CULTURE

POWER

PLACE

EXPLORATIONS IN CRITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

struggles over gentrification in New York City, in which he reads the Lower East Side as Wild West.

4   Compare Renato Rosaldo (1989b) on "imperialist nostalgia."

5   Mike Davis (1989) explicitly places in polarized counterpoint the middle-class, mostly white, homeowner-based "slow growth" associations in and around Los Angeles and the urban street gangs of black "homeboys," each epitomizing equally dystopian responses to the international corporate restructuring of the *Blade Runner* city's spatial economy. See also Kate Braverman's essay "Nostalgia for the Empire" (1989), in which she narrates the urban heart of darkness in postapocalyptic Los Angeles as experienced by the story's main character. The protagonist's figuration as a low-income, white female single parent is prototype for yet another third-worlded group in the United States.

6   The results of the Ford Foundation research project are available in Goode and Schneider 1994.

7   Thanks to Hong-Joon Kim for pointing this out from his research on the Korean American community in Philadelphia.

8   Compare Jean Baudrillard 1983b. In a different vein, Kathleen Stewart (1988) shows how even nostalgia can be inflected by counterhegemonic resistance in her discussion of Appalachians, whose recuperative memory-narratives mark a refusal to forget—even while parodying their own discourse—the familiar world that had deserted them.

9   For example, Ted Swedenburg (1989) shows how rap music's selling of social insubordination engages precisely this terrain of struggle.

The Demonic Place of the "Not There":
Trademark Rumors in the Postindustrial Imaginary

ROSEMARY J. COOMBE

In the habitus of death and the daemonic, reverberates a form of memory that survives the sign. . . . And then suddenly from the space of the not-there, *emerges the re-membered historical agency "manifestly directed towards the memory of truth which lies in the order of symbols" . . . the temporality of repetition that constitutes those signs by which marginalized or insurgent subjects create a collective agency.*

— Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

From Upton Sinclair's grisly description in The Jungle *of how workers who fell in vats of fat emerged as Durham's Pure Leaf Lard to the recent belief that McDonald's uses worms in its burgers, one of the most prevalent folk ideas in 20th-century American life is suspicion of big business.*

— Gary Alan Fine, "The Goliath Effect"

Although Philip Morris manufactures more than 160 other cigarette brands in some 170 countries, Marlboros have been the key to its global success. A succession of marketing entrepreneurs steered the company's phenomenal expansion. But the most valuable figure in the company by far is the mythic billboard idol, the Marlboro Man. Forbes *magazine once estimated that the Marlboro Man by himself had a "goodwill" value of $10 billion.*

— Richard Barnet and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams*

These undecipherable markings on the captive body render a kind of hieroglyphics of the flesh whose severe disjunctures come to be hidden to the cultural seeing by skin color. We might well ask if this phenomenon of marking and branding actually "transfers" from one generation to another, finding various symbolic substitutions in an efficacy of meanings that repeat the initiating moments.

— Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"

The bizarre rumors that consumers spread about the origins and meanings of corporate trademarks are phenomena of consumer culture that indirectly articulate social anxieties about the intersections of culture, power, and place in the condition of postmodernity.[1] Demonic rumors, I will suggest, provide a means by which people culturally express commercial power's lack of place — the simultaneously pervasive but incorporeal presence of corporate power. Moreover, such rumors serve to remark upon the consumer's own place — making audible her lack of voice — and her sense of powerlessness in the ubiquitous but evanescent world of commercial media culture. Rumors give presence to the consumer's cultural absence; they assume power and momentum as they insinuate themselves into the "mediascape" (Appadurai 1990). Traveling anonymously, without clear meaning, authority, or direction, rumors colonize the media in much the same way that commercial trademarks do — subversively undermining the benign invisibility of the trademark's corporate sponsor while maintaining the consumer's own lack of authorial voice.

To make sense of such practices it is necessary to summarize some of the socioeconomic conditions from which they spring. The corporate trademark is a signifier that proliferates in the mass media communications technologies of postmodernism. As production moves elsewhere and the industrial landscape fades from public view (emerging, of course, in export processing zones, women's kitchens, and immigrant's garages), the power of the corporation in the "imaginary space of postmodernity" (Kester 1993; Lazarus 1991) is most evident in the exchange value of the brand name, the corporate logo, and the advertising lingo — the "distinction" these signifiers assume in the market. Rumors, suggests Homi K. Bhabha, "weave their stories around the disjunctive 'present' or the 'not-there' of discourse" (1994:200), and in the "not-there" of production, I propose, we may find new meanings in the devil rumors that circulate in conditions of postmodernity.

The proliferation of signification is often understood to be a peculiar characteristic of postmodernity and its hyperreality of self-referential signs (Harvey 1989; Jameson 1991; Baudrillard 1981, 1983a, 1983b, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c; Kellner 1989; McRobbie 1994; Poster 1988). In a series of works, Jean Baudrillard theorized the postmodern by examining the extension of the commodity form to textual phenomena — in contemporary capitalism, he suggested, the pervasive penetration of mass media enabled the hegemony of a "signifying culture," in which the social world became saturated with shifting

cultural signs. The Western world, he posited, has reached the end of an era dominated by industry and now constitutes itself "postindustrially" through the circulation of image and text.[2] In *Simulations* (1983b), the "code" of marketing signs comes to subsume the distinction between objects and their representations: "Instead of a 'real' world of commodities that is somehow bypassed by an 'unreal' myriad of advertising images, Baudrillard discerned only a hyperreality, a world of self-referential signs" (Poster 1988:1).

As I have elaborated elsewhere (Coombe 1991a, 1991b, 1993, 1997) the corporate trademark is one of the most significant cultural goods in conditions of postmodernity — the quintessential self-referential sign — as indicated by the slogans with which they are lobbied into the public sphere: "What's good for General Motors is good for America," General Electric "brings good things to life," and Coca-Cola is "*the* real thing." These signifiers serve as a locus for cultural investments and social inscriptions by those who manufacture mass-market goods. In postmodernity, the focus of commodity fetishism shifts from the product to the sign values invested in products. The "value" of a product, in other words, lies in the exchange value of its brand name, advertising image, or status connotations — the "distinction" it has in the market. Monopoly of the trademark or "commodity/sign" is crucial to corporate capital and an important site for capital growth and investment (Coombe 1997). In many companies, the value of such intangible textual properties as trademarks equals or surpasses the value of tangible assets, and in some corporations a single distinctive symbol may be one of the most valuable assets the company "owns" (Drescher 1992).

Corporate trademarks are key symbols in postmodernity. Corporations invest huge amounts monitoring their use in the public sphere. When a corporation has proprietary rights in a sign, it may also attempt to maintain control over its connotations and to police critical commentary. The more famous the mark, the greater the legal protection that is accorded to it. In practice, this means that the more successfully the corporation dominates the market, the more successfully it can immunize itself against oppositional cultural strategies. But attempts to restrain the tactical appropriations of those signifiers which embody corporate presence in postmodern culture are not always successful.

This is especially evident in the case of rumor. Rumor is elusive and transitive, anonymous, and without origin. It belongs to no one and is

possessed by everyone. Endlessly in circulation, it has no identifiable source. This illegitimacy makes it accessible to insurgency, while its transitivity makes it a powerful tactic, one that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls a truly subaltern means of communication (1988b:23). According to Bhabha, it represents the emergence of a peculiar form of social temporality that is both iterative and indeterminate: "Its intersubjective, communal adhesiveness lies in its enunciative aspect. Its performative power of circulation results in the contagious spreading, ... the iterative action of rumour, its *circulation* and *contagion*, links it with panic—as one of the *affects* of insurgency" (1994:200). Rumors, he suggests, remark "an infectious ambivalence" of "too much meaning and a certain meaningless ... panic is generated when an old and familiar symbol develops an unfamiliar social significance as sign through a transformation of the temporality of its representation" (202). In rumors, everyday and commonplace forms are transformed into forms that are archaic, awesome, and terrifying; the circulation of cultural codes is disturbed by new and awful valences.

The ubiquity and the anonymity of trademarks in consumer societies seem to invite such appropriations. When the reconfiguration of corporate symbols is articulated in the form of rumor, it may be impossible for a manufacturer to stop aliens from speaking its language with their own voices or colonizing its systems of exchange value with their own experiences or lifeworlds. Procter & Gamble, a company that bombards North America with cleaning products, discovered this phenomenon at quite some cost. First, a word about the sponsor. Procter & Gamble is the largest American corporation producing cleaning and food products (Fine 1990:137) and, until quite recently, the single largest American advertiser.[3] Its daytime radio and television commercials engendered the term "soap opera" and the marketing of its brands (Tide, Crest, Ivory Snow, Pampers) has been the paradigm case in business school textbooks for years. Yet despite all this public cultural activity, the company itself keeps a remarkably low corporate profile (*Globe and Mail* 1982; *Montreal Gazette* 1985). Like any good corporate citizen, it lets its trademarks do the talking.

Corporate capital, however, cannot always control the conversations in which its trademarks become engaged. From about 1978 until the late 1980s a rumor campaign linked the company to Satanism. A survey by *Advertising Age* during this period indicated that 79 percent of the public could not name *any* specific product made by Procter & Gamble (Fine 1985:72), one of North America's oldest soap com-

panies and owner of some of the oldest and most venerable brand names in American mass markets (Crisco, Folgers, Duncan Hines). Despite the ubiquity of its products, the multiplicity of its brands, and the mass dissemination of its trademarks, few people actually understood the company to be the maker of these goods.

Anonymous social groups ascribed occult significance to the man-in-the-moon logo it used on most if not all its products.[4] This corporate insignia (originating in 1851) was seen to be the mark of the devil. One woman, for example, claimed that when you turned the logo up to a mirror, the curlicues in the man's beard became 666 — the sign of the Antichrist: "I just don't understand the coincidence" (*New York Times* 1982:D10). An anonymous leaflet asserted that a company official appeared on national television and "gave all the credit for the success of the company to SATAN. . . . They have placed their satanist symbol on all their products so that they can get SATAN into every home in America" (D10). Others reported hearing that Procter's "owner" appeared on a talk show where he admitted selling his soul to the devil for the company's success.

Procter & Gamble hired private investigators and established a toll-free hotline to deal with twelve to fifteen thousand monthly phone calls from concerned consumers. As their public relations office put it, "Procter is going after the rumor with all the diligence that it devotes to a new product" (D10). The anti-rumor campaign cost millions.[5] Yet, in 1985, when the hydra-headed rumor surfaced again, the company acknowledged a form of defeat. It removed the 134-year-old trademark from its products, a decision described by marketing experts as "a rare case of a giant company succumbing to a bizarre and untraceable rumor" (*Globe and Mail* 1985:B6).

Incredibly, in a decade when the Federal Centers for Disease Control linked the company's tampon with fatal toxic shock syndrome, feminists protested the use of sex in Procter & Gamble's advertisements, fundamentalists boycotted the company for sponsoring violent television shows, and unions urged boycotts to back their struggles for recognition, it was the battle over the meaning of a tiny moon-and-stars symbol that brought the diffident corporation most prominently to public attention. In other words, the biggest threat to the company's benign, if somewhat empty, public image came not from organized groups with expressed political agendas but from the anonymous appropriations of mysterious agents whose interests and motivations remain inscrutable.[6]

Scholarly work on urban and "mercantile legends" (for example, Brunvand 1984, 1986), although replete with references to well-known trademarks, fails to see such signifiers as anything but equivalent to the corporations which control them or the products for which they serve as marketing devices. Folklorist Gary Alan Fine, for example, sees trademark rumors as reflecting an American ambivalence toward bigness, manifested in the pervasive portrayal of well-known corporations as distinctly malevolent: "The popularity of mercantile legends suggests that the public is sensitive to the nuances of corporate capitalism. The legends reveal attitudes within modern capitalism that cannot be easily and directly expressed. . . . Most of these narratives are identical thematically: there is danger from corporations and danger in mass-produced and mass-distributed products. In some legends the corporation itself is guilty for producing a shoddy product; in others an employee is to blame. . . . In few stories can the corporate entity be considered heroic . . . and even here the stories revolve around the enormous size, power, control, and wealth of the corporation. In American mercantile legends there is a strong undercurrent of fear and suspicion of size and power" (1985:79). The mistrust of corporations is most fully expressed, he suggests, in mercantile legends that name the firm or product with the largest market share in that product area (or at least market share *as it is perceived* by the public). Fine makes no distinctions between legends dealing with prominent corporations (either in terms of market share, advertising saturation, or size of operations), those that make reference to products by brand name, those that identify products by brand name, or those in which the corporation, the product, and the brand name are linked in public perception. Indeed, he does not address the trademark at all, except to acknowledge that brand names figure as signifiers in the mercantile legends he recounts (often as a means of effacing their corporate authors).[7] Fine makes a more promising suggestion, however, when he remarks:

The social-psychological rationale of these attitudes seems based on the separation of the public from the means of production and distribution. Corporations are perceived as caring primarily about profits and only secondarily about the needs of consumers. . . . Marx was correct in claiming that separating people from the means of production under capitalism will result in alienation; this alienation provides a psychological climate in which bogey legends can flourish . . . one must

accept that the "folk" (in this case the postindustrial public) are capable of conceiving folkloric content in economic terms that reflect the structure of mass capitalist society, feeling constrained, at least subconsciously, by their own lack of control. The resultant sense of constraint and frustration explain this pattern of mercantile legends that is so prevalent under American capitalism. (80)

In later work (1990) Fine suggests that the companies at the center of such rumors are well known (or at least their trademarks are) and deal almost exclusively in consumer products and services. The management and production operations of such corporations are far more anonymous: "These rumors symbolically mirror the ambivalence between knowledge of the product and ignorance of the individuals who direct the creation and marketing of these products" (144).

Despite references to the "postindustrial state" and the "postindustrial public," Fine does not ask why people in a so-called postindustrial society would be any more suspicious of corporate power than those of a more obviously industrial age. The content of the rumor drawn from Upton Sinclair's novel — that workers were being cannibalized in the mass production process — is, however, suggestive. Here, it is the monstrous nature of mass production itself that figures an unnatural form of human consumption for the sake of maintaining a consumer society. The human fodder consumed by the mechanics of mass production is then literally consumed by those loyal to the brand name.

Let us return to the mark of the devil — the Satanic figuring of the corporation in consumer rumors. In *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, Michael Taussig (1980) explored the significance of devil symbolism to the emergent proletariat in Bolivia and Colombia. He persuasively showed that proletarianizing peasants used the devil, a fetish of the spirit of evil, as a powerful image with which to express culturally an ethical condemnation of the capitalist mode of production, their hostility to wage labor, and the unnatural subjection of humans to the commodity form. The maintenance and increase in production under capitalism was understood to result from secret pacts made with the devil.

I shall speculate here on the role of the devil in the current stage of capitalism and its feverish proliferation of media signifiers in the service of maintaining and increasing consumption (appropriating and detourning Taussig's terms to make them speak to a postmodern con-

text). The devil contract may be operating in postmodernity as an image with which to indict a system in which consumption is the aim of economic activity, signs circulate without meanings, symbols are divorced from social contexts, the images that convey commodities are abstracted from the sources of their production, and trademarks are held to be their own sources of value. It may be against this obfuscation of power that satanic rumors are directed — the fetishization of evil, in the image of the devil, directed at the fetishism of the commodity/ sign. The meaning of late capitalism may be emerging in the fantastic fabulations through which trademarks are given evil reenchantments.

The devil in North America may adopt a variety of forms. Demonic others figure in many consumer rumors, but the devil will assume the image of evil most compelling in the subaltern spheres in which it circulates. This is clearly evident in the perpetuation of Ku Klux Klan rumors that circulate among African Americans in a black counterpublic that flourishes in postindustrial America.[8] Two centuries of American support for the sale of black bodies; the branding, marking, and wounding of African Americans; official tolerance of white on black violence; and an insidious fascination with and fixation on controlling black male sexuality have inevitably left legacies of hostility, anger, and distrust. These legacies are registered in rumors — which increasingly target corporate powers. Drawing on the comprehensive accounts furnished by folklorist Patricia Turner (1993), I will elaborate upon the particular prevalence of trademarks in the subaltern consumer counterculture she describes.

Turner links contemporary rumors or legends in African American communities to a provocative corpus of related oral and written lore concerning race relations and the imperiled black body that can be traced back to the early-sixteenth-century encounters between white European explorers and sub-Saharan Africans. Similar, if not identical, rumors have circulated back and forth between black and white communities in mimetic circuits of exchange ever since this mythic moment of "first contact."[9] As Walter Benjamin might appreciate, mechanical (and electronic) modes of reproduction have increased the speed and velocity of these rumors, as corporate control of imagery has mystified the sources of control over the black body. Turner (1993) traces the continuing operations of the mimetic faculty in the multiple modernities that African Americans have experienced and the demonic others who populate their appropriations: "Concerns

about conspiracy, contamination, cannibalism, and castration . . . run through nearly four hundred years of black contemporary legend material and prove remarkably tenacious" (xv).

As both whites and blacks attempted to fit the other into their own worldview, they both adopted the figure of the cannibal, with flesh eating representing the epitome of barbaric and uncivilized behavior for both groups during that period (Turner 1993:9). In the era of slave trading, rumors about the other circulated and were mimicked by their alters, as evidenced in the continued currency of the trope of man-eating: "New World cannibalism rumors continued well into the nineteenth century, as the mutiny on the Spanish slave ship *Amistad* revealed; although the African men had been subject to all the horrors of experience as cargo in the Middle Passage, they did not attempt to take over the ship until they were told by the cook that the white men intended to eat them" (14). The term "man-eater" had a literal meaning for both the slave traders and the slaves, the majority of whom were men, and rumors that black men are the particular targets of white animosity and most at bodily risk have persisted over the generations. For blacks, Turner suggests, "such as those in West Africa where economies of commodified labor were unknown, the rumor satisfied basic explanatory needs; slave traders kept coming back for live bodies to satisfy their hunger for human flesh" (30).

The commodification and the vilification of black bodies in the United States — their simultaneous status as objects of property and subjects of physical danger and sexual potency, branded as chattel and targeted with violence — have a long and sordid history that lives on in the embodied memories of African Americans. Apologists for slavery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries claimed that Africans had been visited with an ancient, if not biblical, "curse" that "marked" them for slavery: "God has placed a mark on the Negro as distinctive as that on Cain" (Harriet Schoolcraft 1860, cited in Diane Roberts 1994:58). Such marks served to deem those who bore them (blacks, women, natives) subservient to their unmarked (white, male) masters. The witnessing of abuse visited on black bodies lingers in collective memory and continues to inscribe the bodies of African Americans to the present day. Elizabeth Alexander movingly evokes these corporeally inscribed memories, repetitively provoked by white on black violence, as consolidating "group affiliation by making blackness an unavoidable, irreducible sign which, despite its abjection, leaves creative

space for group self-definition and self-knowledge" (1994:78). Ku Klux Klan rumors are one example of this memory and creative self-recognition.

After the civil rights struggles, rumors linked reprehensible violence against blacks to the KKK—tying the Ku Klux Klan to consumer goods conspiratorially designed to prohibit black reproduction. "To many African-Americans, the Klan exists as the agency on which whites depend to mitigate or eliminate black access to those rights and privileges that white adults take for granted" (Turner 1993:58). The Klan's verifiable abuses of black bodies—lynching, castration, burning, and mutilation are sufficiently well documented; "Reconstruction-era Klansmen devised many cruel fates for blacks, which contributed to their emerging reputation as demonically inspired monsters determined to sexually humiliate those who threatened white supremacy. Sexual metaphors abound in stories of KKK violence" (64). In the Reconstruction era, for example, Klan members padded and enlarged their own crotches when pursuing their presumably overendowed victims—a mimicry of the alterity they so fantastically constructed. In many accounts, the desire to destroy the victim's sexuality is literally realized, as when black genitalia served as the trophies of a successful hunt.

Black engagement in the defense of international democracy during World War I did not bring them democratic rights and privileges when they returned home. Wearing uniforms and carrying weapons were privileges that white American men saw as properly their own preserve—black male adoption of these insignia provoked an anxious backlash of white supremacy. Associations between male sexual prowess and military acumen were registered in the lynching, mutilation, and dismemberment of black men in uniform (71). Later, post–World War II Klan attacks on male genitalia and the bombings and burnings of institutions central to the reproduction of black community life made rumors linking the KKK to the insidious sterilization of black men particularly compelling.

The KKK has figured prominently in at least four contemporary legend cycles in which modern corporations are the mechanism by which late-twentieth-century white supremacists pursue the bodies of blacks. The KKK, in other words, has traded its white sheets of yesteryear for the white shirts of corporate America. In one rumor, the KKK, who [sic] allegedly owns Church's Fried Chicken, has tainted

the chicken recipe so that black male eaters are sterilized after consuming it. In a second, young African American male consumers are unwittingly supporting the KKK by purchasing overpriced athletic wear manufactured by the "Klan-owned" Troop clothing company. Third, many believe that the KKK owns Marlboro cigarettes, a brand popular among black smokers, and is not only accruing financial benefits from but also deliberately causing cancer in African American consumers. Finally, the Brooklyn Bottling Company, maker and distributor of a soft drink called Tropical Fantasy, which is said to contain a mysterious ingredient capable of sterilizing black men, is similarly alleged to be a front for the KKK. (82–83)

In these rumors of KKK manipulation of mass production, the agendas of the suspect corporations mimic those traditionally pursued by the KKK—conspiratorial attempts to limit and destroy the reproduction of the black population. Church's Fried Chicken was targeted, Turner suggests, because its persona in the market—its public signature, trademark, and trade name—reminded blacks of houses of worship: "Churches played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement. In many communities houses of worship were the only public spaces in which African-Americans could meet. Moreover, many of the best-known leaders in the civil rights movement emerged from the ranks of the clergy. In its attempts to prevent civil rights advances, the Klan was proven to be responsible for the bombing and burning of numerous black churches throughout the South. This flagrant disregard for the sanctity of churches no doubt left a lasting impression on the African-American mind. The notion that 'Church's' [a company with ownership based in the South] could be responsible for such destructive behavior as the sterilizing scheme thus gained a perverse, ironic appeal" (85).

Moreover, Church's "product" involved the preparation of foods typically associated with the soul food of the folk. Such foods were sold exclusively in inner-city black areas—Church's was one of the last fast-food franchises to move into suburban locations (86). Its retail operations were highly visible in black communities but largely unknown in white areas, whereas its advertising budget was (contrary to Fine's expectations) the *lowest* in the industry. With few other connotations to attach to the company's mysterious "presencings," only its disembodied trademark remained for inner-city consumers to invest with meaning. The very anonymity of the company might have invited rumor, suggests Turner—although the franchises provided some em-

ployment in heating and serving precooked food, these were jobs that reinforced servile and emasculating images. Like Kentucky Fried Chicken, Popeye's, and other southern food franchises, moreover, Church's figured in rumors that its fried chicken recipes were stolen from black maids. In such rumors, even the history of exploitation is further expropriated for white profit when an "imitation of life" is sold back to blacks under the signatures of Southern white men — descendants of slaveholders — who claim food for the soul as trade secrets and circulate it by means of trademarks — taking possession of the literal sustenance of black bodily well-being.

In 1985 another company introduced a line of sportswear under the name "Troop," capitalizing on an incipient military aesthetic in the male urban underclass. It marketed these intimidating combat-style goods almost exclusively to black and Latino youths in inner cities where the clothing became incredibly popular. Soon it was reported on community radio stations that the Troop trademark was owned by a company controlled by the Ku Klux Klan — the trademark, in other words, was employed to create the perception of a threatening, oppositional "army" that would legitimate *and fund* the Klan's own paramilitary operations.[10]

In fact, Troop Sport was a New York firm owned by Korean and American entrepreneurs with production operations based in Korea. It had no Klan affiliations that could be established. But rumor is never error but basically errant (Spivak 1988b:23), and this one, capturing the public imagination, swept the nation. As the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported: "A Chicago variation of the rumor has rap singer L. L. Cool J. ripping off a Troop jacket on the Oprah show and accusing the firm of hating blacks. The singer has never appeared on the talk show. . . . In Memphis, the rumor was that the letters in Troop stood for: To Rule Over our Oppressed People. And in Atlanta some believed that the words 'Thank you nigger for making us rich' were emblazoned inside the tread of Troop's tennis shoes. . . . Troop's [black] marketing director . . . [claims] that he has gone to great lengths to disprove the alleged Klan connection. 'I went to Montgomery, Alabama to a store and cut open five pairs [of shoes] to prove it wasn't like that' " (1989).

In contrast to Procter & Gamble's defensive countertactics, Troop Sport responded overtly. It decided to "do the right thing" and affirm its allegiance to civil rights. A two-hundred-thousand-dollar public relations campaign enlisted the aid of Operation Push, the NAACP, and

black musicians and athletes. Church rallies were held, black students were publicly awarded scholarships, and anti-Klan posters were distributed. According to Turner, Troop officials in Chicago also engaged the executive secretary of the African American Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity to request that they use their chapter network to dispel the rumors. Despite these efforts, the company fell into dire straits, closed its stores, and filed for bankruptcy in the summer of 1989. Its downfall may have been due to changing fashion trends, but it is difficult to deny the injuries that the rumors visited on the company's reputation.

The objective falsity of this rumor makes it difficult to understand at first why people find it persuasive. Although Ku Klux Klan rumors may be empirically false, they articulate compelling truths about the history of black social experience in North America. In marketing goods to the black population, these companies were not unusual. But elements specific to these endeavors make them unique. For example, instead of addressing blacks as part of a market in which everyone could now be seen to consume the same goods — an inclusionary gesture — the Troop marketing strategy was designed to *mark* a *difference.* The pseudomilitary character of the product itself physically interpellated young black men as identifiable targets and marked them (while inviting them to brand or tattoo themselves) as recruitable subordinates. If this seems far-fetched, this excerpt from the *Metro Word* ("Toronto's Black Culture Magazine") indicates that such possibilities are never far from consciousness in black urban communities: "On a warm autumn day, Rick is easy to spot wearing his Black leather jacket imprinted with an X along with his Malcolm X cap. . . . As Rick turns to catch the bus, the large white X smack dab in the middle of his back takes on an ominous meaning. The X appears almost like a target and Rick appears to have become human prey. From Public Enemy's Rebel Base One in New York, [Harry] Allen says, 'This is why Public Enemy has taken the image of a Black man with his arms crossed defiantly and his head held upward in a rifle sight as their logo. Most Black people see themselves in the same situation — in the sights' " (Beaumont 1992:7).[11]

The Troop marketing strategy seems to have evoked disturbing associations in black cultural memory and the social unconscious. The disproportionate numbers of young black men recruited to serve as subordinate "grunts" in Vietnam was a powerful memory. The experience of serving as capital's reserve army of labor, increasingly mobi-

lized according to the demands of the military industrial complex, was potentially evoked, along with memories of the rewards expected and postponed after serving in two world wars. Indeed, race rumors during the two world wars demonstrate profound racial distrust. According to Turner: "The antiblack rumors that circulated during wartime reflect the ambivalence, insecurity, and uneasiness felt during a time of crisis. The dominant culture did not embrace the idea of training black men to shoot, but the idea that they share the risk of being shot at was perfectly acceptable. Blacks were empowered, in short, by America's need for them. A nation that had always tried to limit black access to weapons suddenly needed to train black soldiers. Few roles reinforce masculinity more than that of soldier. Whites knew, moreover, that they could not easily ask blacks to be soldiers while denying them the full rights of citizenship and increased access to the American dream" (1993:45). Black rumors focused on the second-class treatment of black soldiers and on the individual bodies of black soldiers serving as fodder for American troops: "Yet from the Revolutionary War through World War II, the weapons, pay scale, food, and training provided to black soldiers were nothing like those afforded to whites. . . . Given the disregard with which blacks were treated before World War II, the possibility that the military establishment wanted to place them between Axis bullets and white Allied bodies undoubtedly rang quite true" (45). Later, race riots also provoked (and were provoked by) rumors about the relative treatment of black and white bodies by members of the other race.

Michelle Wallace adds further dimensions to this emphasis on the black body:

Afro-Americans, as ex-slaves, are not only permanently exiled from their "homeland" (which now exists most meaningfully only in their imaginations), but also from their bodies. Their labor and their reproduction can be considered to be in a state of postcoloniality—no longer colonized but not yet free. In a manner that may be characteristic of "internal colonization," Afro-American culture has traditionally seemed fully aware of its own marginality to the white American mainstream. Accordingly, it combined (and often cleverly disguised) its political objections to Afro-American "invisibility" with a progressive integration and reinterpretation of those qualities and features that first marked the "racism" of white images of blacks. In other words, black culture continually reincorporates the "negative" or "racist" imagery of the dominant culture. (1990:2)

As Manthia Diawara phrases a similar insight, "Blacks often derive the good life from repressive institutions by systematically reversing the significations of those institutions" (1994:42). With these insights, we might see black male adoption of army surplus camouflage gear and military insignia in the service of a "BAD" aesthetic as ironically inverting this symbolism to create and affirm black solidarity. The gesture is one that Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988) might see as a form of "Signifyin(g)" — the employment of figurative rhetorical strategies that repeat and imitate elements of dominant culture while critically marking a difference — that enables blacks to respond indirectly to an exclusionary white culture. Gates discusses literature and the oral tradition, but Wallace (1990) argues that Signifyin(g) tactics are even more characteristic of African American popular culture and its mass culture derivatives (2). As Grant Farred remarks: "Subjugation in contemporary America is an insidious process because it silences constituencies even as it gives voice and face to their culture and histories. It adopts black dress and posture, it facilitates black interpellation without enfranchisement, it addresses blacks without providing channels and forums for response and critical engagement; it takes on repertoires of black representation without respect for the conditions under which the history of that community is made" (1995:26).

The conversion of the signs of physical conscription and betrayal into a subcultural aesthetic of resistance might be Signifyin(g), but it was as signification that they were rerouted by Troop Sport to serve the endless needs of commerce for new sources of distinction. The appropriation and projection back on blacks of their own Signifyin(g) by anonymous forces of capital — an inversion of their inversion — inevitably sparked racial anxiety about white enmity. This enmity was most aptly represented by the Ku Klux Klan. Black response to the Troop marketing strategy (the Ku Klux Klan rumor), however "false," served to connote historical "truths" about black male subordination. The Troop marketing strategy stirred something in the political unconscious of black Americans that surfaced in the form of a fantastic recognition of black social identity; the rumor might be understood as a return of the repressed in the black social imaginary.

British Knights and Reebok, both manufacturers of athletic shoes, have also been visited with accusations of Klan affiliation, although in the Reebok case, the funneling of funds to South Africa to maintain apartheid was a more pervasive theme. As Patricia Turner notes, the

Knights trademark was easily associated with the knights of the Ku Klux Klan, but the Reebok rumor was more mysterious. The rage for athletic footwear did cause concern within black communities, and the Reebok rumors circulated just as celebrity condemnations of South African apartheid became dominant in American media (1993:127–28). Perplexed by these allegations, Reebok marketing personnel chose to interrogate the trademark with which the company purveyed its goods so as to determine if it held any clues to the origins of the rumor. Implicitly they recognized that the authorial mark under which the goods were marketed and with which black consumers marked their bodies might contain clues to the nature of African American distrust: "The company's founders, Joe and Bill Foster, turned to the dictionary for a name for the bootmaking company in the late 1950s; they 'picked the name Reebok . . . a light, nimble gazelle.' . . . Coincidentally that species is found almost exclusively in South Africa. [Vice-president for corporate communications] Lightcap, in speculating on the source of the rumor, mentioned . . . the similarity between the words *reebok* and *springbok*—an annual South African rugby match—and the fact that the corporate symbol for the Reebok brand is the British flag" (129).

Turner claims to have found few informants for the rumor who knew anything about the gazelle or the South African rugby team (although informants with a British Caribbean heritage did associate the British flag used in Knights shoe advertising with a history of racist colonial oppression) (129). "To the company, its status as the first major U.S. shoe company to withdraw its products from the South African market makes the allegations even more disturbing. Proud of its record on human rights and its support of the African-American community, Reebok has gone to great lengths to dispel the rumor. . . . Lightcap spends a great deal of time on the road, pleading Reebok's case to African-American college groups as well as community and political groups. Signs disavowing the South African connection are very much in evidence at Reebok outlets. A handsome flyer entitled 'Reebok: On Human Rights' contains disclaimers from both African-American athletes and well-known anti-apartheid groups" (130). The flyer also contained a letter to Reebok employees that reiterated the company's determination to reproach other American corporations doing business in South Africa and its commitment to "a responsible corporate America" (131). Although it is the largest athletic footwear

manufacturer in the world, Reebok's vision of corporate responsibility does not include the provision of any manufacturing jobs for the African Americans who constitute so great a share of its market. Like other corporations, it has adopted strategies of flexible capital accumulation, shifting the places of its production operations to take advantage of low-wage labor and legislative regimes that impose the least onerous regulatory constraints on its operations.

The effects of global capitalist restructuring have been particularly grave for African Americans: "The shift to a system of flexible accumulation which led to smaller workplaces, more homogeneous work forces and the weakening of labor unions, meant that the moderate-waged bases of the Black working and middle classes were eviscerated. Moreover, under the new regimes Blacks were more likely to suffer from racial discrimination in the labor market. Further, the spatial aspects of this transformation left inner-cities economically devastated as their economic base was removed, and large sectors of urban minority residents lived in increasingly impoverished neighbourhoods" (Dawson 1994:209). Like Troop and other athletic-wear companies, Reebok's manufacturing operations are now located in China and Southeast Asia, a typical corporate strategy that has moved manufacturing jobs out of the country and, more significant, out of the areas in which most African Americans live. Providing only low-wage, low-skill service jobs without benefits or security to those black youth able to commute to distant retail outlets, Reebok is typical of a larger pattern of disinvestment in black communities that has prevailed since the 1980s. The shoes sold to young black men retail for prices that often exceed fifty dollars—sometimes three times that—but are physically produced (largely by women) in minimal-wage, sweatshop conditions or subcontracting arrangements to inflate profit margins. These factors are still largely unknown to many consumers. The invisibility of these conditions of production or indeed of any places of manufacture for those consumer goods with which African Americans mark status distinctions makes such rumors more compelling than they might be if African Americans had any role in the goods' manufacture.

Athletic wear has special significance for African American male youth—celebrity sportsmen are role models for many who see their greatest chance for legitimate financial success to lie in professional athletics (Turner 1993:173). Black leaders have accused athletic-wear companies of stoking violence by inspiring lust for expensive goods. In

1990, for example, the Reverend Jesse Jackson urged black consumers to boycott products manufactured by Nike because the company had shown so little corporate responsibility in the black community.[12]

Cigarette companies are also linked in black popular imagination to the KKK. During the 1960s, rumors circulated among African Americans about Kool, a menthol cigarette that was a top brand among black smokers. "By misspelling a word prominent in the folk speech of African-Americans to arrive at the product's name," Turner suggests, the manufacturer set itself up for speculation (1993:98). Today, rumors alleging Klan affiliations are targeted at Marlboro, the phenomenally successful brand controlled by the Philip Morris Corporation. Many blacks claimed that the letters KKK could be found in the logo on the cigarette package (Turner 1993:100). One of Turner's informants recalled a caution received when lighting up a Marlboro:

> The logo design incorporated 3 representations of the letter K. . . . So far is plausible, the final "proof" was that if you tore the bottom of the packet open [in a particular way] . . . there would be revealed the head of a hooded klansman, the two spots, in black and gold, standing for eyeholes. To this was added the "fact" that Philip Morris, in person, was a noted Klan member and financier. . . . Although I personally never heard or saw the story carried in printed sources or on T.V. . . . Marlboro nevertheless stopped using the two spots on their boxes. . . . With the withdrawal of the two spots, this story seems to have died a death, but even so, every now and then somebody will say to Marlboro smokers (there are a lot of us unfortunately), "you shouldn't smoke Marlboro, you know." (Cited in 1993:100)

The three *K*s on the package that supposedly indicate the Ku Klux Klan "signature" and the work in which black consumers engaged to "discover" the Klan's presence in the manufacture of the cigarettes display in particularly graphic fashion the dance of mimicry and alterity at play in the market. Out of the trademarks and logos the corporation disseminated, black consumers constructed the signature of the demonic other — they manufactured marks of alterity in the countertrademarks they created with those offered to them. They detected other authorities behind products that harmed them and did so by evoking the figures that most thoroughly represented their bodily vulnerability in white society.

Philip Morris is not a singular owner of a manufacturing concern but the original English tobacco merchant who achieved success in the

mid–nineteenth century (and was a rather minor player in the global tobacco market until the birth of the Marlboro Man in the 1950s). The American company is now publicly owned by thousands of shareholders. This differentiation of corporate ownership is rarely represented in the commercial marketplace per se, and trade names that incorporate the names of individuals are far more common on packages and in the advertising of goods that consumers encounter. Ownership is much more easily conceptualized in individual terms, and the prevalence of white patriarchs in consumer culture (Colonel Saunders, Orville Redenbacher, Dave Thomas, "Mr. Christie," Frank Purdue) legitimates a misrecognition of personal control over the manufacture and distribution of goods.

The toxicity of tobacco and the dangers of its consumption require little comment; a product with detrimental effects for black bodies might well attract attention. More salient perhaps are historical memories of tobacco harvesting and black exploitation in conditions of forced labor. After emancipation, intimacy with southern tobacco fields continued: "A fancy coffee table book, published in 1979, on the Philip Morris company's commitment to the art world . . . contains several artistically rendered black-and-white photos of African-Americans working in tobacco fields" (Turner 1993:102). Today, black and Hispanic communities are particular targets of tobacco company advertising; as wealthier and more educated Americans stop smoking, cigarette companies aim more and more of their marketing at the poor:

> Much of Harlem looks like a war zone, but the ubiquitous billboards featuring scantily-clad women advertising Kools, Camels, and Virginia Slims and the fully clothed cowboys welcoming all to Marlboro country are bright and shiny. In early 1990, the *New England Journal of Medicine* published the shocking findings that black men in Harlem were less likely to reach the age of 40 than men in Bangladesh. Six of the top seven killers in Harlem are, according to the great weight of medical opinion, tobacco-related or alcohol-related. According to the Centers for Disease Control, cigarettes and alcohol are the two most heavily advertised products in African-American and Latino communities. Indeed, about 90 percent of all cigarette and alcohol billboard advertising in the country is located in these communities. (Barnet and Cavanagh 1994:196–97)

These rumors focus on the racial body and its vulnerability and surveillance in the United States. They remark a suppressed subaltern

truth when they stress the vulnerability of those bodies that American industry has controlled, contained, and ultimately abandoned in conditions of postmodernity. Both Fine and Turner view the rumor as a form of resistance — one of the few weapons of the weak in a society where culture is commodified and controlled from indeterminate places. The "folk idioms of late-twentieth-century life" are potent resources with which black consumers contest "ubiquitous billboards, glossy advertisements, coupons, and television commercials" (Turner 1993:178). Significantly, the modes of discourse with which consumers spread rumors mimic the tactics through which the trademark itself makes its way into daily life, provoking alternative forms of authorship and new sources of authority.

This is particularly evident in the Brooklyn Bottling Company's battle with Klan rumors, which began in 1990. Tropical Fantasy was resisted in communities heavily populated by Caribbean-born blacks and Hispanics (Turner 1993:142). In 1991 young blacks were handing out photocopied flyers reproducing the allegation and authorizing it with "evidence" — an exposé that had supposedly appeared on the television show 20/20. Graffiti artists further perpetuated the rumor: "The *Wall Street Journal* describes this scene: 'A burned-out building covered with graffiti includes the slogan: "Oppressors are not our protectors." Just under the spray-painted warning a chalk-scrawled postscript adds: Tropical Fantasy' " (169).

These anonymous others mimic the mass circulation of the commodity text with whatever means of reproduction are available, authoring alternative versions to the commodified narratives that mass marketing provides, and claim the authority of the mass media to validate their own authorship. Many rumors contain accounts of their own verification — pointing to the media as authenticating the account. The mediums that interpellate us as mass subjects (Warner 1993) operate for America's others as authorities that legitimate their own knowledge of their perceived bodily excess and real corporeal vulnerability. Nationally syndicated news and entertainment shows appear to be the vehicles of choice. As one of Patricia Turner's African American students put it: "Oh well, I guess that's like what they say about eating at Church's Chicken — you know the Klan owns it and they do something to the chicken so that when black men eat there they become sterile. Except that I guess it isn't really like the one about the Kentucky Fried Rat because it is true about Church's. I know because a friend of mine saw the story on '60 Minutes' " (1993:84). In

response to the Tropical Fantasy rumor, corporate authorities sanctioned alternative forms of authority — black authorities — to validate their own benign intentions; they sought black authorship, provided black employment, and publicly recognized the specificities of their consumer base:

While the most potent folklore genres of the postindustrial age — rumor, graffiti, Xeroxlore — were being put to work to spread the notion that Tropical Fantasy was a KKK-inspired aphrodisiac, the company fought back with all the standard damage-control tools. They had their products tested by the FDA and made the results public; they hired a truck to drive around black neighborhoods with a billboard denying the KKK allegation; they hired a black public relations team to propose strategies by which they could reclaim their customer base. Individuals respected in the black community were enlisted for the campaign. The mayor of New York, African-American David Dinkins, guzzled the soda on television; community clergymen denounced the rumor. (169–70)

Like the Procter & Gamble rumor, these anonymous appropriations had the effect of pulling invisible companies into the public limelight. Rumors may provoke corporations to renounce their lack of public presence and make political commitments. Procter & Gamble, whose implicit motto is that cleanliness is next to Godliness (its products are marketed with biblical referents), may have been compelled only to reaffirm its advertising commitments to purity, cleanliness, and light against the forces of evil, filth, and darkness. Troop Sport, Reebok, and the Brooklyn Bottling Company, however, were pushed into overt political engagement, solidarity, and connection with African American communities and concerns.[13]

Like Fine, Turner does not explore the pervasive significance of trademarks, brands, or trade names in rumors concerning corporate-controlled, antiblack conspiracies that threaten black bodies and the fate of the black race. Although she recognizes them as features of "modern motifs" or indicia of "contemporary legends" (1993:5), we are not told what is peculiarly modern about them. I would suggest instead that they are postmodern phenomena, peculiar to late capitalist, post-Fordist, or "postindustrial" conditions.[14] Trademarks promise a unique source of origin for mass-produced goods of identical appearance, but this site can be traced in postindustrial societies only with great difficulty. The brand name or trademark floats mysteri-

ously — a corporate signature endlessly reproduced by mechanical means, it marks an invisible and imaginary moment of manufacture — conjuring a source of origin while it magically garners goodwill for its invisible author.

Rumor campaigns such as those directed at Procter & Gamble, Church's, Reebok, Philip Morris, and Troop Sport must be understood in the context of a consumption society in which corporate power maintains silence and invisibility behind a play of media signifiers without referents, a circulation of signs without meanings. In a world in which the presence of power lies increasingly in the realm of the imaginary, such rumors may be understood as cultural guerrilla tactics — "political" in their significance, if not in their self-consciousness. As Bhabha phrases it, "What articulates these sites of cultural difference and social antagonism, in the absence of the validity of interpretation, is a discourse of panic that suggests that psychic affect and social fantasy are potent forms of political identity and agency for guerilla warfare" (1994:203).

The nature of signifying power influences the form of the appropriations it engenders. Arguably, such rumors constitute a "counterterrorism" of sorts to the "terror" of postmodern hyperreality. If the "terror" of hyperreality[15] lies in its anonymity, its fleetingness, its dearth of meaning and excess of fascination, then it is not surprising that it provokes "counterterrorist" tactics that have the same characteristics. It constitutes an "alter" in its own seductive image.[16] As social psychologist Frederick Koenig puts it, "Next to an act of terrorism, what corporations fear most is that they may be targeted with an outlandish tall tale" (cited in Turner 1993:166). The rumor campaign seems to have the same superficial senselessness and indeterminacy as the media that it combats, into which it simultaneously insinuates itself.

These rumors concomitantly challenge visions of the masses as silent majorities capable only of passive yes/no signals in response to power, while they add more subtlety and dimension to claims that people are capable only of making arbitrary and ineffective connections among floating signifiers. Faced with only the signifier, people construct a signified; in a world of empty signification, people may invest their own meanings. The connections people make may well be arbitrary, they may even be absurd, but the massive investments that manufacturers make to counter their influence suggest that they are hardly ineffective.

Finally, these rumors indicate popular refusal of a dominant cultural logic that replaces exchange value with sign value to the extent that even the memory of use value is lost. To put this more succinctly, as manufacturers erase and obscure all traces of production through their investments in decontextualized media signifiers, they encounter consumers determined to reembed these signifiers in myths of origin or narratives of production. These narratives bespeak an anxiety about the abstraction of symbols from lifeworlds and the invisibility of production relations in Western societies, giving voice to a profound suspicion of corporate power and its contemporary lack of place.

NOTES

1   I should make it clear at the outset that I don't believe it is possible to adopt the position of a detached observer who studies practices of rumor. In a mass-mediated society and culture, the practices involved in spreading a rumor, reporting it, commenting on it, and analyzing it necessarily collapse into one another, as they do here.

2   The term "postindustrial" must be approached with great caution — the idea that we occupy a "postindustrial" culture is part of an ideological structure that denies the industrial work being done "out of sight." Good criticisms of some usages of the term are provided in Kester 1993 and Lazarus 1991. I employ it here to refer to a felt sense of industrial production's disappearance and its cultural manifestations.

3   Barnet and Cavanagh 1994:197, 221. Since 1991 its advertising expenditures have been exceeded by Philip Morris, the tobacco giant of Marlboro Man fame, who acquired General Foods and Kraft and with them a roster of famous trademarks — Jell-O, Kool-Aid, SOS, Maxwell House, Cheez Whiz, and Miracle Whip — and is now the single largest advertiser in the world. By acquiring General Foods and Kraft, Philip Morris now controls about 10 percent of all food products in U.S. supermarkets. With relationships with 165 banks, over $19 billion was available overnight to accomplish the hostile takeover of Kraft. Philip Morris accountant Storr refers to himself as a shaman: "At a meeting in Nigeria for senior managers, he put on an African mask and waved a wooden snake to make a point. He knows that when he telephones for money, he is

certain to get it because his request is backed by the full faith and credit of the Marlboro Man" (Barnet and Cavanagh 1994:229).

4   Fine suggests that even though the trademarks belonging to Procter & Gamble were unknown, rumors suggesting that the company was controlled by Satanists, a witches' coven, or the Unification Church were believed because "the psychological dominance of the corporation as a whole made such beliefs credible. . . . Such rumors need not be grounded in knowledge, but only in general emotions about the corporation" (1985:72). This begs the question of how a company becomes "psychologically dominant" and ignores the very signifier around which the rumor circulated—the medieval stylization and religious resonance of the logo of the moon and stars, which no doubt suggested an association with the devil, witches, and "Moonies" in a fashion that a more streamlined or modern logo would not.

5   The company hired detectives from Pinkerton and Wackenhut to track down rumormongers, instituted lawsuits against rival Amway distributors who were alleged to be spreading the story, and in Canada enlisted provincial police in its efforts to track down producers of flyers disseminating the story.

6   Threats to a company's public image are necessarily based on perceptions of perceptions and therefore cannot be measured in quantitative terms. Press surveys for the 1980s, however, indicate that the rumor campaign received more press coverage than did Procter & Gamble's other difficulties and suggest that its public relations department devoted more energy and resources to deflecting the rumor publicly than to meeting other challenges simultaneously faced by the company.

7   According to Fine: "Some companies so dominate their product areas that their names are almost generic. We refer to Xerox machines rather than copiers, Jell-O rather than flavored gelatin, Kleenex rather than facial tissues, or Oreos rather than sugar cream sandwiched between two chocolate wafers. People use these names even when they refer to other brands because these corporate names symbolize the products. In legends and rumors dealing with these products ('Xerox machines cause cancer') we use the corporate name without necessarily claiming that the corporation named is the only corporation involved. When informants talk about 'Jell-O' hardening into rubber and being indigestible, the target of the story may not be General Foods. However, the mention of such corporate names reflects psychological dominance. If asked directly which corporation was involved, informants typically confirmed that it was the corporate leader even though the source for the account might have used the product reference generically" (1985:71).

Fine does not explore the possibility that there may be social significance to and distinctions made between the name of the corporation, a legally protected trade name (which may also be the name of the corporation), a brand name legally protected as a trademark, and the product itself, conflating all these when he decides "for ease of reference" to "use 'corporation' to refer to corporations and products" (71). Thus it becomes impossible to determine whether specific rumors manifest distrust of known corporations, surround

trademarks of especial renown in their own right (through advertising, for example), attach to brand names known to have particular corporate owners, or are associated with especially popular products that are most easily referred to by a mark that is becoming generic (for a discussion of the fear of "genericide" and its cultural consequence, see Coombe 1997). It is difficult for Fine to explain why in the anxiety surrounding certain technological innovations (e.g., microwave ovens) rumors do not attach to a certain manufacturer or any particular brand name but to the product itself, whereas with others (e.g., soft bubble gum), a brand name (Bubble Yum) figures prominently (except to suggest that perhaps in the microwave field no one brand is publicly perceived as dominant, whereas in the bubble gum field, the new brand became the bestseller—but we have no way of knowing if members of the rumormongering public were aware of this). Only by examining the particular products, their consumers, and the corporate marketing strategies that accompanied their introduction into the market would any rationale emerge. To the extent that children form the penny candy market and are perhaps the most mystified segment of the consuming population—when it comes to recognizing and distinguishing corporate ownership, production processes, marketing strategies, trademarks, and the products to which they refer—their rumors are likely to name products exclusively by trademark (Pop Rocks and Bubble Yum are examples Fine cites).

8   The ideal of a singular public sphere for civil society has come under much critical scrutiny. In the context of a discussion of the possibility of a black public sphere, Steven Gregory (1994) evokes Nancy Fraser: "Fraser notes that members of subordinated groups, such as women, people of color, lesbians and gays have found it politically important to constitute alternative, or 'subaltern counterpublics'; that is, parallel discursive arenas where those excluded from dominant discourses, invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs. The proliferation of such counterpublics allows issues that were previously shielded from contestation to be publicly argued. . . . The presence of a counterpublic can direct attention to the public arenas where micro-level discursive interactions are shaped by wider institutional power arrangements and discourses" (153).

Although Gregory clearly has a more articulate and rational discussion in mind, a counterdiscourse is no more likely to adopt a rationalist tone than the discourses it counters. Hence, in the case of the subaltern practices I discuss, the rumor adopts a mode of address and circulation that simultaneously mimics and disrupts the mass-market media significations to which it indirectly responds.

9   My use of mimesis and alterity as related to moments of alleged "first contact" and what might be deemed the phenomenology of primitivism draws extensively from Taussig 1993. For a longer discussion of Taussig's theory of mimesis and alterity and its relevance for considering the cultural power of trademarks, see Coombe 1996.

10 I am grateful to Kathleen Pirrie Adams for her insights into this issue and for helping to give linguistic shape to my inchoate sense of rage on learning of the Klan's purported involvement in the marketing of these goods.

11 Margaret Russell (1992) describes how California police use certain brand-name clothing to target minority youth. They are seen as de facto indicators of gang status in "gang profiles" that are used to justify the harassment, interrogation, and detainment of minority youth and as grounds for denying Latinos and Afro-Americans entry into public amusement parks or ejecting them if they are inadvertently admitted.

12 According to Patricia Turner: "Although African-American consumers purchase 30 percent of all Nike shoes, blacks had no Nike executive positions, no subcontracting arrangements, and no seats on the company's board of directors; moreover, the footwear giant did not advertise with black-owned media outlets. With the possible exception of such celebrity spokesmen as film director Spike Lee and basketball superstar Michael Jordan, both of whom received large sums in exchange for product endorsements, Nike simply was not sharing its profits with blacks" (1993:20).

13 However cynically one might view the support that tobacco companies give to African American causes, there is little doubt that such corporate donations to community public interest groups are much needed and appreciated.

14 For further discussion of the role of the trademark in the configuration of African and African American identities and the politics of the black public sphere in globalizing conditions, see Coombe and Stoller 1995.

15 The concept of hyperreality as developed by Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco is ably summarized in Woolley 1992:190–210.

16 The concept of the seduction used here is drawn from Baudrillard 1988b:149.

Bombs, Bikinis, and the Popes of Rock 'n' Roll: Reflections on Resistance, the Play of Subordinations, and Liberalism in Andalusia and Academia, 1983–1995

RICHARD MADDOX

RESISTANCE IN ACADEMIA AND ANDALUSIA

In 1986 and 1987, there was much concern with the topic of resistance within a segment of the anthropological community. In the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University, for example, it seemed that whenever graduate students and junior faculty members met, they talked about struggle and domination and the tactics of resistance that people employ in the affairs of daily life. That this was not merely or primarily a local concern was brought home to me when a group of visiting anthropologists, some of whom were seeking jobs, gave a series of guest lectures that either referred to or directly focused on how people in subordinate positions managed to oppose and evade the predations of higher powers.[1] At the time, I too was much engaged by the topic of resistance. I was completing an ethnohistorical dissertation on tradition and hegemonic processes in Aracena, a hill town of sixty-five hundred people in southwestern Spain, and was confronted with the problem of how to describe the ways in which townspeople had responded to the political, economic, and cultural liberalizations that had occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, during the transition from the Franco dictatorship to parliamentary democracy. Resistance, I hoped, would be one of the keys to organizing my account of what had been occurring in Aracena.

Unfortunately, though, the talks by visiting anthropologists were more perplexing than helpful. Although, in my view, they demonstrated a laudable zeal to uncover seeds of hope and traces of freedom in the mundane business of daily life, they often seemed to join to-