CULTURAL RESISTANCE READER

STEPHEN DUNCOMBE

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ONE

INTRODUCTION

When I hear the word culture I reach for my revolver.

attributed to Joseph Goebbels

NEW YORK CITY, OCTOBER 4, 1998

It's a damp afternoon in early October. The clouds are heavy and low and periodically a light mist rolls down. For the past twenty minutes groups of young people, three here, five there, have been walking up to "The Cube," a large steel sculpture on a traffic island marking the entrance to Manhattan's East Village. Carrying portable radios and dressed in the young hipster uniform of oversized shirt and super-wide pants, they look like they're either coming home from or launching out on an all-night rave. Some look more anxious than others, and the most anxious of the lot scurry around talking too loudly into cell phones or more quietly in little huddles. Radios are tuned to the frequency of a pirate radio station and techno music flows out from fifty boomboxes. Thwump, thwump, thwump. Heads start to nod and feet shuffle. The crowd is visibly excited. Something is going to happen.

Meanwhile, a block south, an old bread truck is parked by the curb, invisibly emanating the pirate signal. Jammed inside its rusting body is a portable radio transmitter, a sound engineer, a couple of DJs, and enough pot smoke to levitate the vehicle. A block west a small crew of people, studiously feigning nonchalance, waits next to a bundle of three, thirty-foot-long steel poles, laid horizontally along the ground and linked at one end. Further down and around the corner stands another small group surrounding what looks like a garden wagon covered in a tarpaulin.

At a little after 3 pm, as the crowd had grown to more than a hundred, someone gives a signal. Led by a man holding aloft a large orange traffic sign with outlines of a man and woman dancing, the crowd moves tentatively off the curb of the traffic island and on to the street. "Move, move," the anxious ones yell and the crowd breaks into a run down Astor Place. It's one short block and a left turn onto Broadway – the major thoroughfare running the length of Manhattan. In the middle of the street the metal pipes are being pushed into the air to form a tripod. Once the tripod is up and stable a young man scrambles up and seats himself on top. The garden cart is wheeled out, its tarp ripped off, and – after many frustrating tries – a small generator fires up, powering a compact receiver and amplifier. Heavy beats pump from the sound system, echoed by the boomboxes now turned to full volume: THWUMP, THWUMP, THWUMP, Thwumpada Thwumpada Thwumpada. Curious crowds come off the sidewalk, people start to dance, and soon 300 people have turned Broadway on a Sunday afternoon into a street party.

The New York Police Department shows up, at first slowly and then in force. Dressed in riot gear they stand by bewildered, confused by a protest that doesn't look like a protest, mystified by the young man perched precariously twenty-five feet above the pavement, and unsure how to confront a street full of ravers, some with painted faces, a few decked out in Marie Antoinette garb, and one fellow dancing particularly energetically in a bright blue bunny suit.

Propaganda has been handed out to the crowd, proclaiming this as an action of the newly formed New York City chapter of Reclaim the Streets, thrown to protest the Mayor's draconian "Quality of Life" policing campaign and the increased privatization of public space. But such assertions were redundant. The protest itself spoke more eloquently about reclaiming the streets for free and public expression than any photocopied sheet of indictments and demands.[1]

I think it was there, in the middle of that happy, frenetic crowd, holding one of the legs of the tripod steady, that I fully realized the political potential of culture.

I had been a political activist my entire adult life. I began in college, pressuring the State University of New York to pull their money out of businesses in South Africa. From there I constructed houses in Nicaragua, shut down the City University of New York over tuition increases, protested the Gulf War, got arrested with ACT UP, walked picket lines to support immigrant restaurant and greengrocery workers, formed a community activist organization in the Lower East Side, and would soon

assemble direct action affinity groups for world trade demonstrations. For fifteen years I built organizations, planned actions, strategized campaigns, and attended far too many meetings.

I was committed to the struggle for radical change, but also more than a bit disappointed in it: too many defeats, too much defeatism. The "Left" I was part of often seemed stuck in its ways and those ways were not working. But that afternoon with Reclaim the Streets I glimpsed something that filled me with hope. Instead of the exhausted march, chant, and civil disobedience protest model that we (and the police, media, and public) were used to, we had created our own liberatory culture and – at least for a little while – had demonstrated it to the world. In place of the sour Lefty cry of "No! We're against it," we yelled out triumphantly: "Yes! This is what we're for." I went to the first planning meeting of this action as a loyal skeptic, by the end of the afternoon I was a committed believer in the power of cultural resistance.[2]

It wasn't a hard sell. It was culture, punk rock culture, that led me to politics in the first place. I grew up with a supportive family, I went to a good school, I lived in a nice suburb, but I knew something was wrong. Black kids I'd never met stared me down in rage. White kids in work boots were tracked out of my college-bound high-school classes. Boys who were not sufficiently macho were called faggots and girls existed only to fuck. And to top it off, I was bored. For explanation I turned to what culture I had at the time: television. Informed and entertained, I was reassured that these problems are too complex for easy answers, smart men were working on them, it's all being taken care of, it's normal, it might not even exist, you're one of the lucky ones, shut up. I thought I must be crazy.

Then, sometime in my mid-teens, I heard the Sex Pistols.

> Right! NOW! ha ha ha ha ha
> I am an anti-Christ
> I am an anarchist
> don't know what I want,
> but I know how to get it
> I wanna destroy the passer by
> 'cos I, I wanna be . . . anarchy.

Damned if I could figure out what Johnny Rotten was singing about, but I did know that he was angry, and I was angry, and I was not alone. I remember that feeling. That wonderful feeling. A joyous homecoming to a world I hadn't even known existed.

About the same time I was listening to the Sex Pistols I discovered the

Ramones. Since they were from the US, I could better understand what they were saying (even through lead singer Joey's affected Cockney accent). But what I got from the Ramones wasn't from their funhouse lyrics – it was their music: high energy, repetitive, rock 'n' roll: G-G-G-G-G-G-G-C—D—. Two bar chords, three positions: "Hey, ho, let's go!" It was simple, it was stupid, anyone could play it . . . and so could I. Within months of listening to the Ramones some friends and I learned to "play" our instruments and we formed a band. I crossed the line from consumer to creator.

And so it was punk rock that taught me my first, and probably most important, political lessons. I learned the importance of community. Alone, I owned my problems: *I* was alienated, *I* was bored, *I* was too sensitive to injustice. But as a punk I found others who also had these problems, and since we all seemed to share them, we reasoned that they must not just be ours, but society's problems. *My* personal problems became *a* social problem. Us punks then supported each other, helping each other face a society we didn't like and working together to create a micro-world that functioned according to different principles. In Lefty parlance, I learned the power of "solidarity." But before I could do anything, I first had to believe I could do it. Initially, I didn't. Like most people growing up in liberal democracies and consumer economies, I was used to politics, products, and entertainment being created and carried out by others *for* me, my own action limited to spending a dollar or casting a vote. Punk taught me to DIY: Do-it-yourself. The idea that I could create my own culture – *do-it-myself* – was for me revolutionary, as it carried within it the promise that I could also create my own politics and my own world.

Punk provided me with political ideas, then ingrained them through experience. The first time I heard the term anarchist used as anything other than an insult was in the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy in the UK." The lyrics of that song, and later ones from more overtly ideological bands like The Clash, Dead Kennedys, and Stiff Little Fingers, lent me new words to interpret and talk about the world. And critically this culture spoke not in the pious slogans of sectarians or the priests' Latin of academics but in a rough, emotional language that was my own. I didn't read about "counterhegemonic cultures," I was surrounded by one: fun, messy, mine. As I spent time immersed within punk culture I internalized a way of looking at and acting in the world that became as "natural" as any set of habits or values I had held before. Smashing the state topped getting a prom date on my things-to-do list for Senior year. And what I learned, I learned by doing. Punk didn't work unless it was performed, and by writing songs, dressing up and playing out I learned to perform my passions. That is, I learned how to

transform ideas into action. When I found my way to political activism a few years later, it was an easy step because I was already halfway there.

But only halfway. For just as many aspects of punk pulled me toward political resistance, there were equal forces pushing me away. Punk was a great tool for articulating the problems of my world, and providing a supportive culture where I could develop that critique, but punk in itself did nothing to affect the root causes of the things – racism, sexism, and class inequality – I was so angry about. Punk had no strategic plan; it had no plan at all. In some ways punk rock was merely a release, an escape valve for my political dissatisfaction: "I wanna be anarchy!" OK, I've said that, now I feel better. The culture of resistance that my friends and I had built became a safe place to hide. Fortified by our righteous sense of superiority, stocked with a steady supply of punk rock band, club, and scene trivia to keep us busy, boundaries between "us" and "them" clearly demarcated by dyed hair and leather jackets, we closed off the world. Eventually, however, punk did escape the ghetto walls we had constructed. Following the success of the band Nirvana and the discovery of "grunge" in the early 1990s, the signs and signifiers of punk became a way to market commercial products to a potentially lucrative "Generation X." When I heard Iggy Pop's proto-punk anthem "Search and Destroy" used to sell Nike sneakers I felt sick, but I also learned another important lesson: the politics of culture is not predetermined. Culture is pliable; it's how it is used that matters.

The very word "culture" is elastic. You've probably already noticed that I've been stretching its meaning. Here I'm referring to culture as a thing, there as a set of norms, behaviors and ways to make sense of the world, and, in still other places, I'm describing culture as a process. This is because the word "culture," as Raymond Williams will later elaborate, means all these things.

The term "cultural resistance" is no firmer. In the following pages I use it to describe culture that is used, consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, to resist and/or change the dominant political, economic and/or social structure. But cultural resistance, too, can mean many things and take on many forms, and before we go much farther it may help to clarify some of its parameters, developing schematically some of the ideas sketched out more casually above and introducing new ones.

Let's begin by considering how cultural resistance works to foster or retard radical political activity. First off, cultural resistance can provide a sort of "free space" for developing ideas and practices. Freed from the limits and constraints of the dominant culture, you can experiment with new ways of seeing and being and develop tools and resources for resistance. And as

culture is usually something shared, it becomes a focal point around which to build a community.

Equipped with new ideas, skills, confidence, and comrades, the step into the unknown terrain of political resistance may seem less frightening. And because cultural resistance often speaks in a more familiar and less demanding voice than political dissent it makes this move even easier. In this way cultural resistance works as a sort of stepping stone into political activity.

Cultural resistance can also be thought of *as* political resistance. Some theorists argue that politics is essentially a cultural discourse, a shared set of symbols and meanings, that we all abide by. If this is true then the rewriting of that discourse – which is essentially what cultural resistance does – is a political act in itself.

Taking a more pessimistic view, cultural resistance can be seen as an escape from politics and a way to release discontent that might otherwise be expressed through political activity. From this vantage point, cultural resistance is the creation of a sort of safe sanctuary, a "haven in a heartless world."[3] Within this private utopia an ideal society is conjured up, problems are magically resolved, but outside nothing changes at all.

And finally, continuing the pessimistic slide, you can argue that cultural resistance does not and cannot exist. The dominant system is one of such complete ideological and material hegemony than any cultural expression, even if it appears rebellious, is, or will soon be repackaged and transformed into, a component of the status quo. From this perspective cultural resistance as a political practice is at best a waste of time and at worst a delusional detour from real political resistance.

Next let's look at how culture conveys its politics. A message can travel via the *content* of culture. Returning to the Sex Pistols' "Anarchy in the UK" for example, the band counsels resistance through explicit lyrics. Reading or hearing these words provides you with a political vocabulary, analysis, and even an action plan (although in the case of the Sex Pistols' "I wanna destroy the passer by," a pretty dubious one).

Politics can also be transmitted through the *form* culture takes. It is one thing to read lyrics on a page, quite another to hear them sung with emotion or laid over a danceable beat. Similarly, a different message is conveyed by the same song recorded on a DIY label versus a CD manufactured and distributed by a multi-national corporation. And that song changes yet again depending on whether you are listening to it performed or mixed live at an underground party, or sung in a stadium where you've paid $50 to watch the performer from afar on a wall-sized video screen. To crib from Marshall McLuhan: "the medium is the message."[4]

How culture is received and made sense of – its *interpretation* – determines its politics as well. Even though Malcolm McLaren started the Sex Pistols as an art prank cum rock 'n' roll swindle, it didn't stop a kid like me across the Atlantic from hearing a call to arms. In the same way, Sister Sledge's disco hit "We Are Family" took on new meaning when appropriated as an anthem of gay and lesbian pride and solidarity in the 1980s.[5] Content and medium may carry a message, but the meaning and potential impact of that message lie dormant until interpreted by an audience.

And finally, the very *activity* of producing culture has political meaning. In a society built around the principle that we should consume what others have produced for us, throwing an illegal warehouse rave or creating an underground music label – that is creating your own culture – takes on a rebellious resonance. The first act of politics is simply to act.

Now we can consider the spectrum of political engagement, or what I call scales of resistance. Political self-consciousness is the first one. On one side of the scale is culture that may serve the function of resistance, but was not created with that in mind, nor with the idea that its participants understand it as such. The other pole is occupied by culture consciously created for political resistance and used for that purpose. Somewhere in the middle is culture appropriated for ends for which it was not intended. This can cut both ways: culture that was not meant to be rebellious can be turned and used for those political ends and, conversely, culture that was self-consciously fashioned with rebellion in mind can be made to serve very non-rebellious purposes.

The next scale measures the social unit engaged in cultural resistance. To the left is the individual, creating and perhaps even living out a culture that may – theoretically – challenge the dominant system to its very core. But that person does this in their own head, within their own little world, sharing it with no one. In the middle lies the subculture, a group that has been cut off, or more likely has cut itself off, from the dominant society in order to create a shared, inclusive set of cultural values and practices. To the right is society. If an entire society is engaged in cultural resistance it means one of two things: that the dominant culture and the power it props up are bound to fall away at any moment, or that cultural resistance has been so thoroughly incorporated into a society of spectacle that its practice is one of political futility.

Which brings us to the final scale: the results of cultural resistance. The spectrum here ranges from survival to revolution. Survival is the point at which cultural resistance is merely a way to put up with the daily grind and injustices of life while holding on to a semblance of dignity. Rebellion is

where cultural resistance contributes to political activity against the powers-that-be. Results of this resistance may range from suffering repression to forcing meaningful reform, yet all of this occurs within the framework of the dominant power. And revolution, well, revolution is the complete overthrow of the ruling system and a time when the culture of resistance becomes just culture.

The following may help clarify things:

Cultural resistance and political action

- cultural resistance creates a "free space":
  ideologically: space to create new language, meanings, and visions of the future
  materially: place to build community, networks, and organizational models
- cultural resistance is a stepping stone, providing a language, practice, and community to ease the way into political activity
- cultural resistance *is* political activity: writing or rewriting political discourse and thus political practice
- culture resistance is a "haven in a heartless world," an escape from the world of politics and problems
- cultural resistance does not exist. All culture is, or will immediately become, an expression of the dominant power

Means of cultural resistance

- *content:* the political message resides within the content of the culture
- *form:* the political message is expressed through the medium of transmission
- *interpretation:* the political message is determined by how the culture is received and interpreted
- *activity:* the action of producing culture, regardless of content or form or reception, is the political message

Scales of cultural resistance

• unconsciously political	appropriation	self-consciously political
• individual	subculture	society
• survival	rebellion	revolution

Culture, of course, is made and maintained by people, and people don't fit neatly into charts and typologies. To get a feel of what cultural resistance is, how it works, and what it can do, we need to turn to people and their

theories, descriptions, and proclamations. I believe that the readings that follow are, to borrow a line from one of the authors, "the best which has been thought and said" about cultural resistance. I've drawn from literature and memoir, history, philosophy, and the social sciences, and, of course, from the writings of cultural activists themselves. The essays span from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, and explore cultures of resistance from the Middle Ages to the new Millennium. I've picked the essays with an eye to readability and have judiciously edited a good number in order to make them more immediately enjoyable. I've divided the essays among eight sections, each addressing a particular aspect of cultural resistance. I start each section and each essay with a few words to provide some history and context, and raise key issues and questions for the readings that follow. Scattered alongside these essays are smaller snippets: sidebars of songs or stories, eyewitness accounts, historical examples, and other primary documents that enrich each selection. Finally, I've arranged the essays, both within each section and as a whole, in order to tell a story about cultural resistance. Like any good story, this one is full of conflict. Cultural resistance is not some specimen, anesthetized, classified, and mounted on a pin, but constitutes a lively, ongoing, and sometimes cantankerous, debate.

We open with an archetype: Christopher Hill's account of Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers' seizure of St George's Hill in 1649. Laid out in the Diggers' action and Winstanley's words are nearly all the possibilities and pitfalls of cultural resistance that will be played out for centuries to come – and explored in the readings that follow.

The next section begins with an historical definition of the word culture from Raymond Williams. With one definition in hand we look toward another, asking what is meant by "The Politics of Culture?" Addressing this question are five influential theorists. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in selections from *The German Ideology*, argue that culture is a reflection of the economic and social, that is material, conditions of a society. Therefore, they argue, the ruling culture of every age expresses the world-view of those who rule. Matthew Arnold asserts much the opposite: that culture – "sweetness and light" – is what allows us to transcend politics, guiding us out of the morass of the material world. The Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, writing from a Fascist prison, further complicates our picture. Culture, for Gramsci, is not something "out there" but intimate, internalized into our consciousness and directing – often without our knowledge – our activity. Full of contradictions, culture is shot through with both revolutionary and reactionary tendencies. The job of the revolutionary is to untangle this mess and extract a culture of resistance. We wind up this first section with

the brilliant and tragic Walter Benjamin, the patron saint of DIY culture. In his essay "The Author as Producer," Benjamin argues that the content of culture means little, for today's cultural resistance is tomorrow's art object or commercial product. Instead it is the conditions of cultural production, how culture is produced, that holds the political key.

The next section explores the theme of "A Politics that Doesn't Look Like Politics." Mikhail Bakhtin's study of the carnival of the Middle Ages, and the acts of rebellion played out within a drama of buffoonery and laughter, sets the stage. We then jump 500 years and halfway around the world to the fields of Malaysia, where anthropologist James C. Scott finds in the grumblings and gossip of peasants a potent "everyday form of resistance" that he then traces back through history. Nearly halfway around the world again and we are in urban Los Angeles, where historian Robin D.G. Kelley recounts a personal tale of working – and not working – in a McDonald's as a teenager. Here too, Kelley finds an everyday form of cultural resistance that falls outside mainstream definitions of political action. Others, however, are not so sure that these "hidden transcripts" of resistance are resistance at all. The critic Adolph Reed Jr. interprets these acts as simple survival techniques on the part of their participants and political fantasy for those who study them. Cultural politics and their valorization, Reed argues, are a dangerous retreat from real politics. But other theorists hold that it is the retreat from politics itself which is a new form of politics, one better suited to new forms of social control. So asks the always provocative postmodernist Jean Baudrillard: what better way to resist a consumer capitalist, liberal democracy where you are constantly being asked for your vote or dollar than simply to do nothing? Hakim Bey then puts a twist on the politics of retreat, calling for what he names temporary autonomous zones, zones of cultural resistance created only to disappear when confronted by a hostile all-powerful state or, worse, a very receptive consumer economy looking for new lifestyles to market. Next, music journalist Simon Reynolds, taking Ecstasy and entering into the world of rave culture, leads us into a blissful temporary autonomous zone. Once here Reynolds explores the utopian politics of raves, but stays long enough to come down off the high and critique its shortcomings. And finally, because there is a disturbing propensity within the field of cultural resistance to applaud uncritically any popular cultural activity as one of admirable rebellion, we end this section with a grisly and hopefully sobering warning: a 1920s newspaper account of the lynching of an African-American man; an example of a popular, spontaneous, anti-governmental cultural celebration of racism.

From here we move to "Subcultures and Primitive Rebels" and the study of groups that have separated themselves from the mainstream of society, often distinguishing their distance through the medium of style. In the first selection the great social historian Eric Hobsbawm excavates the world of the social bandit. The nineteenth-century Robin Hoods he studies respond to inequities of wealth and power with "pre-political" strategies of cultural rebellion, creating for themselves the myth, if not always the practice, of the peasant rebel, righting wrongs by stealing from the rich to give to the poor. A second essay by Robin Kelley links Hobsbawm's "primitive rebels" to gangsta rappers of the late twentieth century. Gangsta rap and OG, that is "Original Gangster" style, are a response to economic and social degradation faced by young and poor African-American men, but are also, as Kelley points out, a creative map they use to navigate the terrain of capitalism and racism. The infamous zoot-suit riots of 1943, in which white servicemen beat up and stripped zoot-suit wearing Chicanos, are the topic of the next selection. Recounted by historian Stuart Cosgrove, the riots illustrate how style was employed as a visual rejection of minority invisibility and understood, by both the Mexican-American youth and their tormenters, as a weapon. Then we go to Birmingham, England, home of the famed Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, for two classic subcultural studies. In the first, Dick Hebdige describes how mods appropriate mass cultural items, reassigning their meanings so that they speak in a subcultural tongue. In the second, John Clarke analyses how skinheads use their subculture to "resolve magically" the real problems they face as young working-class men in a deindustrializing England. Continuing with music identified subcultures, the Riot Grrrls, a network of post-punk young women, contribute their manifesto "Riot Grrrl Is . . ." which uses their subculture to redefine, on their own terms, what it is to be a woman. This is followed by an excerpt from an interview with Kathleen Hanna, one of the founding mothers of Riot Grrrl, in which she reflects upon the difficulties of trying to create a new world while still living in the old one. The radical playwright Bertolt Brecht then moves us out of subcultures and into the mainstream, insisting that in order to talk to people about your politics you need to speak a cultural language they understand, even if what you plan to do with that language is show them the possibility of a different culture. The last selection in this section is from Stuart Hall, a past director of the CCCS in Birmingham. In "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," Hall argues that what a culture is – mainstream or subcultural, commercial or traditional – makes little political difference as these boundaries inevitably shift. What matters politically, is the political use to which culture is put.

The political uses of culture in anti-colonial resistance is the subject of our next section, "Dismantling the Master's House." We start with the "ghost dances" of 1890 and Elaine Goodale Eastman's first-hand account of the magical hope of the decimated Sioux Indians as they danced to bring back their land and buffalo, and the tragic outcome as the US cavalry responded with their guns. Next, a more successful anti-colonial warrior, Mahatma Gandhi, proposes a strategy of Indian cultural resistance. Writing as a young man in the pamphlet *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi reasons that if India is to free herself from Britain, she must also purge herself – entirely – of the British culture she has adopted. But C.L.R. James, the radical critic and West Indian nationalist, complicates any such call for a pristine national culture. For in his beloved game of cricket James locates both a symbol of British rule *and* a lightning rod for West Indian national pride. Cultural complications continue as the historian Lawrence Levine demonstrates how African-American slaves blended a hybrid culture to articulate their longings for freedom. Using the master's tools of language and religion and the covert cultural blueprints of West African tradition, slaves used song as a means to imagine dismantling the master's house. George Lipsitz concludes this section by bringing us up to date, studying music created by young Algerian, West Indian, and Indian immigrants in France and Britain. These musicians mix ingredients from the old world with those of their new home, then fold in the music of immigrants of other ethnicities who have done the same, ending up with a polyglot creation that makes a mockery of cultural purity and may just point out fruitful directions for inter-ethnic immigrant alliances.

By focusing on cultural resistance as a public activity – on the streets, at the clubs, or in the field – resistance in the private sphere is often overlooked. Perhaps not coincidentally, this private sphere has also traditionally been a woman's place. The next section, "A Woman's Place" explores women's cultural resistance. The great novelist Virginia Woolf, in a selection from *A Room of One's Own*, starts us off. Sketching the unhappy life of an imaginary sister of Shakespeare, Woolf suggests that it is a woman's private place in the home that is her problem. Limited horizons and constant domestic demands have left women's culture stunted. To create a viable culture, Woolf argues, women must force their way into the public world now monopolized by men. Arriving in the second wave of feminism in the early 1970s, the Radicalesbian collective issues a call for "The Woman-Identified Woman," arguing that a woman can only be free if she is free of men's definitions of herself. Through a woman-centered culture, they argue, women can construct a new and liberatory identity. Riding the third

wave in an article in *Bust* magazine in 2001, Jean Railla makes a case for re-evaluating the domestic sphere. Within this traditional women's place, devalued by men and feminists alike, Railla discovers a rich culture created and cultivated by women for millennia. In the next selection, literature professor Janice Radway studies a women's literature often devalued: romance novels. By asking women readers what they like about their romances, she finds that far from reading them as tales of women's dependence upon and subservience to men, the readers extract stories of reassurance and empowerment. Following this theoretical line to its perhaps illogical conclusion, John Fiske identifies shopping malls as "women's places," places which cater to their desires and spaces where they daily exert their power by buying products. This leads Fiske to the provocative claim that shopping is a form of cultural resistance.

The commodification of culture is, of course, a critical chapter in the contemporary story of cultural resistance. The next section, "Commodities, Co-optation, and Culture Jamming," starts where Fiske leaves us, but moves rapidly in the opposite direction toward different conclusions. We begin with one of the pioneers of cultural studies, Richard Hoggart, writing in the 1950s and noting how marketers pitch products to the working classes of Britain by drawing upon traditional signs and symbols of class culture. But, when these cultural markers are employed for purely commercial purposes, their meanings subtly but decisively change. Theodor Adorno's classic essay "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" follows. Capitalism, the author argues, transforms nearly all culture into commodities. This alienates us from the very things upon which we bestow meaning, and reduces our cultural passions, and even cultural rebellions, to "pseudo activity" easily incorporated back into the system. Illustrating Adorno's thesis is an excerpt from poet and critic Malcolm Cowley's memoirs of Greenwich Village bohemian life. As early as the 1920s, Cowley writes, the ostensibly anti-bourgeois values of bohemia were inadvertently working to support the then new business ethic of consumer capitalism. Thomas Frank then brings Cowley to the present, arguing in his essay "Why Johnny Can't Dissent" that cultural rebellion, far from challenging the powers-that-be, has become *the* mainstream philosophy of a business world built around endless consumption. But the appropriators can always be appropriated. Pioneering a strategy now called "culture jamming," 1960s' Yippie activists Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin close this section with advice on hijacking the methods and means of commercial culture to communicate radical messages.

The final section, "Mixing Pop and Politics," takes theory to the streets,

demonstrating how activists employ cultural resistance as a tool for social change, told by the activists themselves. We start with "The Politics of Prefigurative Community," Barbara Epstein's study of anti-nuclear direct action protests in the US. These protests, later to provide the model for those in Seattle and beyond, stress means as well as (and sometimes in place of) ends, creating a culture of activism within the protest that "prefigures" the type of community desired for the future. Following this, activist and artist John Jordan unfolds the history and philosophy of Reclaim the Streets, describing and explaining their carnavalesque practice of protest which transforms the protest itself into a living, dancing example of the politics they advocate. Telling the story of his own arrest in a Disney store, Jason Grote then introduces us to Reverend Billy, a cartoon-like character created by performance artist Bill Talen, who battles the equally cartoonish, yet also very real, Disney Corporation over public space and private memories. Andrew Boyd, an organizer who specializes in theatrical agitprop, writes about activist "memes": a new and growing form of activist "organization," with no leadership, office, fixed membership, or ideology. In place of the material organization is an organized cultural idea that spreads and multiplies, is acted upon, and then disappears. Our last reading is an interview with Ricardo Dominguez, co-founder of the Internet activist group Electronic Disturbance Theater, and co-creator of the electronic civil disobedience tool FloodNet. It is a good finale, for Dominguez not only points toward the future of activism on the Internet, but also reaches back to tell his life story as an activist weaving culture and politics into effective resistance.

So that's the story. No, that's not true. This is *my* story, a story of cultural resistance whose contours are shaped by my scholarly strengths and weaknesses, and my political passions and prejudices, all of which, no doubt, will become clear as you read on. I have tried to be inclusive in the essays I've selected. I've covered the major debates within the field, stretched to include topics often neglected, and even included writers whose ideas I don't personally agree with but are important nevertheless. But in the end there was much that I did not include. I've left out many worthy authors and essays for simple reasons of space. Others, like those addressing the politics of the fine arts or high culture, I've largely excluded because the subject is better dealt with elsewhere. What follows is a selection, my selection, and it is not the final word on cultural resistance.

What I do hope I've included are words to inspire. To inspire you to think, and think hard, about the relationship between culture and politics, pushing ideas in new directions. But I also hope these words will inspire

you to act: to create and cultivate cultures of resistance, imagining, and building a world turned upside down. And then to take it one step further, transforming resistance in the realm of culture to political action on terra firma. For if cultural resistance is to take its own rebellious claims seriously, this must be the goal. As those quixotic rebels who dug up St George's Hill so many centuries ago sung out in the last line of their song, "Glory *here*, Diggers all."