

SOCIETY AND POLITICS IN POPULAR CULTURE

SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL ISSUES IN
POPULAR CULTURE
INTRODUCTION

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POPULAR CULTURE

**What is
popular culture?**

POPULAR CULTURE

- multiple definitions
- Dick Hebdige:

popular culture – the sum of easily accessible works – films, recordings, attires, TV programmes, means of transport etc.

POPULAR CULTURE (1)

- *widely favoured or well liked by many people*
- easily accessible / available on various media



POPULAR CULTURE (2)



- *left over after we have decided what is high culture*
- popular culture as inferior one
- lack of formal complexity
- class divisions

POPULAR CULTURE (2)

- 31 July 1991
- Hyde Park, London
- Luciano Pavarotti's live performance
- 250 000 spectators

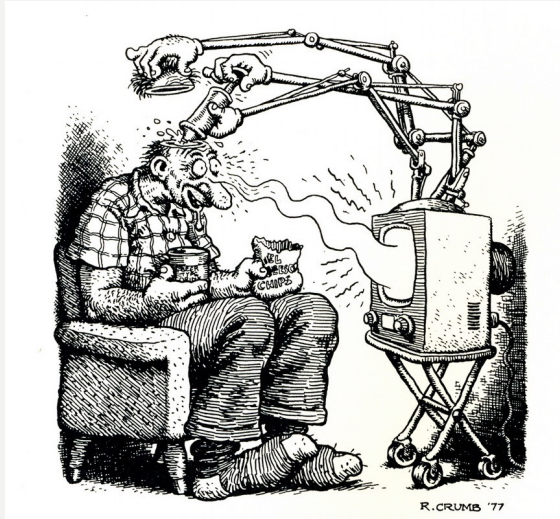


POPULAR CULTURE (2)

Popular culture as 'inferior' culture

Popular press	Quality press
Popular cinema	Art cinema
Popular entertainment	Art

POPULAR CULTURE (3)



- popular culture as mass culture
- commercial culture
- mass consumption
- American culture

MASS CULTURE

DOMINIC STRINATI

Mass culture is popular culture created by mass industrial technology and sold for gain to mass audiences / consumers

MASS CULTURE

DWIGHT MACDONALDS

- standardisation
- formalisation
- repeatability
- superficiality
- false (trivial) pleasures
- lack of authenticity (like in folk culture)

HIGH CULTURE vs LOW CULTURE

- quality matter
- criterion of the split: aesthetic value
- institutionalisation and hierarchization of taste
- what is a work of art?

WORK OF ART?



RUSKIN vs WHISTLER

I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.



WHAT IS ART?

- John Ruskin on James McNeill Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875)
- it ended up in court
- Whistler won
- extension of the borders of what is considered art

POPULAR CULTURE (4)



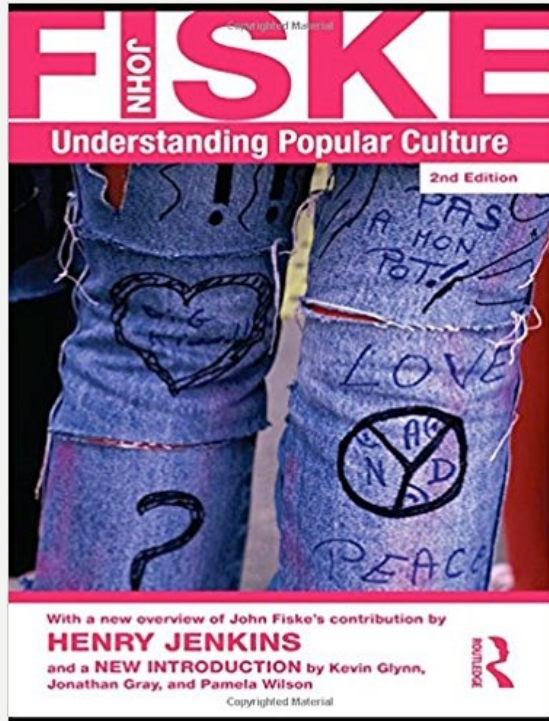
- *culture that originates from 'the people'*
- folk culture
- authenticity
- non-commercial

POPULAR CULTURE (5)

- popular culture as a tool of 'hegemony'
- *a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups*



POPULAR CULTURE (5)



- Antonio Gramsci: source of hegemony, the “tuba” of the dominant ideology
- John Fiske: strategy of resistance against the hegemony of the privileged classes

POPULAR CULTURE (6)

- postmodernism
- *no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture*
- end of elitism, victory of commercial culture, or the end of any culture?



CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION



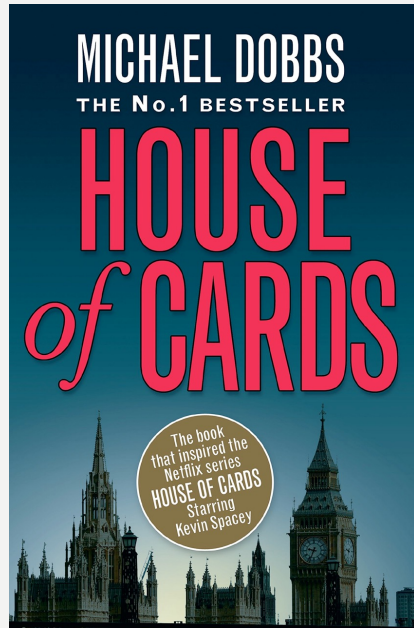
CULTURE

COUNTER-CULTURE

Expresses beliefs, values, norms and lifestyles that are evidently contrary to what the general public obeys



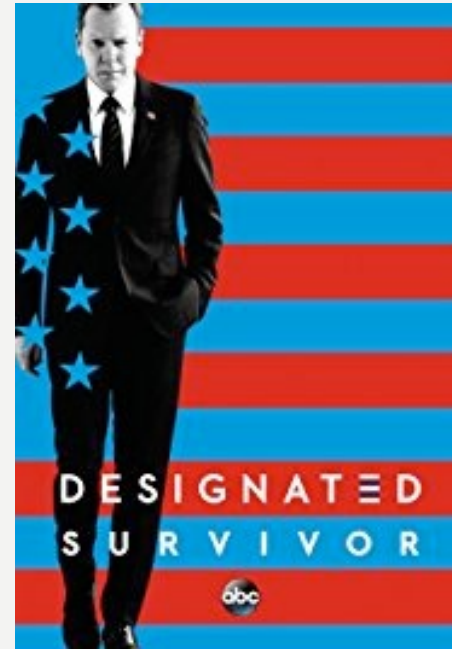
POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS



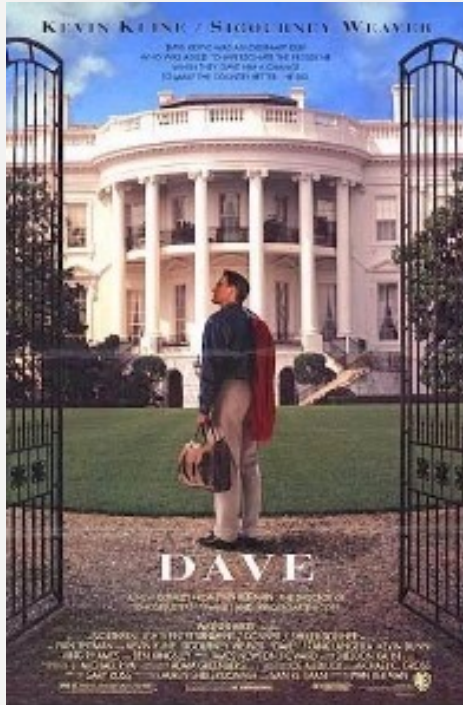
- unique perspective
- creative imagination important for *areas of study where experimental verification is impossible or of doubtful reliability*

POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS

- political analysis should not be confused with literary criticism
- opinion data
- teaching aid
- degree of political realism



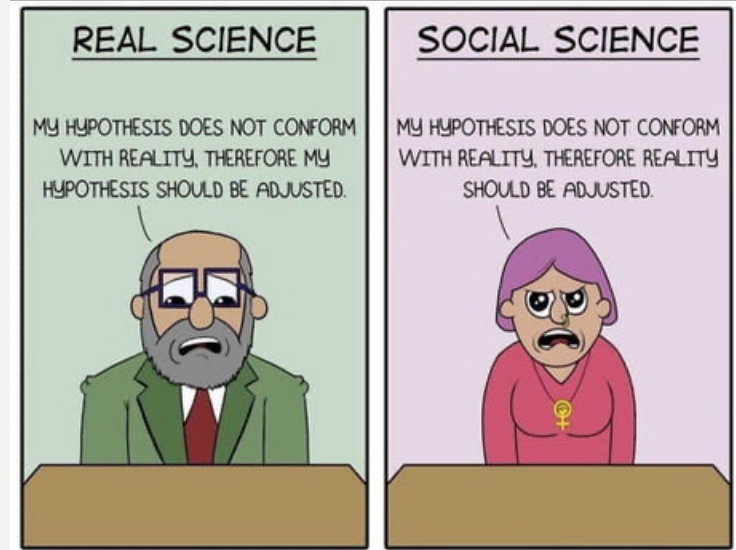
POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS



- expectations vs reality
- politics vs popular culture
or politics using the
popular culture
- the sign of the times

INTERPRETATIVE APPROACH

- politics = conflicted /competing narratives
- impermanence of results
- understanding (*what it means?*)
- different epistemologies
- practice: ironic commentary



NEW HISTORICISM

- text should be read in the social and cultural as well as political context
- *do not accept autonomous contents of a text, rather relating contents to other parallelly produced cultural forms (memoirs, diaries, anecdotes, fashion etc.), to the context of other codes of an era, its institutions and customs, so that question can be asked on ideological problems of literature, eg. its class identity, race and gender determination etc. according to the belief that 'thought has its own history'*

INTERTEXTUALITY

- Charles Bazerman: *the relation each text has to texts surrounding it*
- pre-existing texts have impact on any text ever created:
 - direct quotations
 - indirect allusions
 - language similarities
 - similar style of communications

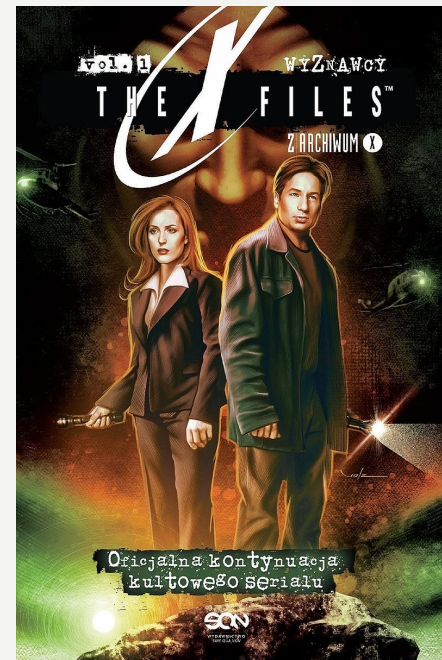
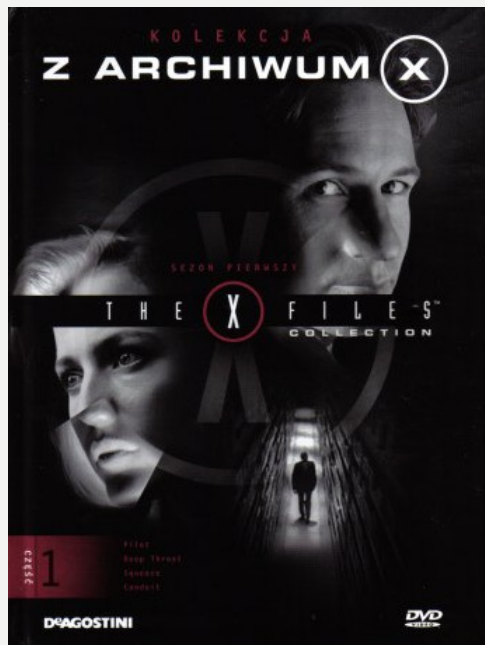


INTERTEXTUALITY



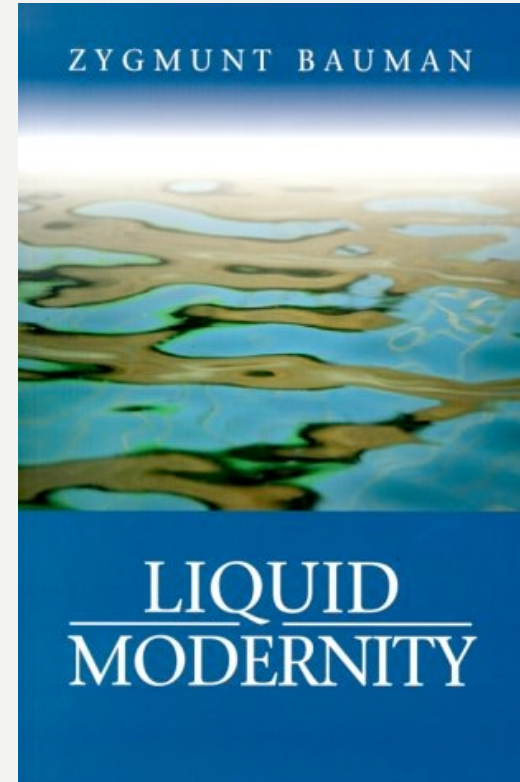
- *stylish way of talking about allusion and influence* (William Irwin)
- important: the way text is used

TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING



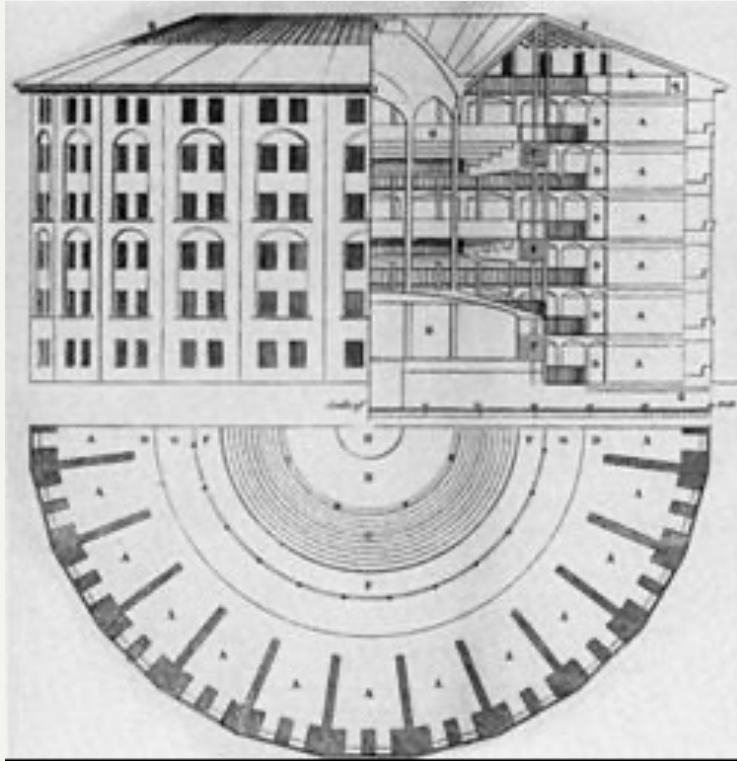
LIQUID MODERNITY

- lack of stable structures
- uncertainty
- fragmentation
- eradication
- dependence on one's life plan



PANOPTICISM

MICHEL FOUCAULT



- punishment = restoration of majesty of the ruler
- discipline = permanent sense of being observed and evaluated

CULTURAL STUDIES

- culture is ordinary
- banal artefacts – big importance
- culture = a site of political struggle

