LECTURE 8

Culture, Resistance, and Struggle

In this lecture I want to elaborate on the notions of resistance, opposition, and struggle that I have been using, continuing to focus on cultural and ideological rather than political forms of resistance. The most important point I want to make, the point I have been making from the very beginning, is that cultural struggle is not reducible to other areas of determination. You cannot predict the contents, forms, or particular groupings that will be attached to particular areas of cultural resistance simply by attempting to read them off from either the political or economic forms of practice in a society. The domain of culture has its own specificity, modality, and relative autonomy or independence from the other levels of the social formation. That does not mean that it is outside of their structuring influence nor that it does not have, as its conditions of existence, forms of social practices and relations other than cultural. Culture is not, and can never be, outside of the structuring field of the central contradictions that give shape, pattern, and configuration to a social formation, that is, contradictions around class, ethnicity, and gender. It is not outside of them, but it is not reducible to them.

Two consequences of this attempt to think a Marxist theory of cultural struggle in a noneconomic and non-class-reductionist way are worth emphasising at the outset, and I shall do so by remaining within the domain of ideological struggle as discussed in the previous lecture. The

first involves the relationship between particular elements within the ideological terrain as sites of struggle and their relationship to class formations; the second involves the relations among the different contradictions that structure the social formation. The position I have presented is sometimes mistakenly taken as denying that there are class forces in play within ideological struggles. I am not denying the existence of class-articulated ideologies, of the very clearly and well-established articulation of certain ideological elements of discourses to particular class positions—for example, the relationship between particular ideological formations and the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a historical force. It is nevertheless an attempt to say that the field of ideological discourse, the systems of representation which articulate the terrain of ideology, are neither organised by nor directly reducible to economic class positions.

While that proposition is widely supported when put in general terms, its more specific exemplifications are often less enthusiastically received. So let me place the following example—the question of rights—before you. The emergence of a political language of rights—of natural rights, of individual rights, and of a conception of the State as predicated on the defense of such rights—is a moment crucial to the formation of bourgeois ideology. Whenever one sees that language appear in the ideological field, one has to be quite careful about the persistence of its articulation to certain bourgeois positions. However, it must be clear—I would hope—that the language of rights cannot belong *only* to the bourgeoisie. The demand for civil rights, and the movements which it organises, may be ultimately limited and contained in their reach by the ground on which they often end up; but they are, nevertheless, in many of their historical appearances, real and effective movements of protest, resistance, and struggle.

A particular elaboration of the language of rights can only be understood within a complex field, as a set of connections between the language of rights, particular conceptions of human nature, definitions of the market, ideals of freedom, and ideas of subject and subjectivity (e.g., possessive individualism). It is a specific configuration, a nexus of ideas and discourses. Ideologies do not exist as or within single terms or concepts. In fact many of the elements within the so-called language of rights existed before their appearance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries within the ideological positions of the bourgeoisie, but they did, in

that context, connote a new set of meanings in relation to the appearance of a rising class, to the fundamental break of old patterns of economic development and organisation, to the formation of a market society, and to the emerging dominance of these relations. That is of course a critical historical moment in the formation of ideologies, the point where a class or class fraction engages a particular system of representations in order to understand its emerging place in the world, to define what those relations are and how they are different from those of the previous epoch. Only by defining the new emerging economic and social reality in terms of that system of representations can they make sense of and normalise the emerging values and forms of collective action. And after such a critical moment of historic formations, it is impossible to enter that particular field of ideological articulations without mobilising the whole chain of connotations that have articulated it into bourgeois positions. That is the dialectical formation of a class and of what one might call an organic ideology.

Nevertheless, it cannot follow that all the elements of that ideology belong exclusively to the bourgeoisie. The elements are themselves open to being reconnotated through ideological struggle in exactly the same way as Western socialists in the 1980s have to struggle over the meaning of "democracy." Democracy, although it has been implicated in a particular bourgeois parliamentary political discourse, cannot be, as it were, given to the other side. Though elements of ideologies are historically constructed and powerfully stitched into a particular location in relation to class and other social forces, they remain a field of potential—and often real—ideological struggle. The language of bourgeois rights, even in the way it was articulated by Thomas Hobbes and later by John Locke, helped both to secure the position of a particular bourgeois class and to open the possibility for classes which had been excluded by the ways in which that ideology functioned, to claim the universality of such rights. Those excluded others could struggle to place themselves within a language which claimed to speak of *human* rights. It takes an enormous political struggle to articulate the notion of rights within liberalism to practice, because those forces attached to a particular definition of freedom in liberal discourse forcefully resist the attempts of classes (like the working class in the nineteenth century) and other social groups (which may not have a clear class belongingness, like women in the suffrage

struggle) to claim those rights. Even though they had been articulated in a universalising discourse in order to mobilise mass political popular support for them, the early bourgeois formation delivered their effects only to a particular class. That becomes a site of potential struggle, a point around which the working classes organise and struggle for their enfranchisement. It is certainly true, as critics have objected, that the franchise is eventually won in a form which, while allowing them access to political power, also individualises and fragments their political representation (one person, one vote). And this in turn makes it difficult for them to mobilise around another form of democratic power, one defined in opposition to the deeply rooted, individualised organisations of power structuring the parliamentary forms of the democratic process. This is the containment of more radical definitions of democracy by articulating them to, stitching them into place within, ideologies of liberalism. The result is no longer liberalism alone or democracy; it is a particular form of liberal democracy. Yet this was clearly the site of one of the most sustained struggles entered into by the working classes in the nineteenth century. At this site, it staked a claim to political power and set certain popular limits on the capacity of the bourgeois class to determine what they were and would be. It made important gains and advances at the same time that it was itself constrained. And of course, the meanings of all of these terms, and the struggles organised around them, changed from the seventeenth to the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. The same terms refer to different realities. They can even represent different interests, different demands, different sites of struggle, as the historical conditions in which they are mobilised, the social forces to which they are attached, change.

The same case can be made using E. P. Thompson's (1975) discussion of the rule of law. In the first instance, "the rule of law" is put forward by a class that does not yet have full political power—the bourgeoisie—against the forms of power practiced by the gentry and the aristocracy. It is an emergent and a progressive demand, one which limits and constrains existing forms. It is then installed as one of the key bourgeois rights by which the new emergent landed bourgeoisie articulates its interest in law and excludes other interests. And yet, by the end of the eighteenth century, it is exactly the point around which the popular demand for the extension of justice is raised. People who were being excluded, whether the working classes, the poor, women, servants, et cetera, did not

need another term; they needed *that* term, the term which the bourgeoisie already understood, in order to conduct the struggle. It is simply not possible to understand the crucial struggles which marked the emergence of the bourgeoisie, and the challenges raised against its power by the working classes and by women, if we assume that the key ideological concepts around which these central struggles were organised have always been, and remain essentially, bourgeois. The fact that these struggles were stitched into a fabric of ideas which were bourgeois in origin does not guarantee that they always remain inscribed in just this way. This is as true of the present as of the past.

The point I am trying to make is not only theoretical but has serious political implications. Before we simply and finally ascribe the rule of law only to the bourgeoisie, we need to acknowledge that, for many of the oppressed and subordinated populations in our world, the rule of law would be an important and real advance. The idea that notions of the law cannot belong to the socialist project because they are a part of the ideology through which the bourgeoisie established its domination rests upon an oversimplified and reductionist theory of the relation between ideologies and classes. It constructs the field of social forces as if it were composed of monolithic classes, "as if," in Poulantzas's terms, ideologies "were 'political' number-plates worn by social classes on their backs" (1973, 202). It assumes that entire configurations of ideas are permanently stitched into simple class positions: The bourgeoisie inevitably and solely possesses the ideas of rights, liberties, democracies, freedom, et cetera, and hence, they cannot belong to us. That position leaves the field of potential ideological intervention as an empty space, and while we wait for the great war between the two classes, we ignore the endless possibilities for struggling with and contesting the dominant definitions of ideological terms in order to disarticulate them from their current class positions and rearticulate them in some new way.

The second issue I want to expand upon, continuing the discussion of ideological struggle, involves the question of the primacy of class over other contradictions or, perhaps more accurately, the relations among the different contradictions in any conjuncture, since I do not think one can abstractly hierarchise their importance. It is necessary, however, to acknowledge the irreducibility of one contradiction to another. Different contradictions have different effects in the social field, and it is the

tendency to reduce one to the other that is the theoretical problem. For this reason, the suspension of the capitalist mode of production in a particular society will not guarantee the liberation of blacks, women, or subordinate classes. The primacy which Marxism has given to the capital-class contradiction is in fact a problem. It is implicit in, albeit not necessary to, its logic that, in the end, the principal contradiction not only structures every other contradiction but is their truth as well. Consequently the capital-class contradiction not only has political priority, but it often serves as a master key which can unlock all the secrets of the social formation. It is essential, both theoretically and politically, that we face the consequences of the difficult fact that one could move from the capitalist mode of production and see the continuation of the domination, not only of one race by another and especially of one gender by another, but also of one class by another.

The only alternative is a Marxist politics which recognises the necessary differentiation of different struggles and the importance of those struggles on different fronts, that is to say, a Marxist politics which understands the nature of a hegemonic politics, in which different struggles take the leading position on a range of different fronts. Such an understanding does not suppress the autonomy and specificity of particular political struggles, and it rejects reductionism in favor of an understanding of complexity in unity or unity through complexity. The reality of this complexity is not merely a local problem of organising but the theoretical problem of the noncorrespondence of the mode of production and the necessary relative autonomy of different political and ideological formations. The mode of production does not command every contradiction; it does not find them all at the same place or advanced to the same degree—neither within our political organisations nor within the formations of capitalism and socialism in the Western industrial world.

This is, after all, the site of the emergence of Cultural Studies: that we have lived through a succession of periods in the Western world when nonproblematic forms of the class struggle and the class belongingness of ideologies have simply refused to appear. There are only two responses to this situation: Either continue to use theory to guarantee that somewhere down the road such correspondences will appear, or undertake the exceedingly difficult task of bringing theory into line with the complexities of the empirical problems you have to explain. A contemporary

Marxism that does not place the apparent containment of the most advanced industrial working classes in the world at the center of its problematic is no longer facing up to the real world of people; and even more important, it cannot help us understand how it is that the vast masses of working people in the most advanced industrial capitalist civilisations of the world *are* contained and constrained by forms of political reformism. Unless we have a better grasp of the hold which reformist political ideologies have exerted over men and women and over the potential revolutionary agencies within capitalism, we are not using the theories to address the political issues that demand our attention. We are using them to create illusory scenarios which cheer us up.

I want to make a similar point about the illustration I gave in an earlier lecture (lecture 6), because thinking about the ideological articulation of "black" clearly demands that we recognise its relations to issues of class, class ideologies, and class struggles, but in ways that do not reduce the specificity of race, of racist concepts and practices, as well as of antiracist struggles as a potential field of ideological contestation. I tried to demonstrate that such an understanding requires us to move beyond the obvious: that it is a field or site of discrimination; that it is the source of negative identities. By understanding that "black" works within a variety of chains of connotation, we can begin to acknowledge that different groups in specific historical situations have been able to identify with different terms within this complex network. Each identification helps define and constitute the position of the group in the field of ideology and excludes other possibilities. Each appropriation, each positioning of the black subject in relation to terms like West Indian, immigrant, Negro, black, Afro-Caribbean, all of which are possible in the field of ideology, is different. Each requires a different ideological position. A different set of political practices follows from each and each is dependent on a different set of historical conditions.

Further, there is absolutely no way you could reduce the systems of representations of race in any social formation—say, South Africa—to a matter of class. It will not be explained away in relation to the capital-labour contradiction. It is perfectly clear that black and white labour in South Africa is exploited by capital. In relation to race, it is perfectly clear that, in addition, black races are exploited differently from white races in relation to capital. Black labour is positioned differently in so-

cial, economic, and ideological relations. There are two contradictions operating politically and ideologically, and while they work in the same space, they refuse to be identical. To assume their supposed correspondence is simply politically ineffective, because the two fields are constantly intersected and bifurcated from different directions. Race and class are powerfully articulated with one another but they are not the same and, consequently, each is likely to both unite and divide. A black labouring class, exploited by capital, is able to begin to constitute its political unity, partly through the categories of class, but more significantly through the categories of race in this particular political situation. One can see this only by recognising the necessary autonomy of the different movements in the South African political scene, and the capabilities of developing a common political struggle through the possible articulation of those elements, without assuming their necessary correspondence. Otherwise one will go on assuming or hoping that that scene will resolve itself in ways which are historically impossible. Notions of articulation, overdetermination, and the specificity of the different contradictions within the ideological field are important, then, not only for an adequate general theory of ideology but for the analysis of a particular political situation as well.

Cultural resistance can have many and varied forms and effects, although often we do not know how to identify these differences or how to theorise them. Consider, for example, the so-called cultures of survival, which particular groups may require if they are not to be totally overwhelmed by alternative definitions of their identity and history, if they are to have any sense of solidarity or identity at all. But such cultures of survival neither guarantee nor necessarily generate the basis of a culture of hegemony. Groups can survive without the slightest chance of being in the leading position at the moment. And although forms of culture that arise in response to the need for survival are not necessarily even strong enough to negotiate with hegemonic formations, the ability to survive is most certainly one of the conditions of possibility for such negotiation. Despite the "reformist" ring of "negotiation," if a group is to enter into important cultural negotiation with the dominant ideological or cultural forms of a society, it must have a good deal of persistence and strength. It has to have achieved a certain degree of organisation; it has to have achieved a level of self-reflexivity which makes it capable of

formulating projects. You cannot enter into negotiation without knowing the ground you are working on and the possibilities and potential sites of victory, however small they may be. The moment of negotiation is also a moment of struggle and resistance. The fact that the other side is not going to be overthrown does not mean that important concessions and gains cannot be won.

E. P. Thompson (1963) describes just such a moment, in the period after Chartism, when the British labour movement had, for all practical purposes, lost its capacity to define the world in its own image. But one could not give an account of the history of that class, its culture, its political and ideological institutions, without acknowledging what Thompson demonstrates: that at that moment, the labour movement turned back on its own social and cultural forms, developing and providing them with a necessary warrant. It negotiated spaces and found ways of keeping people off its terrain. It developed institutions which were more organically connected to its material conditions and to the lives of labourers and their families; through these, it penetrated into myriad areas of working-class life. It established in that period what we now think of as traditional working-class culture. The fact that it remains, partly as a result of these developments, a subordinate and incorporated class throughout its history does not negate the fact of the intense internal corporate strength which these changes also produced.

The strengths and contributions of that culture are always contradictory; it has positive and negative features, progressive and conservative effects. It is this I want to insist upon, that cultural forms and practices are always contradictory. The culture that holds the traditional working class together and allows people to identify the difference between "us and them" is also the very same culture that maintains particular forms of masculinity inside working-class political organisations and renders that culture in some ways blind to the contradictions of gender. Precisely one of the ways that culture unites diverse groups in the working class depends upon its capacity to define and resist the "other," the alien, the person from another culture; and this of course has rendered it in some ways blind to the contradictions of race and ethnicity. It is not a question of simply celebrating that cultural formation—one cannot do it—but rather of recognising that such cultures of survival are required for resistance, for opposition, for negotiation, for the kinds of upheavals

you find in rebellion and revolution, and, perhaps even more important, for counterhegemonic formations. They are required for the construction of new kinds of societies. But every such formation, every struggle for change, has contradictory effects as well as limits. One cannot ignore the negative side in defending the positive contributions it advances, but one cannot ignore the gains that are made while condemning its defeats.

We have to think of both domination and resistance as processes. We need to look at the way in which forms of cultural and ideological resistance by particular groups or classes provide the space for interventions. Intervention can deepen the forms of cultural resistance by working on them, dislocating them, or disarticulating them from the ways in which they are constantly held in subordinate places. But this requires us to recognise the strengths and the weaknesses of those forms and one can only do that by entering into their spaces, beginning to work with them as well as on them. One is then involved in the process of strengthening and deepening the oppositional elements of already existing cultural forms and not of inviting people to abandon the forms in which they are involved and to suddenly move over to a different place, into a different formation. The latter strategy is not only unlikely to persuade anybody to move, it is also deeply self-delusory. It suggests that we have ourselves clarified and cleansed our own cultural positions, that we have rendered them transparent to our own critical gaze, and that they are free of all residues and attachments to older, more problematic cultural forms. It suggests that we no longer collaborate in those illicit pleasures we derive from the many cultural practices which we do or should know are ideologically impure, which may even belong to the "other side." To approach people as if everything is perfectly clarified—the forms over there belong to the terrain of delusion, false consciousness, illicit pleasures, and mere consumerism, while these over here belong entirely to the ideologically pure pursuit of the truly revolutionary consciousness—is a strategy that is unlikely to bring people on from position to position. You will not enable people to deepen those elements which separate them from the dominant formations, to resist the attachments that stitch them into the existing system, and to begin the difficult process of articulating themselves into another set of positions. While cultural politics and ideological struggle are not sufficient in themselves to restructure the social formation, there can be no sustained establishment of counterhegemonies

without their articulations in culture and ideology. Cultural politics and ideological struggle are the necessary conditions for forms of social and political struggle. Those political and social forces that are actually attempting the difficult task of intervening in the actual social formations and beginning to transform them into some new image or at least in some new direction—and not merely to go on resisting—cannot avoid the need to open the possibility of new political subjects and subjectivities. The domain of culture and ideology is where those new positions are opened and where the new articulations have to be made. And in that domain, people can change and struggle.

But if we cannot guarantee in advance what either the determinations or the political effectivities of a cultural form are, can we at least describe their historical relations to each other? Can we, for example, make use of Williams's (1977) distinction between dominant, residual, and emergent elements or forms of culture as a way of beginning to map the cultural terrain? Although I suggested earlier that this was a quite useful schema, it is clear that there is no point in trying to assign each of the forms of particular cultures to one of those categories, because those forms are never pure and their identities are never entirely inscribed upon their surface apart from their articulation into particular contexts. Thus, we find that residual forms are reworked in an emergent situation and become precisely the forgotten languages in which people speak of their new projects. And practices whose identity seemingly depends upon their status as "avant-garde" rapidly emigrate to the arts review pages where they become, if not part of the dominant, certainly no longer part of a strongly resistant cultural formation. And perhaps most significantly, we also find that the dominant has the capacity not only to speak its own language, but to speak through the fact that it grants many other languages the possibility of speaking. As I suggested earlier, hegemonic leadership need not incorporate or dissolve all but the dominant cultural forms; it can even enable the subalterns to take on their own formations. It is perfectly capable of devolving cultural leadership to other groups. It need not secure the absolute cultural power of one delegated group of organic intellectuals. It allows many inorganic intellectuals to function in the field, recognising, representing, celebrating, and even supporting their diversity, at least to the extent of guaranteeing that the medley of voices will be sustained. Hegemony entails precisely this capacity to continually com-

mand a central position within an apparently open plurality of voices. When power is exerted in the cultural field through the censorship or repression of that plurality, then hegemony has not yet been secured. Consequently, I want to resist the notion that one can permanently ascribe cultural forms to particular positions. Hence I reject that type of formal analysis of cultural fields which sorts the world into progressive and nonprogressive forms because I am struck by the number of nonprogressive forms that actually progress and the number of progressive forms that do not seem to progress anywhere. The progressiveness of a particular form or practice is not given within the culture itself. I will illustrate this with some examples of the interplay of both residual and emergent moments within the cultural field, and of the play of domination in between, as it were.

Some of the best-known work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was in the area of the succession of youth cultures, often identified with particular styles of music and dress which emerged largely in the 1960s and seventies in the wake of the period of affluence of the 1950s. Some of that work is collected in *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson 1976). In that body of work, we tried to find ways of describing the relationship between class and youth cultures without reducing youth cultures to class. On the one hand, it was clear to us that there was no way the field of postwar youth social movements could be reduced to the structure of the fundamental classes or even to the questions of class contradictions. On the other hand, there was no way one could understand what was going on in the waves of movements among young people which have marked out that terrain in Britain since the early 1950s outside of the structuring determinations of class. Classes play in and across the field of those movements in complex and often indirect ways.

We suggested, for example, that in many of the forms of cultural differences between two of the leading forms of such movements in the late 1950s and early 1960s (the Mods and the Rockers), one could see the shadow as it were, not of the distinction between the middle and the working class, but the perhaps equally crucial distinction between an upwardly mobile fraction and a downwardly mobile fraction of the working class. I say "shadow" because it is not the case that the class affiliations of the groups corresponded that exactly; many members in fact

were not working class in their precise social or economic origins. But the Mods, for example, did tend to be kids who were on an upward trajectory, perhaps out of their class, or transitionally within their class. They also tended to have more years of education and to be better educated than others; and of course, education in England is a crucial signifier of class. But there is no way you could define the intrinsic forms that generated the Mods' style, taste, and culture simply in terms of those class elements or their class position. Nevertheless, certain very important things about the ways in which they lived in the world and saw their own difference are, I would say, "shadowed" by class.

While such movements provided new identities and subjectivities for young people, and engaged the youths themselves in this production, the movements were not at all politicised. Neither did they engage directly with questions of economy and labour: There are no messages about work. The culture was suspended in the space of the good time, which is not work. It was defined by and within "not work time." Kids who had to work throughout the day lived their relation to their real conditions of working through the imaginary relations of being a Mod. It was precisely an alternative subjectivity or identity.

Moreover, if you look at the meanings that were becoming dominant within these youth cultures, you will see that they were defined generationally. The generational contradiction between older and younger people or fractions is very important. One can identify within the culture of these movements "the parental class culture." But this generational contradiction cannot be isolated from either the particular class fractions from which the different formations were drawn or from the larger structures of the culture as a whole. After all, youths—even Mods—have to grow up and find out how to be adult workers, spouses, and parents. And there were very few messages in The Who about any of that! Even if one wants to celebrate the Mod style as a moment of resistance, one has also to think about the life trajectory, within particular class fractions, of people whose new subjectivities were being formed in these cultural spaces. Although it could not be predicted, it is important to look at the question in relation to the fraction of the class from which they came and to which they were likely to be consigned. And that is articulated onto a much wider cultural frame. The ways in which all those adult identities

were taken up will make a difference, but they are not self-sufficient in themselves; they are part of a larger configuration.

Similarly, when we talked about the middle-class subcultures—the countercultures of the sixties and early seventies—we noted the complex relations that they had to class identities and political possibilities. The countercultures often operated within cultural fields marked by intense generational and political differences, and a whole range of symbolisms were mobilised to generate new subjectivities. And yet, there were strong relationships between those divisions and the divisions within the middle class. The great cultural split and the different ways in which the countercultures of the younger generations developed were framed by important divisions within the class itself. It was not simply a question of the middle versus the working class. It had as much to do with the internal differentiations which were opening up against the background of the rhythms of a new economic period. One of the key cultural divisions in the middle classes in that period in Britain was the distinction between what we call the "progressive" and the "provincial" middle class. Those in the progressive middle class—regardless of generational identity—adopted the ethic of consumption. They understood how it worked, moved with it, and took advantage of it. They did not feel that their lives would collapse if the Protestant ethic weakened its boundaries a bit. Indeed they found pleasure in the rapid movements in and out of more conventional bourgeois positions. The parental generation was obviously not able to live their children's lives, but they did seem to be trying to catch up as rapidly as possible. In that very default, other fractions of the middle class felt attacked and increasingly "squeezed" into a narrow set of cultural possibilities: attacked from below by rising Mods and Rockers and from above by the "cosmopolitan middle class's" desertion of traditional bourgeois positions. What were they to do? They were neither the propertied class nor the dominant class; their whole identity, and their future as well, was invested in their position as keepers of the bourgeois consciousness, defending the virtues of saving and thrift and the respectable life. They had made great sacrifices for that, and they expected their place in the cultural sun, even if it was a subordinate one. Interestingly, this division penetrates very deep into the way that sexual ideologies were mapped onto the cultural field of the middle class. Out

of the progressive middle class has come a certain kind of liberal progressive feminism. Out of the provincial middle class has come our version of the moral majority.

In making such arguments, we were trying to maintain the relative autonomy of the ways in which those new youth subcultural identities were generated. Rather than denying the importance of what you might call the secondary contradictions around gender and race, we wanted to argue that you could not develop an adequate understanding of youth subcultures until you located them within the framework of a class structuring of the society, a structuring which is deep and penetrative across its whole future. The subcultural work of the Centre was accused of class reductionism: of reducing the Rockers to their working-class position and of consigning the Mods to their petty bourgeois project. There is, unfortunately, some truth to that. We did not get the balance of the determining effects of the different contradictions quite right. But the work is important for having raised the project of trying to think about the nonreductiveness of cultural formations to class formations without pulling them so apart that they fall into totally autonomous positions.

I also want to offer a subcultural illustration of the way in which cultural forms themselves may open up and structure possibilities without going completely over to the position that claims that those possibilities and their politics are intrinsic to the forms. If political tendency alone will not organise, as Benjamin (1970) suggested in "The Author as Producer," I want to add that cultural forms alone will not guarantee. There is no guarantee of the intrinsically progressive or regressive nature of particular cultural forms. This was very clear in the era of the Skinheads in England, after the Mods and Rockers. It occurred in different economic conditions. The principal forms of this subculture were articulated against the middle-class forms of the 1960s; therefore, they stressed and amplified their proletarian symbols. That is, Skinhead culture revalorised a relationship to some working-class cultural elements on the ideological terrain of the need to mount an effective opposition to the dominant middle-class-related symbolism. This can be seen in the way the Skinheads dressed (short hair as opposed to long hair, jeans as opposed to flowing Indian robes) and in the affirmation of the increasing importance of territoriality. The most important thing about

the Mods was that they were all attached to Italian scooters and could go anywhere: Their very style affirmed mobility. The very fact of being able to leave the East End where one lived most of one's life and set out in large numbers for a weekend in Brighton (which is not very far away, but is very different) was a sign of the acquisition of new cultural space. But the Skinheads were as deeply imbricated in their localities as any football team and its fans. They denied the reasons for leaving one's locale by affirming that, as it were, the whole world is in a particular area of Liverpool.

Despite their mixed social composition, the Skinheads revalorised certain elements of the working-class culture as a whole and reworked them in generational, musical, visual, and stylistic terms. Many people who had found it difficult to come to terms with the implications of the politics of the previous phase hailed the movement as a more hard-edged, realistic, proletarian cultural moment. But this was also the moment in Britain of the rise in the National Front as an active political organisation. Racism was becoming more overt and organised as a political and ideological position, and for a time, there was an absolutely crucial struggle to attach the cultural associations and affiliations of young people in these new styles to the fascist movement itself. The effort was very effective because the subcultural formation revalorised certain proletarian elements that have a strongly masculine, aggressive edge to them. The struggle to attach those kids to a fascist political position worked through the culture of football (soccer) where there is already a structured violence organised around the territoriality of supporters' relation to a particular team. The attempt was made to articulate together elements of Skinhead culture—proletarian identification and strong support for particular clubs, including the violence that followed from that occasionally—directly into a youth fascist movement. There were about eighteen months when it was absolutely uncertain whether that culture would be the first indigenous young working-class fascist movement in Britain. It was suddenly clear that the progressive possibilities of rock—exaggerated perhaps by the explicit politics of the middle-class countercultures—did not stem from the intrinsic progressiveness of rock's cultural forms. At that moment, rock looked like anything but a potentially progressive form; in fact, it looked like an opening into a kind

of mindless race-gender-class identification, which would have created a trajectory among young people right into the hands of the National Front.

This articulation to the right was not stopped by the intrinsic cultural and political value or content of the cultural forms but by an alternative cultural practice, which began with the formation of a group and then an organisation: Rock Against Racism. It began by attempting to win over those musical groups that already had visible and leading positions in the culture and convince them to adopt overt political positions. Its project was, then, to constitute in the minds of the supporters the notion that being in that culture—being young, being a football supporter, et cetera—might go along with being antiracist. Antiracism could then become something fashionable and explicit. Rock Against Racism is one of the few real political-cultural interventions in recent times. More typically, the Left watches the growth of cultural forms and, intuiting their oppositional tendencies, hopes that a socialist youth movement, rocking and opposing as it goes on, will come out of them. We have rarely found, or even searched for, an actual cultural practice that would articulate these things together. Instead, many progressive people romanticise the deviant by mistaking the moment of opposition for the moment of rebellion. It is true that the members of the various subcultures were not exactly "inside the big system," but the problem is precisely how to work on that disavowal in order to constitute other subject positions. It does not happen on its own. Left on its own, virtually everything and anything can and did happen: Some were politicised, some depoliticised, some moved to the right, most moved to the middle, and a few moved to the left. The oppositional relationship to parental cultures and the dominant culture was maintained across the field of effects. It was still youth running wild, but youth could run wild to the right as well as to the left. Youth could run wild against Pakistanis as well as with them. The fact that rock was a progressive form of music, that it broke with many of the dominant musical forms, did not guarantee its political space and social content. That can only be guaranteed by articulating the forms of subjectivity it opens to particular political positions. The importance of Rock Against Racism is not undermined by the fact that it has declined. It was a moment in which the Left developed a practice for the contradictions of the moment, realistically recognised both the positive and negative

aspects of the forms it had to work with, and inserted itself into a language which was capable of being heard. It was able in this case to find a language which could establish a system of equivalence between the values of its own cultural formation and particular political and social positions outside. It established an articulation. Although it did not win white British youth for antiracism, as if there were some final battle, it stopped a particular moment of racism dead in its tracks.

The example serves my general point: Cultural forms themselves are important. They create the possibility of new subjectivities, but they do not themselves guarantee their progressive or reactionary content. They still require social and political practices to articulate them to particular political positions. That is a formal practice that requires the utmost sensitivity to the nature of the complexity and nuanced quality of the cultural period in which you are working. If you simply enter the space of a concert by The Clash to give a political speech, you will fail. Who wants to hear a political speech in the middle of The Clash? But there are ways of working with the oppositions that are already implicit in that music and deepening their political content by associating them with positions that are linked to an alternative or oppositional content. A politics of cultural resistance that neglects the internal and intrinsic forms of the cultural field in which it operates is not likely to create alternative subjectivities, but those forms of cultural politics that are satisfied with working only at the levels of forms, as if that will guarantee their necessarily progressive nature or content, are likely to be frequently if not forever disappointed.

I want to turn to an example of emergent forms—emergent forms of music, emergent forms of social movements, emergent forms of cultural practices, and emergent forms of subjectivity—that operate within and upon the context of residual forms. There is, after all, nothing so residual as religion. Although the vast majority of the people involved in the contemporary black movement in Britain are not Rastafarians, it is the accessibility of the new subjectivities inside Rastafarianism and of its music (essentially reggae, but other associated musical forms as well) that have given a cultural articulation to that movement. Without that articulation, the movement would have even less shape and direction than it currently has, and we would presumably be in more trouble than we already are. Rastafarianism has a long history which I will not develop

here, but I do want to say something about the cultural skills which it built upon and offered us.

There is something which all slaves learned (although as I suggested at the beginning of this lecture, it is certainly not confined to slave or ex-slave culture): the importance of cultural resistance by negotiation. It is not possible to be in the position of the slave in a society and not learn how important it is to maintain the difference between yourself and the other in the moments between the points where you can resist openly. All those things that supposedly describe the "simple-mindedness" of blacks—their inability to speak the language properly, their fondness for imitation and mimicry (which is supposed to be a very primitive element), their overdeveloped physical properties, and underdeveloped intellectual ones—are all ways in which slaves learned how to remain people in a culture which denied them that possible subjectivity. A slave must learn the difference between how one can operate both outside the dominant culture and inside its spaces. For example, in Jamaica, African drumming has been maintained somewhere about ten miles from the window of the room in which I grew up. It was a continuous voice in the night when I was a child, as I imagine it still is. It never died out, although people outlawed it for a variety of reasons (e.g., to stop the killing of the animals from which the drums are made). Nevertheless, people went on being able to drum *outside* the dominant culture. But if you are in a slave society, it is not possible to remain outside of the dominant culture for very long. So we understood how to maintain and keep Africa alive *inside* the Christian religions, both Catholic and Protestant.

I used to live next door to a black Baptist church where they sang British, Baptist, and nonconformist hymns. They sang them for hours. As time passed and the rhythms became slower (and you thought you'd never get to the end of a line, let alone the end of the hymn), someone—the person who was hoping to preach—would begin to fill the space allowed by the slow rhythms, reminding people of the lines. And suddenly, you could hear this traditional religious music and language—a part of the dominant culture—being subverted rhythmically from underneath. Where did this other rhythm come from, this other language preserved inside the forms of religious music? How is this subversion from within possible? Slaves develop a set of skills by which they can conform perfectly—they meet the requirements, speak the language,

honor the gods, sing the songs, learn the Bible, and so on—but adapt the forms in such a way that something is secured, some advance is made, maintained, and continued. Forms remain contradictory in spite of their manifest meanings. That is a skill learned a long time ago, and although slavery has been gone for quite a long while, it is a cultural skill that survives. It becomes crucial in a certain period in Jamaica that I want to describe briefly, a period in which religion and the musics associated with it came to play an absolutely central role in Jamaican politics.

In the period after Jamaican independence (in 1962), it was no longer acceptable for our music to be a residue from other cultures. Nations need their own music and musical forms. So we were given one by a Jamaican anthropologist trained in the U.S.A. from a middle-class Lebanese family. Edward Seaga, the prime minister from 1980 to 1989, argued that this music had to be truly Jamaican, free of the many musical forms that had been assimilated, and he proposed a music called "ska." Ska is, like all cultural forms, very contradictory in relation to the legitimated musics of the period. It is a bizarre mixture of North American blues and Third World authenticity. It does retain and bring to the surface many of the African rhythms. It is not only slow but deliberately retarded so that the repetitive, simple, rhythmic base can be heard again by a population looking for national cultural identities. Its form presents itself to be heard as a black music. At the same time, it is impressed on the population by the most advanced commercial advertising techniques. There are records on how to learn ska and dance clubs where you can learn to do the ska (a dance) and so on. Ska not only became very popular, it was frequently used to organise particular groups politically. It is the music associated with the early phases of Jamaican nationalism.

This appropriation of ska has to be understood in a larger field of struggle. One of the central aspects of Jamaican nationalism, as in all such nationalist movements, is the attempt to constitute a new subjectivity: the Jamaican identity. Having been for so long a part of the British Empire and suddenly becoming an independent country, there had to be ways of being and feeling Jamaican. The unity of Jamaican society is in fact constructed on top of a very complicated system of color distinctions. My grandmother, who must have learned something from slavery, could detect at least eight different lines. When nationalist Jamaica first had its beauty contest, it could only deal with the real differences in the

color spectrum by having a range of different beauty contests for the different color groupings. You could be Miss Mahogany, or Miss Majo, or Miss Pine, and so on. And these differences were intersected by others: differences of class and education. Those provided the classifications that my mother and grandmother operated with in the crucial questions of life—for example, in questions of kinship. It was a schema which Lévi-Strauss would have understood as soon as you unfolded it. If you were Majo but well educated, you could marry in a certain way. Certain affiliations were permitted and others were not. Identity was then an arena of difference, of antagonism, of actually whom this nation belonged to. That unity had to be created and constituted. It doesn't really exist in the society, which is actually riven with all kinds of differences: color, race, class, politics, geography, and religion. You have to constitute the subjective possibility of unity out of this, and one of the languages for doing so is music. Ska was supposed to be the music that could appeal to everyone. Everyone can join in it because it affirms the national unity of the people, despite their differences. Everyone could dance to ska to celebrate their independence.

However, just as some people wanted to use the combination of religious and musical forms to constitute a new unity, others wanted to reconstitute the difference. They wanted to say that within this unity that is Jamaica, there are some who are more Jamaican than others, and differences are also partly expressed in, partly constituted through, music and religion. Rastafarianism was, in my childhood, a tiny religious sect connected with Marcus Garvey's Pan-African movement and thus affiliated with Africa. It represented a small part of the population which was constantly oppressed by various social powers but who had clearly learned the sorts of skills of negotiation that I described earlier. They needed a language to tell them who they were but they had only one book: the Bible. So they made that say what they needed to hear it say. They reread the Bible by entirely turning it on its head, in terms of the persecution of black people. They reread the exodus from Egypt as the exodus of black people from slavery. They went on to say that they are still, as they were then, in Babylon; they looked forward to a new moment of promise, release, and liberation. So they adapted the language of the Bible, as blacks have adapted the language of Christianity to their own situations, and

they began to articulate that. The internal complexities of the forms of Rastafarianism are perhaps less important than the fact that it became an alternative language for speaking about what Jamaica is. It made the African connection overt and alive in a way that many of the other ideologies and cultures of independence could not. It had the capacity to construct new subjectivities because it operated in the religious field in a society in which religion is an absolutely central bearer of meanings.

It is impossible to move in Jamaican society without encountering the traces of religious language and thought because it was one of the few spaces allowed to the slaves. If you look at the cultures of Jamaica, religion is imprinted in everything. It is in every political and cultural position. You cannot begin to articulate the culture without encountering the language of religion. Very close to where I lived was another church which only operated at night. It was essentially for domestic servants, the black underclass that was locked into the kitchens of the black and brown middle class until after dinner, which was usually rather late. After being allowed to go back to their homes in downtown Kingston, they would stop in at the church and sing about being oppressed, about being at the end of one's rope. It was a very different sound than that of the church I described before. Yet that form enabled the women to walk every day from one world into the other and to work. They could not possibly have done it without some compensation. It was the opium of the oppressed. But it was also their means of survival, a moment of pure survival. It was not a moment from which new identities could be constructed, nor a moment from which opposition could come. Later on this group—and their daily movement—became very important, but only when women who worked in that way in Jamaica were much fewer and better organised. But in this moment religion kept them in their place, but it also enabled them to survive a certain kind of life.

Does this mean that one celebrates the role of religion? One has to recognise the negative effects as well as the positive purchase it may have given people on their lives. Religion is largely the reason why Jamaica remains an anticommunist society. Those very forms of religious consciousness that enabled people to open doors and speak new languages about themselves also had limits and shut some doors. It was possible within its terms to counterpose God and capitalism to communism. As

deeply oppressed as you felt, you never felt so oppressed as those living under and trying to flee the devil of communism. That is, you could generate in the very symbolism of religion a hatred for the "other." So religion in Jamaica is a form of consciousness which is effective in different ways at different levels: It helps people to survive; it helps them to constitute a false notion of unity; and it helps them to distinguish themselves from false representations of themselves. It permeates the society and it also establishes its own kinds of limits. That is one of the functions that Rastafarianism came to play, and people who could not become Rastafarian in their religious beliefs became "cultural Rastas." They wanted to identify the core of what it was to be Jamaican with those things that had never been spoken openly in the culture before: the African connection, the slave connection, the trench town connection, and the yard connection. They said, "That is what Jamaica really is."

The politics of Jamaica has to be understood in terms of that project of producing a cultural definition of the people, of helping to constitute what the people are. Although politics has to function on the terrain of the popular, the people and the popular are themselves constituted through discourses, collective practices, and cultural forms. There is no Jamaican people "out there." There are many peoples and they can be constituted in many different ways. In the crucial election between Michael Manley and Edward Seaga in the early 1970s, Seaga's party was substantially supported by the lower classes and in the towns, largely through affiliations to certain kinds of music and to certain religious sects. The Pentecostal and other fundamentalist Baptist black sects and churches have always strongly supported that particular party. Undoubtedly, one of the main reasons why Manley was able to acquire political power at that time was that the Rastafarians "gave him the rod." He was suddenly identified with Rastafarianism, even though Manley is the son of an English mother and a high Majo Jamaican father, a Jamaica brown, very high classed and refined. How this articulation happened is less important than the fact that it did. Nor is it important whether Manley was in some sense Rastafarian, but that this was the moment of the articulation between a particular cultural definition of the country—and of what it would mean to be a Jamaican in that sense—and a particular political position. It was the recognition that there might be a politics that could construct Jamaica in that way. That is, in Jamaican politics, politicians

are often forced to follow the cultural definitions of what Jamaica is and of what it is to be. Politics becomes endowed with very special—almost intrinsic—cultural and religious significance.

That is Rastafarianism in one place. But of course many of the people involved in its forms are not in Jamaica at all; they are in some other place: in London, in Birmingham, in Bradford, and so on. They are young people who can hardly speak patois. They are, after all, second- or third-generation West Indians. They are suffering from the problems of the alienation of a population that had identified itself with the possibilities that immigration opened for them and find that they are treated as second-class citizens. And they are suffering as well from the problems of increasing unemployment among blacks, especially black youths. They are, of course, a potential part of the unskilled or semiskilled sector of the working class. Black immigrants do the most menial and unskilled tasks in the society as a whole. There are occupations in Britain, just as there are in the United States, that have acquired a clear ethnic or race identity, whether cleaning, or ticket taking, or food service. That is the situation that increasing numbers of young black people face at that point: their insertion into the labour process in terms of their race.

Although their class position is crucially important, it is through the categories and structures of race that they become conscious of the complexities of the systems of exploitation of which they are the object. It is there that they begin to become conscious of their position and start to fight it out. They are overwhelmed by the threat to their identity or by the possibility of having no identity at all, of being denied an identity in the educational and cultural apparatuses of society which seem to want the generations of British-born blacks to be as their parents were obliged to be: invisible, not present. What was required of us when I first came to England was not to appear, not to trouble anybody by being too much "out there," living what I call the "lace curtain syndrome," as we stayed inside, pulled the curtains, and watched England go by "out there." A trip to a pub in the 1950s was like going into unknown territory. You didn't know the language or the mores; you didn't know whether somebody was going to throw you out or not; you knew nobody would talk to you. The first generation of immigrants lives in a foreign territory, but the third generation has no other place to go; it has no other sense of itself than what is offered it within that foreign territory. But in fact it

has developed another sense of itself, a sense of itself as other, a sense of itself that is very substantially related to the cultural forms that had been generated by Rastafarianism. The language that it speaks is largely that of reggae, which has been the musical carrier of its religious forms and concepts.

Young black people in Britain today are actually worse off economically and politically than their parents were when they first emigrated. But they are better off in at least one respect: They have a sense of themselves in the world; they have a pride of their place; they have a capacity to resist; they know when they are being abused by the dominant culture; and they have begun to know how to hold it at bay. But above all, they have a sense of some other person that they really are. They have become visible to themselves. One of the manifestations of this is that they speak a deeper patois than their fathers and mothers ever did. Jamaican patois has deepened in England in the fourth generation. That has become possible only because of the music and music shops. And that opens onto questions about the difficulties in establishing a black record shop and the commercial exploitation of the black culture. But nevertheless, out of the exploitation of black culture and the music business back home, and out of some very politically tainted sources, has come the possibility of a black subjective identity for these young people in the new world; they are going to make their own that which emerged in the old world to which they no longer have real connections. They have transformed the language from something that refers to the Kingston yard to that which refers to Handsworth or Brixton. They use a language which grew out of and resists one form of oppression to translate and to begin to articulate another form. That would not be possible without the music and the religion. Their music and religion cannot guarantee their success; they cannot say if they will win, or when, or how. There are limits imposed on them by the fact that their language, and the identity it constructs for them, take a religious form. Yet without that form, no black political movement would be possible today. Are those limits the product of some essential irrationality at the heart of religious cultural forms? No. But what other cultural practice do you offer black kids who are not satisfied with definitions of identity and politics which, built on their relations with the police, construct them as criminals who are either beaten up or fight back?

You have to acknowledge the irrationality of religious forms, but also you have to recognise that all cultures, including religious ones, have very different logics. Consider the following illustration of that. I was in Jamaica in the late 1970s when the truth was being revealed about Ethiopia (the land to which Rastafarianism looks) and Haile Selassie's regime. Many of us thought that the revelations about the actual history and conditions of Ethiopia under his rule as emperor (1930–1974), followed by his eventual death, seemed to undermine many of the Rastafarians' core beliefs (including that Selassie, as the first black king, was the incarnation of God or "Jah") and might signal its end. It does, after all, make very explicit and visible the limits of a highly irrational culture. I challenged this very old, very distinguished, and very religious Rastafarian: It did now appear that Ethiopia was not such a wonderful place for blacks and that it was in fact in turmoil. And Haile Selassie did not seem to rule quite as well as one might have hoped God to do. And besides, bringing out my final rationalist key, how could he be God if he's dead? The Rastafarian's response was quite simple and yet elegant: "When was the last time you heard the mass media tell the truth about the Son of God?" I had to confess that it wasn't the Word that was on the lips of BBC announcers or in the newspaper headlines. Within the logic of his discourse, the media were certainly no evidence for his death. But it need not have mattered that he was dead, just as it did not matter that some of them actually did go to Ethiopia and did not like it. Ethiopia is a place in the mind or, perhaps more accurately, in a language. It is a place they need because it is somewhere other than where they are. It is where people are free because here they are oppressed. They know about Ethiopia because they know about Babylon.

People have to have a language to speak about where they are and what other possible futures are available to them. These futures may not be real; if you try to concretise them immediately, you may find there is nothing there. But what is there, what is real, is the possibility of being someone else, of being in some other social space from the one in which you have already been placed. As I said before, nothing in the cultural forms of Rastafarianism guarantees the success of the black movement, but it is its necessary condition at the current moment. It is the necessary condition within which black politics, black alternatives, black struggles, and black resistance are developing and will develop.

In this lecture, I have tried to demonstrate, at least by example, that although emergent cultural forms do not contain their own guarantees, they do contain real possibilities. Also, although they cannot be thought of as self-sufficient and outside of the structuring effects of the contradictions that deeply penetrate and organise the social formation, they cannot be reduced to them either. Their progressive or nonprogressive content cannot be read off from the cultural level alone. And I have tried to talk about the way in which residual cultural forms are constantly appropriated, expropriated, and reworked. Sometimes the forms people appropriate may not look like they have any potential for struggle, resistance, negotiation, or even survival, but nevertheless generate them for people who are able to discover in them a language within which alternative subjective possibilities are made available. But this appropriation is always limited and partial; after all, we cannot all be Rastafarians and the politics of contemporary black struggles cannot be entirely Rastafarian. Finally, considering both emergent and residual forms, I have tried to suggest that we understand resistance as a process. Rather than reserving the notion of class struggle only for the moment of the barricades, we need to see resistance as the continual practices of working on the cultural domain and opening up cultural possibilities. This is perhaps not the most glamorous political work but it is the work we need to do. The conditions within which people are able to construct subjective possibilities and new political subjectivities for themselves are not simply given in the dominant system. They are won in the practices of articulation which produce them.