The significance of typography in the linguistic landscape of the 1960s and 1970s: Hippie vs. punk

Paolo Coluzzi

paolo.coluzzi@um.edu.my

Universiti Malaya

Abstract

This article looks at the use of letterings and typefaces in the linguistic landscape through a comparison of hippie and punk concert posters. After a general introduction, some definitions and an overview on the hippie and punk movements and the posters they produced, the article introduces the methodology employed, which consisted of both an analysis of the lettering used in hippie and punk posters and a survey carried out among a sample of students at Universiti Malaya (Kuala Lumpur). This is followed by an analysis and a discussion of the data, which have led to two main findings: not only were the antithetical ideas behind these two youth movements portrayed through the specific lettering and fonts used, but the latter feature specific traits that may be linked to our mental processes and possibly our limbic system, the most primordial part of our brain.

Keywords**:** Fonts, hippies, lettering, psychedelic posters, punks, typography

1.   Introduction

Whereas academic literature on typography is quite copious, relatively few articles on this topic have been published in the area of sociolinguistics (see for example Theo van Leeuwen's 2005 and 2006 seminal articles, and the special issue of the journal *Social Semiotics* edited by Järlehed & Jaworski, 2015). This article aims at expanding the scope of typography in the area of

sociolinguistic studies, and in particular in the area now known as 'linguistic landscape'. As the author of this article takes a particular interest in the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, hippie and punk typography was chosen, partly because of its originality and the importance it had for these subcultures. It was believed that comparing and contrasting the letterings used by these very different youth movements would lead to interesting results.

So far, the main focus of linguistic landscape research has been on different languages and scripts used in the public space, shop-owners' and passers-by's responses and perceptions of them, as well as other aspects such as the size and position of the texts, and even the material that signs are made of. As for the particular lettering used in hippie and punk countercultures and particularly in hippie psychedelic posters, brief descriptions can be found in a few publications, academic and not, some having come out in 2017 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the 1967 'Summer of Love' in San Francisco (see for example D'Alessandro & Terry, 2017, cited in this article).

The use of different scripts has actually a lot in common with the use of different fonts (besides the fact that every widespread script can be written using different fonts) in that both can be symbolical and/or evocative and can index something that goes beyond the actual meaning of the text. As, for example, Chinese characters can index or connote[1] Chinese-ness and Chinese culture even for people who cannot read Chinese (Leeman & Modan, 2009), some fonts can also index or connote some specific products/company and even some specific country or historical period, with no need to read or even understand the contents of the message. In other words, "typography conveys ample and subtle meanings beyond its language-encoding function" (Stöckl 2005, p. 208) and "typeface variation does strongly affect the emotional information or in other words the *tone* that accompanies the information" (Amare & Manning, 2012, p. 1). Specific fonts can even more subtly evoke feelings and moods; in Sarah Hyndman' words (2016, p. 26): "the different shapes and styles of the typefaces themselves stimulate responses independently of the words they spell out, and before we even read them."

Scollon and Scollon (2003, pp. 130-131) provided an example of 'Coca Cola' written in a simple font and not in the traditional Spencerian font that has made Coca Cola famous all over the world. Needless to say, if 'Coca Cola' were written in a different, less ornate font, it would lose

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[1]. 'To connote' "refers to the idea that signs may be 'imported' from one context (one era, one social group, one culture) into another, in order to signify the ideas and values associated with that other context by those who do the 'importing'." (van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 146)

all its distinctiveness and appeal. On a similar note, Crystal (1997, p. 16) remarked that a noun phrase such as 'Christmas Fair' written in Old English typefaces would convey a different meaning than what the use of, for example, Times New Roman would convey. On the other hand, Blackletter evokes the Middle Ages (Gothic texts can even evoke Nazism, or some brands of Heavy Metal, see for example Spitzmüller, 2012), Wainwright fonts carry us immediately to the Wild West, whereas Art Nouveau fonts recall the period between the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in France. The contour, shape and colour of the letters can even scare or reassure us, as will be further discussed in this article.

To discuss the significance of typography in the linguistic landscape (and in printed matter more in general as well), this article focuses on the lettering used within the hippie 'counterculture' of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s and the punk 'subculture' which immediately followed it in the second half of the 1970s. The main focus will be the lettering used on concert posters, using mainly photographs sourced from the Web and from two volumes on hippie art (Owen & Dickson, 1999; D'Alessandro & Terry, 2017). These two different styles of lettering were chosen for being clearly related to their respective subcultures (particularly the hippie one) and for contrasting sharply one from the other, which highlights the differences between these two youth movements. The main aim of this article is to contend that the style of the lettering used by hippies and punks for their concert posters, apart from being clearly connotative, may further be linked to our mental processes and possibly our limbic system, the most primordial part of our brain. If this is true, then the styling of the fonts discussed in this article may have been neither a fully creative process, i.e. a conscious decision to make them look the way we know them, nor an arbitrary or random process. Rather it may reflect deep-seated mental preferences rooted in the limbic system, which in turn reflect the ideology and ethos behind these two subcultures. Therefore the typographic choices made may have been motivated at least to an extent by cognitive mechanisms which neither the hippies nor the punks were aware of at the time.

2.   Definitions of Typography, Fonts and Typefaces

Together with the non-technical term 'lettering', 'typography' and 'fonts' are used interchangeably in this article, following a general trend that has made them, particularly the last two, almost synonymous with each other. However, the three terms really refer to three different, yet related concepts. Technically, 'typography' "refers to the process of design, production, and visual

organization of letterforms (shape, size, spacing, etc.) to achieve 'harmony' and 'legibility' despite the social sense of their use" (Järlehed & Jaworski 2015, p. 117). However, we will adopt Sue Walker's more wide-ranging definition (2001, in Järlehed & Jaworski 2015, pp. 117-118) that subsumes " 'writing' in all possible modes of production and technologies such as handwriting (including the use of 'writing' instruments such as pens, as well as inscribing, scrawling or scratching), mechanical (printing), and the digital media." Within typography, we can distinguish fonts and typefaces: "a font refers usually to the digital, computerized form of a particular typeface. Each typeface may have a family of several fonts (bold, italic, condensed, semibold italic, etc.), each weight and style on the page a little different" (Garfield 2012, p. 32), but "in common parlance we use font and typeface interchangeably" (ibid.).

The hippie and punk typefaces to be examined here were handwritten at first, then became available through dry transfer processes such as the popular Letraset (or simply as cutouts from magazines and newspapers, as will be shown further on), some of them ending up at some point as out-and-out digital fonts, which can be found on the Web and in some cases downloaded for free.[2]

The typefaces discussed here are no longer very popular, even though they were quite visible in many Western urban areas in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. Unlike Times New Roman, Gill Sans and other common fonts, both hippie and punk typefaces were used mainly in titles and posters, i.e. they were 'display' typefaces,[3] partly because they were very showy and not particularly reader-friendly, especially the hippie ones.

3.   The Hippies and the Punks[4]

Specific juvenile subcultures are a post-Second World War phenomenon, even though something akin to them had existed before, especially among people from more privileged socio-economic and educational backgrounds in the Western world. In America the first definite and specific youth subculture took shape in the 1950s and came to be known as the beat generation. The beats were in a way the forerunners of the hippies, and in fact some of them, particularly the famous poet

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[2]. As a matter of fact, all the oldest and most classical fonts were originally handmade by skilled typographers, such as Times New Roman or Gill Sans.

[3]. 'Display' typefaces are used for "short blocks of text in larger point sizes", contrasting with 'text' typefaces, which are used for "long blocks of text in smaller point sizes" (Amare & Manning, 2012, p. 7).

[4]. The brief outline provided in this section is based on different sources, foremostly Moretta, 2017; D'Alessandro &Terry, 2017; McNeil & McCain, 2016; Worley, 2011; Strain, 2017.

Allen Ginsberg, became 'spiritual' leaders of the hippies who followed them. Both the beats and the hippies were against the Establishment, as the punks would be after them, but all of them in different ways, as will be shown below. The hippies originated in San Francisco, California, around 1965, but their culture and life style spread rapidly all over the United States and abroad. The hippies were basically young people who decided to reject the superficiality, violence, consumerism and the materialism of mainstream American society, engaging in a way of living that:

> *would lead them down the path towards the creation of a New Age; a society and culture that were more humane, spiritual, and free than any that had existed before. Hippie philosophy stressed the need for pacifism, quietism, creativity, gratification, and community. Hippies translated these values into a radical break with mainstream society's institutions, culture, and lifestyle. Instead of aggression, destructive productivity, obscene commercialism, and conspicuous consumption, the hippie ethos affirmed peace, love, sensuousness, environmentalism, and a simple, less materialistic life. Hippies envisioned the idealistic community as one where everyone was turned on and happy and floating free. Their goal wasn't one long party but rather to create a new society that integrated art and life.*

> (Moretta, 2017, p. 6)

Conforming to all this, the hippies felt they were free to look the way they liked and wear whatever they saw as natural, original and colourful. They let their hair grow (including beards and moustaches for men) and started putting on all sort of clothes, often second-hand and 'ethnic', related to the cultures of the developing world and particularly to the native Americans, whom they greatly admired. They were not political in the strict sense as they did not want to change the Establishment. They simply wanted to create a new and more humane, free and environmentally friendly society separated from the mainstream one. These are the main reasons that many hippies ended up living in alternative rural communes where they could experiment with a new free and disinhibited lifestyle (see for example Miller, 1999). They made significant use of drugs, largely so-called psychedelic drugs such as marijuana and LSD, which, they were convinced, would help them to widen their horizons and create a new liberated humanity.

The punk movement also started on similar premises as the hippies, as an anti-Establishment movement. The first youth movement which we may call punk (or pre-punk)[5] actually consisted of 'marginal' hippies who did not like the 'meek' and peaceful attitudes of the dominant hippie youth culture. The American actress, painter and author Mary Woronov, who was part of the American punk scene at the time, put it like this:

> *We didn't even want to go to San Francisco. California was really strange. We weren't like them at all. They hated us. For one thing, we dressed in black leather, they dressed in wild colors. They were like: 'Oh wow, man, a happening!' [...] We were [sadomaso] and they were free love. [...] So they thought we were evil and we thought they were stupid.*
>
> (McNeil & McCain 2016, p. 17)

This passage points up the difference between hippies and punks, a difference that was antithetical and, as will be shown, that reflected in the lettering they used (see also the title of Sex Pistols' album 'Never trust a hippy' in Figure 5).

The punks were part of "a generational revolt against both the postwar consensus society that seemed to have fallen into disrepair by the 1970s and the wistful liberal utopianism of the 1960s counterculture" (Worley, 2011, p. 69). They were as non-political (at least at the initial stages) as the hippies, but they were more aggressive, or at least they wanted to be seen as such. They were an angry lot, angry towards 'normality', they wanted to shock. To this purpose, they made use of "an explicit and violent use of language as part of a general shock tactic strategy meant to offend and draw attention to punk itself" (Triggs, 2006, p. 73).

While hippies on the whole had a constructive attitude towards life, punks were more often than not destructive and self-destructive, which was reflected in their use of alcohol and heavy drugs like amphetamines and heroine, and for those who could not afford the latter, even plain glue. Whereas the hippies tended to have a more 'feminine' look, with men wearing long hair, necklaces and bracelets, the punks on the whole had a more 'masculine' look, with leather jackets and chains, and some even shaving part of their heads. Even though the first American punks did not look so different from the hippies, apart from their tendency to wear black clothes, their better-known British counterparts who reached notoriety in the middle of the 1970s looked much more outrageous and aggressive, with ripped clothing, shaved heads and spiky hair, and piercings and tattoos. At least some of these differences may also be explained by the social background of most

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[5]. The term, however, started to be used much later, in 1975 (McNeil & McCain, 2016 pp. 225-226).

hippies and punks – the former came mostly from middle class suburban families, while the latter in most cases came from urban working-class families.

Something that hippies and punks did have in common was the centrality of music in their lives, even though the punks preferred 'rougher', louder and faster music ("two-chorded thrash, shouted vocal", Worley 2011, p. 78). While the hippies listened to psychedelic music bands such as the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane, folk singers such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, and British rock bands such as the Beatles and Cream, the punks were into bands like the American Ramones or the British Sex Pistols, among many others. And for their albums, concert posters and magazines, both movements made use of original letterings that could clearly index their ideology and style.

It should be highlighted here that these characteristics are generalizations and in reality the differences were not always so clear-cut – obviously not all hippies or punks were exactly the same, and neither was the music they made or listened to or the lettering they used.

4.   Hippie and Punk Posters

There aren't and there have never been 'standard' typefaces for hippie psychedelic or punk concert posters. In fact, a cursory look at the posters that can be found online or in specialized books (for example in Owen & Dickson, 1999 or D'Alessandro & Terry, 2017 for psychedelic posters) shows that the range of lettering used for hippie or punk rock concert posters was quite wide and featured quite different levels of artistry. However, most of them shared some general traits.

Figure 1: Hippie Poster by Wes Wilson

Figure 2: Hippie Poster by Victor Moscoso

Figure 3: Two Hippie Posters by Bonnie McLean

Starting with the hippie posters, the original ones were ubiquitous, particularly in "highly pedestrianized areas such as the Haight-Ashbury" in San Francisco between 1965 and 1968; "tacked on telephone poles and pasted in shop windows throughout the Haight and college campuses around the Bay Area" (Terry, 2017, p. 48). These posters were similar in that they:

simulated both the mind-expanding effects of hallucinogenic drugs and the experience of the concerts themselves. As a consequence, most of them featured vibrant colours, dense imagery, and hard-to-read lettering.

(Peterson, 2002, p. 311)

The lettering used by hippies tended to feature round and thick shapes; as the posters in figures 1, 2 and 3 show. It was mainly:

compact, shaped into abstract forms, or ondulating, stretched or warped. Otherwise, it may be finely rendered and elegantly decorative. Color is bright, often intense, sometimes with contrasting adjacent hues that cause the edges or form to flicker, flow, or create an illusion of depth.

(Medeiros, in Owen & Dickson, 1999, p. 29)

Sources for their inspiration were, among others, older letterings, such as Art Nouveau and Victorian, and even 'Wild West' lettering used in a modified version for example by Victor Moscoso in the poster in Figure 2; these letterings, particularly Art Nouveau and Wild West, indexed a pre-modern past, nature and rejection of modernity and modern capitalism (especially the latter). In addition, hippie lettering often featured a psychedelic style, which related to and tried to reproduce the psychedelic hallucinatory states obtained through LSD and other psychedelic drugs.

Obviously, not all posters were so distinctive and creative as the ones shown here, partly because these were designed by three of the leading San Francisco poster artists: Wes Wilson (born in 1937), Victor Moscoso (born in 1936) and Bonnie McLean (born in 1939). Together with others such as Rick Griffin, Bonnie Graham, Lee Conklin, Randy Tuten, David Singer, Gary Grimshaw, David Byrd, Stanley Mouse and Alton Kelley, these three artists produced the most interesting posters of the period between roughly 1966 and 1972 (Moretta, 2017, p. 112; see also Owen & Dickson, 1999; Peterson, 2002; Montgomery, 2016; D'Alessandro & Terry, 2017). Wes Wilson's lettering tended to "fill up space" and be "all rounded and somewhat organic" (Medeiros, in Owen & Dickson, 1999, pp. 52, 54) whereas Moscoso drew inspiration mostly from 'Wild West' lettering: "it was basically a simple upper-case letter to which Moscoso applied large, sometimes massive serifs" (Medeiros, in Owen & Dickson, 1999, p. 73). McLean's lettering was closer to Wilson's, a style that filled up space, but with a more 'squarish' look. These artists designed psychedelic posters mostly for the Avalon Ballroom and Fillmore Auditorium, the two most popular dance halls between 1966 and 1968 (Terry, 2017; Owen & Dickson, 1999; Peterson, 2002; Moretta, 2017).

What is immediately noticeable is that these posters are not reader-friendly at all, but the form and the lettering, what they index or connote, are in a way more important than the contents; as Androutsopoulos has remarked (2004), the functionality of their typography is restricted. "The 'illegible,' 'pyrotechnic calligraphy' embedded in the poster design spoke to the intended audience while remaining incomprehensible to 'straight' society" (Terry, 2017, p. 49).
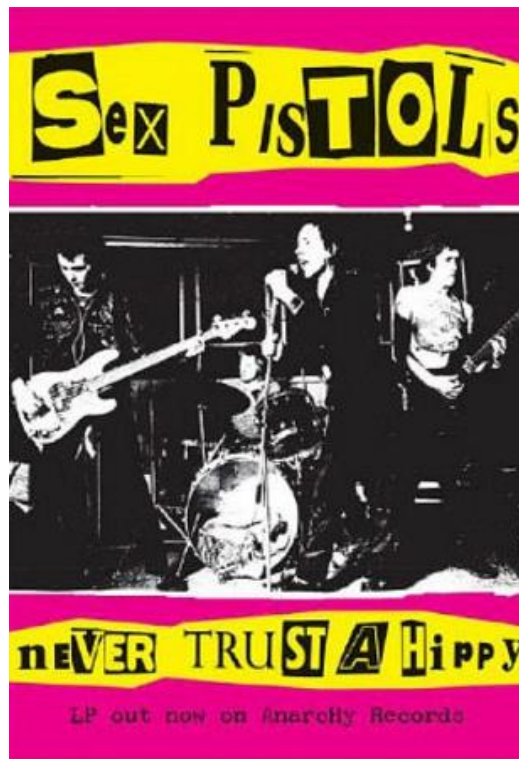
Figure 4: A Punk Poster

Figure 5: A Punk Poster by Jamie Reid

Punk posters, on the other hand, showed very different features, partly because of the "raw and amateur production quality" (Triggs, 2006, p. 74), which was part of their 'do-it-yourself' ethos. Most of the time the lettering they used was in black and white, or a few other strong and 'aggressive' colours like bright red and yellow. It was simple and to the point, often featuring uneven and disproportioned angular letters, often slender, occasionally even pointed or jagged ones, and sometimes cut-and-paste collage compositions were used, which recall anonymous letters of threat or blackmail. According to Androutsopoulos (2004, p. 382), these "ransom note cut-outs" (together with "old fashioned typewriter lettering") were a way to convey a sense of the violence and desperation typical of punk writings. This can be seen in the examples in figures 4 and 5. Among punk poster artists, Jamie Reid (born in 1947), Sex Pistols' art director and author of the group's most celebrated album covers, is probably the most widely known.

What is important to highlight is that both hippie and punk letterings were the results of "conscious acts of subverting authority and 'received' patterns of design" (Järlehed & Jaworski, 2015, p. 120), while at the same time "communicating cultural difference" (Coupland & Garret, 2010, in Järlehed, 2015, p. 173). In general, music-related typography is 'emblematic', in the sense that its main purpose:

> *is not to enhance legibility of the text, but to convey the socio-cultural affiliation of the text and its producers. Emblematic type contextualizes the individual text within the broader discourse of pop music.*

(Androutsopoulos, 2004, p. 382)

And since some specific letterings came to be emblematic of and connote a particular music genre and subculture related to it, it is very common now to see those particular fonts used in contexts related to those genres or subcultures: "emblematic type may start off as part of art products such as record covers, but it eventually diffuses and circulates in a variety of media formats as a resource to signal cultural affiliation, or fan identity" (Androutsopoulos, 2004, p. 383). For example, most of the features described above can also be observed in the fonts used for the cover of many books on the hippie and punk movements, including two of the reference books consulted for this research, as shown in figures 6 and 7.
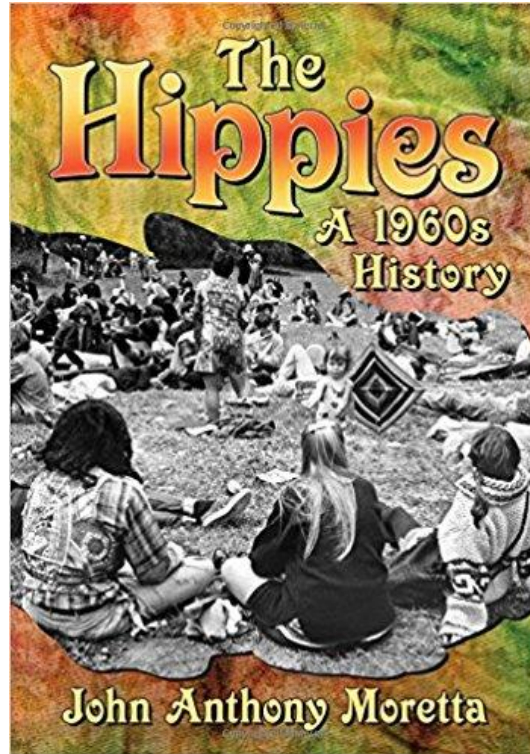
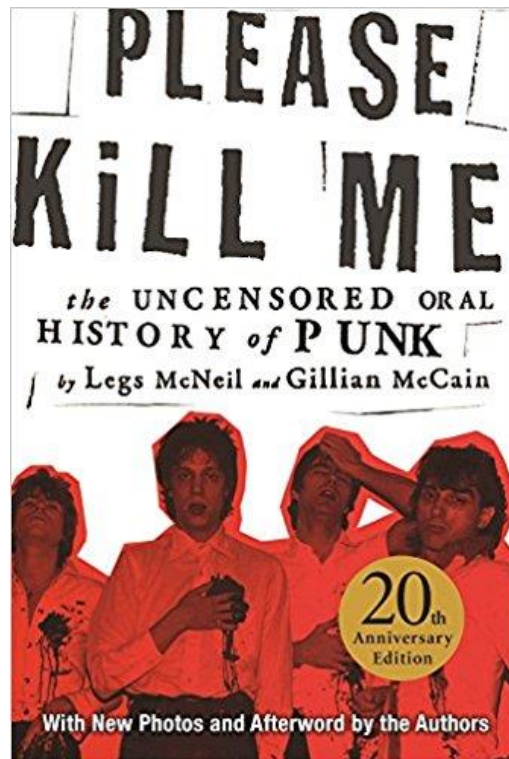Figure 6: Cover of the Book by John Anthony Moretta on the Hippie Movement

Figure 7: Cover of the Book by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain on the Punk Movement

5.   Research Design

Two different methods were used to obtain data for this research. As the research is placed in the framework of the linguistic landscape, an obvious choice for the analysis of lettering would be concert posters advertising both hippie and punk bands, which were very popular at that time and which can be found on the Internet as well as in a few specialized books, particularly on the hippies. These posters were the source of my own analysis and discussion of hippie and punk letterings (see previous section). At the same time, a survey was carried out among a sample of students attending Italian, Japanese, Spanish and French classes at Universiti Malaya (Kuala Lumpur)[6] to test their perception of hippie-style and punk-style fonts. As explained in the introduction, my research hypothesis was that in addition to connoting or being emblematic of these particular subcultures, the typographic styles that are the object of this study may have been chosen and developed the way they are because the lettering style itself conveyed deep messages that reflected the values of hippies and punks. To demonstrate this, I decided to carry out a test among people for whom, because of their age and background, these letterings were likely not to carry any specific cultural meaning, i.e. they did not index anything in particular.

Sixty-five students in the Italian, Japanese, Spanish and French divisions of the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics at Universiti Malaya, all speakers of English as a second language, were given a photocopy each with the same noun phrase written twice using two different fonts that were downloaded from the Internet. As the noun phrase had to be as neutral as possible and its meaning had nothing to do with hippies or punks, the English name of our university was decided upon. Obviously there is a large variety of fonts that can be connected to the hippie or punk movements, some quite different from the others – I opted for two fonts that could be downloaded free of charge from the web, which were not too showy and quite easily readable ('hippie movement' and 'cyberpnuk2 regular'). They were also printed in the same size and colour (black), to prevent these two variables from influencing the perception of the students (see Figure 8). Participants were then given a few minutes to write down the adjectives or any other words that the font evoked under each of the two noun phrases.

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Figure 8: Noun Phrase and Fonts Used for the Test

All the words that were written by the students were then noted down, and they provide a general overview of the interpretation the students gave of the two noun phrases.

The rationale behind this test was to verify whether the kind of fonts used could influence the students' perception and evoke similar images and feelings for each noun phrase. Also, as will be shown, these images and feelings on the whole seem to match some aspects of the ideas and values of the hippie and punk movements. In the Western world and/or in economically highly developed countries such as Japan, these fonts may be easily recognized as punk or hippie (particularly the hippie ones) and therefore would necessarily evoke images and feelings related to the features and values relating to these two subcultures. However, this does not seem to apply to a country such as Malaysia, at least among young people who did not have any direct contacts with those cultures. In fact, the students that took part in the survey are very young (between 19 and 26) and are all Malaysian, whether of Chinese or Malay ethnicity. In other words, it is mostly in the Western world that these fonts have undergone a process of 'enregisterment', i.e. they have acquired social meaning by being correlated to the specific social contexts where they were first noticed (Jaworski, 2015, p. 221). This is partly due to the fact that a hippie or punk scene never really developed in Malaysia and, as remarked above, most Malaysians do not know much about them, especially young people. In spite of the worldwide cultural and economic flows that the Internet and globalization have made possible, various political, educational and cultural factors have kept Malaysians away from most of the cultural developments that have taken place in the West and even in Asia, particularly if they happened before they were born. When asked after completing the test, only few students appeared to have heard about the hippies, and only a handful could describe them even though very superficially. On the other hand, most of them had heard about the punks, but at the most they could only describe their hairstyle and the kind of clothes they wore. None of them had any idea about the lettering they used. The result is that the majority of young Malaysian students are not aware of most of the social and cultural developments that took place in the Western world in the 1960s and 1970s, and as a result their cultural and

typographic knowledge of that period is rather limited. This means that for most of the students at least, these were only two noun phrases written using some 'odd' fonts.

6.   Results and Discussion

As explained above, the data collection comprised of two phases: the first one just aimed at viewing and comparing as many hippie and punk concert posters as could be found, in order to verify the relative uniformity of the styles of the letterings employed and determine their general traits. The second phase consisted of an actual test among university students (see Section 5).

6.1.   Phase 1

Dozens of posters were looked at on the internet and in specialized books in order to verify that the lettering used corresponded to the descriptions provided in the section on hippie and punk posters. Even though the analysis was necessarily subjective, the vast majority of the posters did show the traits described, with only a handful featuring conspicuous differences from the most typical hippie and punk lettering style (but still retaining a distinctive hippie or punk look through other elements such as colour and iconography).

6.2.   Phase 2

As explained in the previous section, this phase consisted of a test carried out among the Malaysian students, the results of which seem to coincide to a large extent with the main features of the two movements described above.

The adjectives, nouns and phrases provided through the test have been listed in tables 1 and 2.[7]

Table 1. Results of the Survey on Hippie Lettering

Hippie lettering (UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA)

Occurrences	Words
19	fun/funny

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[7]. More words were actually provided, but I tried to subsume them under those that had an identical meaning, e.g. 'not clear' and 'unclear', or 'relaxed' and 'relax'. Adverbs of degree (e.g. 'very', 'quite', 'a bit', 'a little') were not considered as they would have fragmented the results in a confusing way. Many other words were actually related to each other, but were counted separately.

17	informal
14	cute
11	hard/difficult/complicated to read/understand, creative
10	attracts attention/attractive
7	happy
5	unique, childish
4	groovy, playful, artists/art, weird
3	hippie, relaxed/relaxing , kids/children, not clear, messy
2	fat, clear, beautiful, nice, stylish, interesting, friendly, joy, soft, lovely, casual, cartoon, unofficial, slimy, not attractive, boring, ugly
1[8]	60s/70s, disorganized, flower child, non-conformist, new, elegant, daring, circus, clown, not professional, wavy, craziness, Willy Wonka, good times, café, old style, neat, alive, active, not regular, free, not serious, young people, non-informative, flexible, uncommon, rare, joke, pretty, simple, curvy, light, mischievous, round, party, comics, kindness, unequal, funky, retro, decorative, peace, colourful, adorable, small, catchy, theme park, dubious, unbalanced, heavy, weak, crowd, alien font, dull, uniform, not interesting, immature, confusing, hard, difficult, mystery, spooky, scant, graffiti, monster, goopy, blurry

[8]. Words that were cited only once were included as well. Even though taken singularly they are not statistically relevant (and as they are not synonyms they could not be grouped together), many of them could be said to belong to roughly the same semantic area, and are, therefore, useful for my analysis.

Table 2. Results of the Survey on Punk Lettering

Punk lettering (UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA)

Occurrences	Words
20	formal
16	easy to read/recognize/understand
11	clear
10	bold
8	serious
7	scary, messy, strong
6	mystery/mysterious
5	nice
4	unclear, dirty, cool, simple, neat
3	horror, old, clean, boring, standard/standardized, professional, easy
2	dangerous, dark, hard, glitch, attractive/attracts attention, official, artistic, modern, adventurous, thrilling, common, interesting, big, beautiful, normal, mature, important
1	troubled, crime drama, staggered, chaotic, apocalyptic, destructive, disturbed, graffiti, blood, hidden truth, creepy, war, dark secret, not attractive, not interesting, abandoned, nostalgic feelings, smooth, confident, tidy, not tidy, informal, familiar, annoying, difficult, retro, old school, incomplete, rebellious, awareness campaign, square, assignment font, not nice, historic, organized, vintage, wild, suspense,

	gimmick, earthquake, dull, proposal, dominant, bright, maturity, elegant, charismatic, easy on the eye, simplistic, stressed, work, banners, events, youth, brave, crowded, obvious, established, majestic, sophisticated, smart, complex, large, usual, uniform, perfect, strict, straight, famous, sturdy, enthusiastic, focus

All these adjectives, nouns and phrases can be divided into three main categories: those describing the actual font (description: bold,[9] round, clear, formal, hard to read, etc.), those expressing liking or disliking (evaluation: nice, ugly) and those expressing personal feelings or ideas that the lettering evoked (association).

Positive and negative associations are present for both hippie and punk lettering; however, as far as the last category is concerned, it can be observed that, on the whole, the punk lettering is the one evoking the highest number of 'dark' or negative associations: scary (the second most chosen adjective for the punk font), mysterious, dirty, dangerous, dark, destructive, creepy, blood, horror, etc., whereas the hippie font tends to come with brighter and more positive associations: funny (the most chosen adjective for the hippie font), creative, happy, playful, relaxed, kids/children, art, friendly, joy, etc. Four students, those who noted down words such as 'groovy', 'hippie', 'flower child' and '60s/70s', were the only ones who could actually recognize the second font as being related to hippies, perhaps thanks to films they watched and/or stories they heard from their parents or grandparents.

From the findings of the second phase of my research, I would argue that the typefaces used by hippies and punks convey part of the 'atmosphere' and values attached to these two movements; in fact, adjectives such as 'dark', 'scary', chaotic', 'apocalyptic', 'destructive', 'disturbed', 'dangerous' and 'rebellious' do reflect the way punks wanted to be perceived by the 'straight' mainstream society (the Establishment), whereas the hippies had a philosophy that was

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[9]. 'Bold' could obviously also be interpreted as 'brave'. As a matter of fact, the boundary between these three categories is not so well defined and rather porous.

centred on having fun, being happy, playful and relaxed, and at the same time creative and artistic. They were sometimes childish and in a way considered themselves innocent, mischievous and life loving as children. They were a unique new generation of weird, crazy and anti-conformist youth, who believed in freedom, peace, love and joy and tried to be friendly to anyone, even to the members of the 'straight' society they opposed.[10]

It is also interesting to notice that the readability of the two noun phrases according to many students is exactly as expected: easy for the punk lettering and more difficult for the hippie one. As was explained before, this was the norm for hippie and punk posters.

As could be expected, words that do not seem to comply with the ethos of these two movements also appear in the list, and some even with a high number of occurrences, such as 'formal' or 'nice' in the case of the punk lettering. However, as was explained above, most of these words are just descriptive of the actual fonts (such as 'formal') or expressing liking or disliking (such as 'nice'), not actual expressions of personal feeling or ideas associated with the lettering. In addition, the fonts chosen might have also played a part for the presence of these 'mismatched' items – as was explained in the previous section, since there are many different fonts that can be connected to the hippie or punk movements, two easily accessible fonts were chosen that were not too showy and quite easily readable, i.e. fonts whose 'punk' and 'hippie' qualities were not too evident. This might have given space to responses of a more general nature that other more aggressive punk letterings or more 'phantasmagoric' hippie letterings would probably not have given rise to. In addition, it must be remembered that the significance of these fonts is never 'unidirectional', and personal experience and sensitivity might have generated idiosyncratic associations that cannot be easily related to the two subcultures. On the whole, however, the convergence of positive associations for the hippie font and negative associations for the punk font seems quite incontrovertible. As a matter of fact, only 20 words appear in both tables (occurring once or more, for a total of 104 occurrences) out of a total of 474 occurrences (21.9%), most of them being quite generic and in most cases occurring infrequently (or they may be frequent only for one of the two subcultures). Obviously the results provided by this survey, like that provided by all quantitative research more in general, has its own limitations. Interviews with the respondents, for example, may have provided nuances that cannot be appreciated here, particularly considering that English is not the first language for the great majority of the respondents.

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[10]. This description is based on the answers provided in Table 1.

However, this was beyond the scope of this article and the expertise of the author. Hopefully more research will be carried out in the future on this topic, which may include other methods of research.

What is rather striking about these results is that five decades on, in a place miles away from where these movements were born and thrived, young people with no knowledge of either subcultures associate the respective letterings with roughly the same values, ideas, etc., or at least with values and ideas that are congruent with the two different subcultures.

At this point the questions are: why did hippies and punks resort to these letterings without any formal collective debate and decision? How can the mere shape of the letters convey images and ideas that are stable across time and place? And how come Malaysian youngsters in 2020 associate with the fonts roughly the same meanings that these fonts had in the US/UK in respectively the 1960s and 1970s?

Of course, the different artists' mutual influence could be the answer to the first question, but this would not answer the other questions nor explain the results of the test. As a matter of fact, research has demonstrated that certain shapes and contours are very much ingrained in our psyche and even in our old mammalian brain, and specifically the amygdala, part of the limbic system. In fact, "curve-shaped letters are considered calming, whilst angular-shaped letters evoke anxiety" (Hyndman, 2016, p. 68). According to Van Leeuwen, " 'roundness' readily lends itself as a metaphor for 'organic-ness', 'natural-ness', 'femininity' and other related concepts" (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 140), whereas "angularity [can come to signify] 'abrasive', 'harsh', 'technical', 'masculine', and so on" (Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 149).

Psychological research has shown that round shapes are normally perceived as more appealing (see for example Bar & Neta, 2006 and 2007; Bertamini, Palumbo, Gheorghes & Galatsidas, 2016), possibly in part for their connection with that part of the natural world which is not perceived as dangerous (like most flowers, fruit and leaves), and are normally associated with happiness and safety (Oyama, 2003; Palumbo, Ruta & Bertamini, 2015). Round letterings are, therefore, seen positively, and if they are thick they may also convey an idea of health, cheerfulness and abundance. Sharp, angular lines, on the other hand, tend to be liked less than round lines and tend to suggest anger, threat and danger (Oyama, 2003; Bar & Neta, 2006 and 2007; Palumbo, Ruta & Bertamini, 2015).

Bar and Neta's research (2007), for example, has shown that:

In agreement with this hypothesis [that the bias towards liking sharp-angled objects significantly less than curved objects stems from an elevated perception of threat conveyed by sharp object features], the amygdala shows significantly more activation for the sharp-angled objects compared with their curved counterparts. [...] In conclusion, our findings indicate that humans like sharp-angled objects significantly less than they like objects with a curved contour, and that this bias can stem from an increased sense of threat and danger conveyed by these sharp visual elements. [11]

(Bar and Neta, 2007, pp. 2199, 2200)

Other research has shown that the emotional response to fonts tends to be different for each font and consistent among different respondents in a statistically significant way, even when the difference among these fonts is much smaller than the difference between the two styles of lettering looked at in this paper (see for example Morrison, 1986; Brumberger, 2003; Juni & Gross, 2008; Koch, 2011).

Therefore, hippie lettering in general conveys friendliness and calm, whereas the bright colours that were used added an aura of joy and positive feelings. On the contrary, punk lettering conveys negative feelings such as fear, anger and anxiety, which are enhanced by the dominant black, the colour of fear and anger (Hupka, Zaleski, Otto, Reidl & Tarabrina, 1997). The slenderness of the characters of some of the punk letterings may also stir up images of sickness and meagerness.

7.   Conclusions

Typefaces are not elements of secondary importance, as they might sometimes appear, and even if not always in a straightforward and direct way, they do transmit messages of various kinds. A particular font can also acquire a special meaning, and be related to a product, a geographical location, a historical period or even political ideas and ideologies: "A typeface captures the spirit of when it was designed and is a permanent record of that moment in time" (Hyndman, 2016, p. 76), like in the cases that have been analyzed in this article. Hippie and punk typography "contrasts with the ideas of invisibility, anonymity, and legibility imposed by modern typographic design"

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[11]. Among the stimuli used in Bar and Neta's research, English typographic characters (Arial font for the sharp letters and Arial rounded MT for the smooth letters) were also included (Bar & Neta, 2006).

(Järlehed, 2015, p. 166), which make these letterings, particularly the hippie one, perhaps one of the first examples of postmodernist typography (see for example Londoño, 2015, p. 145). The typography dealt with in this article, in the same way as vernacular typography, is not "primarily thought to be *read,* or to transmit a message, but rather to be *seen* as expressing cultural identity and belonging and to *mark* territory" (Järlehed, 2015, p. 166). Fonts can influence the readers' mood and perception, and are often used to reinforce the message conveyed by the words; they can even change the meaning of a written text. In fact, if words that we expect to find in certain fonts appear in a lettering that is normally used for words with the opposite meaning, they may become weird, even destabilizing, which can be considered a case of 'visual dissonance'.

As has been shown in this article, typefaces are very important elements of a written message, perhaps only second to the contents, the language and the script used. Not only can they be emblematic of a particular historical period, a place, a culture or even an ideology, but their significance goes much deeper than that, and the choice of specific traits may be related to mental processes and could even be linked to the most primordial part of our brain. In other words, (1) they are not arbitrary pairings of signifiers and signifieds whose meaning has to be learned, that is, the pairing of font-meaning is conventional; (2) they are not non-arbitrary (motivated) pairings either, where designers look for fonts that express the meanings they want to communicate. The poster artists may have thought they were creating something novel, even though inspired by previous letterings, but actually their 'novelty' is at least in part cognitively motivated, meaning that it would have been unlikely, inconceivable even, that they would have come up with punk-like fonts for the hippie movement and vice versa. Their brains would not have allowed it. In the same way, the brains of our participants in the test produced words associated with both fonts based on the same mechanisms; and these words express ideas that are the same as or similar to those which express the meaning of those fonts as 'conventionally' understood.

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