

# **POLITICAL COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS**

SOCIAL AND  
POLITICAL ISSUES IN  
POPULAR CULTURE  
INTRODUCTION

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# POPULAR CULTURE

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- multiple definitions
- Dick Hebdige:

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

# POPULAR CULTURE (1)

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



# POPULAR CULTURE (2)

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

# POPULAR CULTURE (2)

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



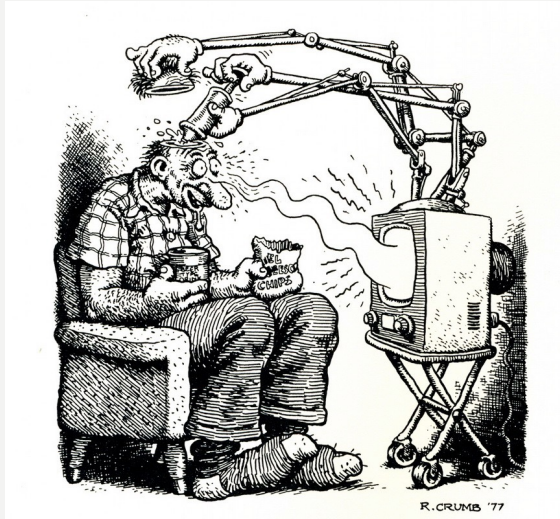
# POPULAR CULTURE (2)

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## 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

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



# MASS CULTURE

DWIGHT MACDONALDS

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

# HIGH CULTURE vs LOW CULTURE

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

# WORK OF ART?

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# RUSKIN vs WHISTLER

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*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?

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- 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)

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

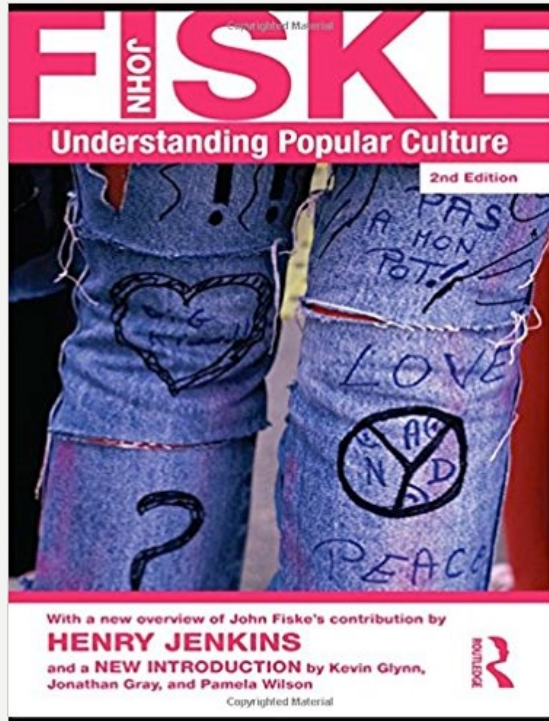
# POPULAR CULTURE (5)

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- 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

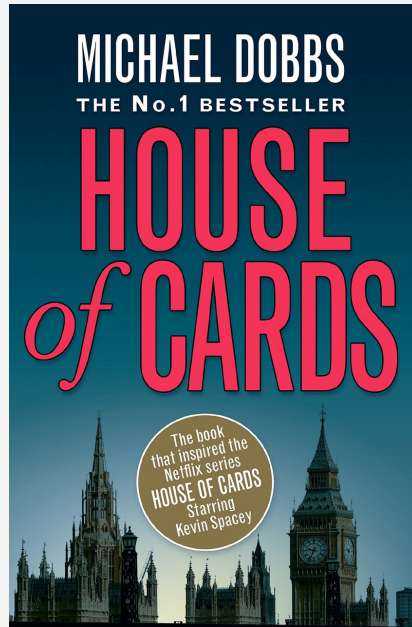
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Expresses beliefs, values, norms and lifestyles that are evidently contrary to what the general public obeys



# POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS

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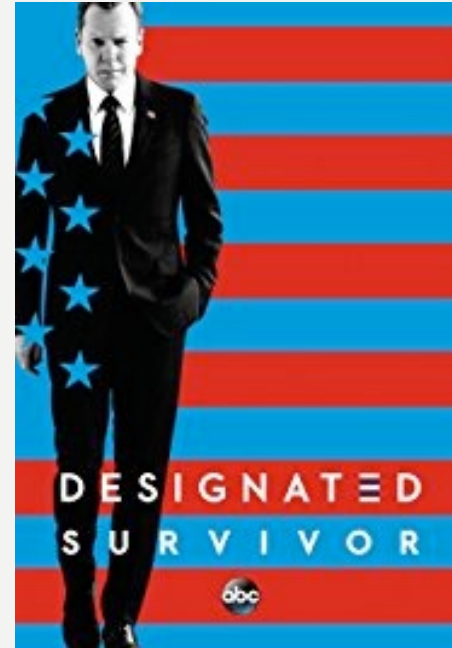


- unique perspective
- creative imagination  
important for *areas of study*  
*where experimental*  
*verification is impossible or of*  
*doubtful reliability*

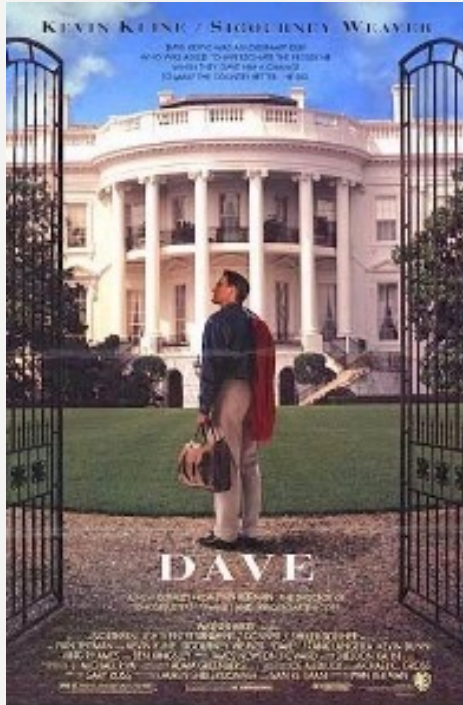
# POLITICAL FICTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF POLITICS

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- 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