



German
Historical
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London



Pop Nostalgia

The Uses of the Past in Popular Culture

Date: 10-11 November

Deadline: 30 June

Convenors: Dion Georgiou (BSSH South Sport and Leisure History Network), Tobias Becker (German Historical Institute London)

Pop nostalgia, we are told, is everywhere. Our current golden age of television—from *Mad Men* to *Vinyl*, *Downton Abbey* to *Call the Midwife*—lovingly recreates earlier periods of the twentieth century, while club nights devoted to the 1980s or 1990s allow us to return to our youth. What is more, popular culture is, in the words of music journalist Simon Reynolds, addicted to its *own* past. It not only reminisces, it revives, reissues, remixes earlier forms and styles instead of coming up with genuinely new. Finally, our most modern technologies are always also time machines: producing sepia-coloured images of the present for an anticipated nostalgic recollection in the future.

These very different cultural phenomena, which are often subsumed under the term nostalgia, raise a number of still under-explored questions. How new is this development, given that period films are as old as the cinema and that popular culture and music has drawn on earlier periods as long as it exists? Can, contrary to Reynolds' argument, the recycling of old styles and forms not also be highly creative and result in innovations? Are period settings and costumes, retro and vintage styles as such indicative and synonymous with nostalgia? Is it really nostalgia—a sentimental longing for yesterday—that drives our interest in and our engagement with the past? And if not what other motivations are at play? What role, for example, have media technologies such as film and the internet played in preserving the culture of the past in the present?

These are some of the questions the workshop *Pop Nostalgia* addresses. It explores the uses of the past in popular culture across all media and genre, from literature, cinema, television, and video games to theme park, club nights and sports events. It is interested not only in representations of the past but also in their production and circulation as well as in audiences and reception. The workshop is particularly interested in the historical dimension of pop nostalgia, namely how it has changed over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

We welcome proposals for twenty-minute presentations from all disciplines and particularly encourage comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives. Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words, along with a short CV, by 30th June 2016 to both Dion Georgiou (BSSH South Sport and Leisure History Network) at diongeorgiou@hotmail.co.uk and Tobias Becker (German Historical Institute London) at becker@ghil.ac.uk. The conference will take place from 10 to 11 November at the German Historical Institute London. Accommodation during the conference will be covered. Up to 100€ of travel costs will be reimbursed to those traveling within Europe; 800€ for those traveling from elsewhere.