done so.

**Comment:** This news item discusses the controversy surrounding a 2021 advert for the high-end jewelry brand Tiffany, featuring Beyoncé and Jay-Z, and, in the background, a rarely seen painting by Basquiat owned by Tiffany. This controversy serves to illustrate both the disappointment that hooks and others feel in how Basquiat's work has been consumed in an emotionally superficial and Eurocentric manner, as well as how his work has come to be a luxury object to be conspicuously consumed primarily by the elite and used for the sake of propagating such consumption of other luxury items to the elite (in this particular instance, a 128.54-carat yellow diamond previously worn by Audrey Hepburn and Lady Gaga). The aesthetic appreciation of the painting, when used as a prop for elite interests, is under scrutiny - and, equally, whether Basquiat's intentions and what he is trying to express through his work are respected in such use and whether they should be. Moreover, many of Basquiat's works are privately owned and are not displayed to the public, only to elites. So, using this ad as a case study, we should note that aspects of specific class and status affiliations and interests can affect how appropriately or inappropriately an aesthetic object is consumed, if at all.

---

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What works of art do you enjoy the most?
2. To what extent, if at all, is emotion central to why you enjoy them so much?
3. Is it inauthentic to prize a work of art, without feeling any emotion towards it?
4. To what extent, if at all, is conspicuous consumption inauthentic or morally wrong?
5. How would you describe the sort of relationship that Beyoncé and Jay-Z have towards Basquiat's painting? What about Tiffany and Co.? What about you?

## 5. ARTISTIC PRODUCERS

STARR, ELLEN GATES. *ART AND LABOUR*

2010, In *The Craft Reader*, Glenn Adamson (ed.). Berg Publishers

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Fragment:** Chapter 21 pp. 156-160

**Abstract:** From the canonical texts of the Arts and Crafts Movement to the radical thinking of today's "DIY" movement, from theoretical writings on the position of craft in distinction to Art and Design to how-to texts from renowned practitioners, from feminist histories of textiles to descriptions of the innovation born of necessity in Soviet factories and African auto-repair shops, *The Craft Reader* presents the first comprehensive anthology of writings on modern craft. Covering the period from the Industrial Revolution to today, the Reader draws on craft practice and theory from America, Europe, Asia and Africa. The world of craft is considered in its full breadth -- from pottery and weaving, to couture and chocolate-making, to contemporary art, architecture and curation. The writings are themed into sections and all extracts are individually introduced, placing each in its historical, cultural and artistic context. Bringing together an astonishing range of both classic and contemporary texts, *The Craft Reader* will be invaluable to any student or practitioner of Craft and also to readers in Art and Design.

**Comment:** Starr highlights in this selection that art and the entirety of humanity go hand-in-hand. Firstly, she notes that art (at least, the best art) has always been, in great part, an expression of humanity's "common life" and not just an expression of its elite's interests. But, secondly and more importantly, she also argues that humans, regardless of their social status or class, cannot live without beauty in their lives. Striving for art has always been essential to joy in humanity's productive capacities, and those products have always been essential to the retention of humanity's hope in itself through our consumption of it. This selection, in conjunction with Du Bois's, makes salient that, although things are often produced by many of us without art in mind and art is often consumed by relatively few of us, such a state of affairs is ultimately not amenable to producing good societies and happy peoples. Art, as she claims, can and must be by all for all, regardless of social status or class.

DU BOIS, W.E.B.. *CRITERIA OF NEGRO ART*

1926, *The Crisis*, 32: 290-297

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Abstract:** Published in *The Crisis* of October 1926, DuBois initially spoke these words at a celebration for the recipient of the Twelfth Spingarn Medal, Carter Godwin Woodson. The celebration was part of the NAACP's annual conference and was held in June 1926.

**Comment:** In this selection, Du Bois discusses the nature of aesthetic value, how black artists have been historically excluded from creating it for false and racist reasons, and what role black artists actually have to play in creating beauty. Firstly, he establishes an expansive conception of aesthetic value. Secondly, he sets out various examples of how black artists have been historically excluded from producing art in general and art which portrays "blackness" more specifically. And lastly, he sets out a vision for the arts which not only includes black artists, but also recognizes the aesthetic and political value of their work for creating fair and equal societies where beauty is ever present and sought. It will help readers to understand the costs and wrongs that come with exclusionary practices in the production of aesthetic objects.

---

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. To what extent is the production of art inclusive or exclusive?
2. To what extent, if at all, should it be either inclusive or exclusive?
3. To whom and why, if at all, should the production of art be excluded?
4. Why, if at all, should it be maximally inclusive?
5. To what extent, if at all, did your answer's track different forms of social stratification?

## 6. CURATING ART: FOR ALL OR SOME?

### FLEMING, DAVID. *POSITIONING THE MUSEUM FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION*

2002, In *Museums, Society, Inequality*, Richard Sandell (ed.). Routledge

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Abstract:** *Museums, Society, Inequality* explores the wide-ranging social roles and responsibilities of the museum. It brings together international perspectives to stimulate critical debate, inform the work of practitioners and policy makers, and to advance recognition of the purpose, responsibilities and value to society of museums. *Museums, Society, Inequality* examines the issues and offers different understandings of the social agency of the museum, presents ways in which museums have sought to engage with social concerns and instigate social change, and imagines how museums might become more useful to society in future. This book is essential for all museum academics, practitioners and students.

**Comment:** When thinking about how class and status influences our aesthetic practices and preferences, it is also important to consider how they also influence the way we display our aesthetic products and culture, and the way we offer access to such displays. David Fleming is one of the foremost UK advocates for accessible museums and he firmly believes that museums can and should be powerful agents of social change. In this particular chapter he clearly introduces what he believes to be the four main reasons why museums in the UK have been socially exclusive, especially regarding class: 1) who runs museums, 2) what they contain, 3) how they have been run, and 4) for whom they have been run. As Fleming shows, privileged classes have been favoured across all these aspects, at the detriment of all others. He refers to this phenomenon as the Great Museum Conspiracy. But Fleming is optimistic and offers practical solutions for building a socially inclusive museum based on his own experience at the Tyne and Wear Museums. As such, this chapter can be used both as theoretical background and a case study to consider the social conditions that contribute to the social exclusion of certain classes from their own culture, as well as the economic and material conditions that serve this inequality - an inequality both in terms of access to and representation in aesthetic practices, but also an inequality in terms of the value conferred upon the culture and artefacts of the working classes.

### PEOPLE'S HISTORY MUSEUM. *TEN TREASURES FROM THE PEOPLE'S HISTORY MUSEUM'S COLLECTION*

2020, Available at: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/cAUxiSqS7Y8Izg>

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Abstract:** In February 2020, to celebrate ten years in the museum's current home in Manchester, the team at People's History Museum picked out ten pieces that they believe capture the ethos, spirit and importance of their nationally significant collection.

**Comment:** This link will take you to a free virtual exhibition offered by the People's History Museum in Manchester, which features ten of the most significant pieces in their collection. Together they illustrate what it is to collect, preserve, contextualise, and display the cultural artefacts of the working classes in the UK, all in an accessible and inclusive manner. It also illustrates particularly well how class issues intersect with LGBTQ+, gender, and race issues, precisely because this intersectionality can be materially experienced in these objects.

---

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think Fleming is right in his assessment of the Great Museum Conspiracy?
2. Can you think of other particular examples (perhaps outside the UK) that illustrate this Conspiracy?
3. When viewing the People's History Museum exhibit, can you identify the ways in which this Conspiracy is countered? Does it go far enough?
4. What kind of value do you think the artefacts presented in this exhibit have? And what kind of value is conferred onto them by the act of displaying them as such?
5. If you were a curator thinking about implementing socially inclusive policies, how would you do it?

## 7. APPROPRIATION: FASHION AS A CASE STUDY

### CRANE, DIANA. *DIFFUSION MODELS AND FASHION: A REASSESSMENT*

1999, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 566: 13-24.

**Difficulty:** Easy-Intermediate

**Abstract:** Large-scale diffusion processes such as those affecting fashionable clothing are difficult to study systematically. This article assesses the relevance of top-down as compared to bottom-up models of diffusion for fashion. Changes in the relationships between fashion organizations and their publics have affected what is diffused, how it is diffused, and to whom. Originally, fashion design was centered in Paris; designers created clothes for local clients, but styles were diffused to many other countries. This highly centralized system has been replaced by a system in which fashion designers in several countries create designs for small publics in global markets, but their organizations make their profits from luxury products other than clothing. Trends are set by fashion forecasters, fashion editors, and department store buyers. Industrial manufacturers are consumer driven, and market trends originate in many types of social groups, including adolescent urban subcultures. Consequently, fashion emanates from many sources and diffuses in various ways to different publics.

**Comment:** Fashion has always been a subject of great interest for sociologists, but only recently for philosophers. In this selection, Crane offers an overview of how fashions/styles/trends have traditionally been thought to spread among and affect the relations between different social groups, but also notes several shortcomings of the existing models. Overall, she ends up concluding that fashion has a number of sources and diffuses in various ways. But, for our purposes, what is particularly important about this selection is in how she casts fashion's diffusion as guided by differential perceptions of class and status and who wants to consume what sorts of fashion, based on those perceptions. Existing models, despite their shortcomings, present a helpful way of understanding various phenomena, including: appropriation, targeted advertizing, class and status signalling, and so on.

### COOPER, LEONIE. *JOE CORRÉ, SON OF MALCOLM MCLAREN AND VIVIENNE WESTWOOD, ON WHY HE'S BURNING HIS £5 MILLION PUNK COLLECTION*

2016, NME, 18th March 2016

**Difficulty:** Easy

**Abstract:** This week [18th March 2016], Joe Corr , son of punk provocateurs Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood proved that rebellion runs in the family. In response to the ongoing Punk London year of events, gigs, films, talks, exhibits, celebrating 40 years of punk - which Joe claims has been endorsed by the Queen - has announced his plans to burn his £5 million collection of punk memorabilia this November 26, on the 40th anniversary of the release of the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy In The UK'. NME visited Joe at his London HQ to find out more.

**Comment:** This news item is an interview with Joe Corr , son of British fashion designer Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren, former manager of the Sex Pistols. In response to the 2016 events celebrating '40 years of Punk' in London, Corr  announced he would burn his collection of punk artefacts, estimated to be worth £5 million (he did end up burning it on a barge on the Thames). In this interview, Corr  discusses how the punk aesthetic has been appropriated by the very people and institutions that the punk movement was against - the establishment. For Corr , his collection is only worth £5 million because of the mainstream appropriation that punk has undergone - for him these items are worthless, they barely even have sentimental value. But equally, Corr , a very wealthy man himself (he co-founded the lingerie brand Agent Provocateur and sold it to private equity for £60 million), has come under fire for his decision to burn the items rather than give them to charity. As such, this piece is an interesting case study that illustrates the mechanics of class appropriation of fashion as discussed by Crane. But it can also be discussed in reference to the People's History Museum virtual exhibition from week 6, as perhaps Corr 's judgement that these items are not worthy of preservation and display is itself clouded by class privilege.

2019, *Philosophical Studies*, 176: 981–1002

**Difficulty:** Easy-Intermediate

**Abstract:** What could ground normative restrictions concerning cultural appropriation which are not grounded by independent considerations such as property rights or harm? We propose that such restrictions can be grounded by considerations of intimacy. Consider the familiar phenomenon of interpersonal intimacy. Certain aspects of personal life and interpersonal relationships are afforded various protections in virtue of being intimate. We argue that an analogous phenomenon exists at the level of large groups. In many cases, members of a group engage in shared practices that contribute to a sense of common identity, such as wearing certain hair or clothing styles or performing a certain style of music. Participation in such practices can generate relations of group intimacy, which can ground certain prerogatives in much the same way that interpersonal intimacy can. One such prerogative is making what we call an appropriation claim. An appropriation claim is a request from a group member that non-members refrain from appropriating a given element of the group's culture. Ignoring appropriation claims can constitute a breach of intimacy. But, we argue, just as for the prerogatives of interpersonal intimacy, in many cases there is no prior fact of the matter about whether the appropriation of a given cultural practice constitutes a breach of intimacy. It depends on what the group decides together.

**Comment:** This article presents a thorough discussion of the competing interests surrounding cultural appropriation and one promising explanation of why it amounts to a harm or wrong based on the notion of intimacy - in particular, breaches of group intimacy. Although this explanation is just one of many that might be given, the hope is that readers will find tools for thinking about the previous items from this week's selections and for developing their own views on cultural appropriation.

---

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Thinking of different fashion brands, how would you describe their diffusion and use?
2. Thinking of the diffusion models presented by Crane and Corr e's impressions of "Punk," as it was and now is, what sort of model seems to describe what Punk has undergone?
3. Do you think Corr e should have done something else with his collection of Punk artefacts?
4. Is Corr e's Punk a good example of cultural appropriation - especially, along class lines?
5. What other examples can you think of?
6. To what extent, if at all, do you think intimacy is at the core of why we find cultural appropriation wrong?
7. What else might be underlying these impressions?