InVisible Culture

Finding Space for Resistant Subcultures

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This paper is a preliminary attempt to come to terms theoretically with empirical research findings drawn from distinctly different socio-spatial and historical contexts, but that seem similarly inexplicable through conventional theorization of power and resistance. Specifically, both authors, in the context of our separate research programs, have encountered practices of resistance that are "off-kilter" both to accepted readings of resistance, and to the fields of power within which those practices exist. We address this theoretical and material slippage in three ways. First, we draw from Scott’s treatment of everyday resistance, Foucault’s notion of "agonism" and de Certeau's discussion of "la perruque," to discuss what we wish to describe as off-kilter resistance: those - often ambiguous - practices that productively circumvent power, rather than actively opposing it.

Second, we use the concept of "Third Space" to theoretically and descriptively situate practices of off-kilter and directly oppositional resistance within the contingencies of their historical and geographical contexts. Third, we develop brief examples from our empirical projects - in late-twentieth century northern Pakistan, and mid-nineteenth century central Ontario - to illustrate the heuristic value of the concepts of "off-kilter resistance" and "Third Space" for understanding the resistant practices of subordinate sub-cultures.

Off-Kilter Resistance

Over the past two decades considerable debate has raged across the social sciences and humanities concerning the nature of the relationship between power and resistance. A crucial aspect of this debate has been the polarization of two seemingly antipodal theoretical positionings regarding the proper focus for resistance studies: struggle geared specifically towards transcendental social change on one hand, or everyday forms of evading the effects of power on the other. Each of these positions falls into the trap of reifying a false distinction between positions of power and resistance. Our starting point is to suggest a theoretical location that occupies the space between these two poles. Following Foucault, we maintain that power and resistance are ontologically inseparable, that they exist as conditions of possibility each for the other. Power relations are "not a binary structure with dominators on one side and dominated on the other; but rather a multiform production of relations which are partially susceptible to integration in overall strategies."

Supposedly separate realms of power and resistance are more productively understood as mutually-constituted parts of the fluidity, play, or ambiguity of social life. Neither transcendental social action nor everyday practices of evasion can claim a privileged
existence autonomous from power. In short, there are no programs or routes of resistance that can deliver complete or final liberty from power. There are several reasons for this. First, there is no guarantee that any particular act or group of actions will meet with desired results. Wendt, for example, suggests that certain types of oppositional tactics play into strategies of panoptic power by heightening awareness of transgressed boundaries. Second, there is no assurance that the ends achieved by resistant actions will be progressive. A newly defined social regime may prove every bit as oppressive as what it replaces -- though perhaps the instruments and modalities of power it displays will vary. Third, because power and resistance overlap in multiple ways, extrication from one point in a web of power may lead to implication in other, not yet recognized, forms of oppression. Fourth, short term successes are always vulnerable to being co-opted or appropriated by dominant groups.

Thus, there appears, quite literally, to be little space for resistance. Indeed, power must be conceived as "co-extensive with the social body." As Thiele claims, "we may change our positions on the web [of power], but there is no jumping off." But if there are no apparent gaps or fissures through which liberty may be gained, why do subordinate groups continue to resist, to practice a "hopeful hopelessness"? As Scott argues, the relevant question is not why subaltern groups have failed to resist (as in theories of false consciousness), but rather, why - in concrete, historical terms - they have resisted so continuously, and against all odds. Foucault's reading of the Nietzschian concept of "agonism" helps to answer that question by asserting that often the realistic objective of struggle is not some final freedom or liberty, but merely (and yet, significantly) the continued ability to struggle itself, to reproduce the conditions - the space - that make struggle possible. The concept of agonal struggle concedes that there is no potential for complete removal from a field of power relations, but there is the realistic hope of creative and partial liberation from particular, local strategies of power recognized as especially constraining: a conceptualization that insists on subordinates' ability to recognize power relations (at least at certain points) and to act creatively towards them. In a similar vein, Wendt stresses the significance of "fighting not to win, but to fight again." In the case of riots, for example, "perhaps just the idea that the statement was possible and can be made again, at any time, is enough to make certain riots locally effective." In short, a recognition of the continuous opportunity for modest forms of local resistance is more important than the illusion of some final emancipatory space, the inaccessibility of which may serve only to insinuate a "pessimistic inaction." Resistance exists only as practice, and only in relation to the multiple and/or overlapping realms of power that it engages.
But what are the characteristics of these modest, local forms of resistance? First, and well-documented, are more-or-less directly oppositional practices. These require little elaboration here. Second, and more interesting for our purposes, are practices that manage to disrupt or partially subvert local conditions of domination or oppression, without aligning themselves in opposition to those conditions; what are well-described as practices of "off-kilter resistance." Again our starting point is Foucault, who theorizes power as coincidentally oppressive and enabling, constraining and productive. Foucault states it plainly:

[What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, produces discourse. It needs to be constructed as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repressive.]

Although the exercise of power is most recognizable in its oppressive form, in order to function effectively it must also allow for the exercise of some productive choice and/or capability.

Power's productive or enabling character has important implications for understanding resistance. Too often the term resistance connotes a "mechanical metaphor of solid bodies coming into contact." But if power is at once productive and oppressive there is, necessarily, some room for creative, non-conforming application of the socio-cultural rules and resources that it produces: resistance as a struggle for, and not only a struggle against. To limit our conceptualization of resistance to that which is confrontational or direct is to deny the more nuanced and creative ways in which subordinate peoples engage power. As O'Hanlon argues, there is no single or autonomous subject position from which resistance emerges to confront the specter of power in its various guises. Rather, in the course of living lives within the context of multi-textured and overlapping realms of power, people artfully consume and use resources; the more meager the available resources, the more artfully they are likely to be consumed and employed. De Certeau develops a similar conceptualization in his discussion of la perruque (or the wig), which he describes as "a worker's own work disguised as work for his employer." He contends:

The actual order of things is precisely what "popular" tactics turn to their own ends, without any illusion that it will change anytime soon. Though elsewhere it is exploited by a dominant power or simply denied by ideological discourses, here order is tricked by an art. Into the institution to be served are thus insinuated
styles of social exchange, technical invention, and moral resistance, that is an economy of the "gift" (generosities for which one expects a return), an esthetics of "tricks" (artist's operations) and an ethics of "tenacity" (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning or a fatality.)  

As de Certeau suggests, resistance is often directed tangentially - or off-kilter - to specific exercises of power. Off-kilter resistance recognizes the repressive dimensions of power, while coding and poaching power's productive dimensions in ways that allow the partial construction of alternative socio-cultural worlds. While we would argue that off-kilter resistance can take almost innumerable forms, a brief description of five overlapping "characteristic types" may help convey what we mean by the term.

First, off-kilter resistance exists in the creation of discourses that step around authorized readings of both power and resistances to imagine and describe alternative, contrapuntal socio-cultural realms that do not deny authorized discourses, but rather disrupt them through supplementation. These alternative imaginaries hover around dominant discourses as "discursive ghosts" that continually haunt the ostensible authority of power, and may lead to the generation of new inter-subjective positionings. This sort of discursive haunting represents an agonal struggle for those whose more directly adversarial options are limited.

Second, subordinates, in their day-to-day familiarity with the workings of power, recognize its different modes of operation (i.e., domination, coercion, seduction, oppression, repression, persuasion, authority, etc.), and often respond to one mode by recourse to another. This may shift the terrain of interaction to a site that is more advantageous to the contingencies of a particular group of subordinates at a particular locale. For example, an exercise of exclusionary oppression within a set of labour relations may never be directly addressed in the work place itself, but rather through a tangential, and ostensibly purely aesthetic, musical response (e.g., reggae music).

Third, subordinates often adopt an agonal stance based in the certainty that despite appearances to the contrary, vigilance and alertness to the opportunity for resistance in some form is always necessary. Subjects are constituted in ways that are always open to safe opportunities for direct resistance ("no!," often in the form of kynicism, or flagrant meta-statement), or for the creation of a real or ideational alternative (no discernible answer, or "yes... but"). Agonal resistance is reliant on flexibility, creativeness, and cunning. As a result, its effectiveness may be compromised if it becomes ossified into a "knee-jerk" reaction of unthinking negation.
Fourth, off-kilter resistances may be manifest in a continuous tentativeness; the lack of any strongly-voiced statements, or definite platforms, or arguments made strongly enough to seem definitive. This reflects the creativity, tentativeness, and sensitivity to opportunity that is characteristic of everyday resistance in general. But it also suggests that such tactics are not reliable. In other words, there are no guarantees that a particular tactic will work - or work the same way - twice.

Fifth, at the thin edge of off-kilter resistance lurk those acts of accommodation to the powerful designed, but not advertised, to elicit some form of (possibly deferred) repayment. Here, it is the cynical and opportunistic practice of building up a store of "slack" that is important both for the resister, and for attempts to negotiate a theoretical relationship between accommodation and resistance.

It is evident from these five characteristics that what we term off-kilter resistance aims less at inverting or antagonizing existing domains of power than it does at hybridizing them, perhaps introducing new planes of instability, new ways of "making do," new combinations of sociality, and among the powerful, unexpected experiences of self-reflexive doubt. As Stallybrass and White argue: "[hybridization] therefore generates the possibility of shifting the very terms of the system itself, by erasing and interrogating the relationships that constitute it." Many practices of off-kilter resistance - like resistance in general - are likely to be most productive if they become cultural property, and thus operate from within a subcultural site of mutuality. Indeed, such practices may be an important component of subcultural identity. Pred's notion of biography formation is useful here. He argues that individual lives are bound into historically and spatially contingent interactions that serve to constitute and reproduce partially-shared knowledge, experience, values, and assumptions. Sub-cultural groups develop as similar biographies emerge from these shared interactions and overlapping lifeworlds. The wider textual community of the sub-culture is both constitutive of, and constituted through, practices of resistance: "Suffering from the same humiliations or, worse, subject to the same terms of subordination, [the radically subordinated] have shared interest in jointly creating a discourse of dignity, of negation, of justice." It is worth recognising, therefore, that to operate effectively as sub-cultural (and not merely individual) practices, non-hegemonic discourses and practices of resistance are subject to discipline from within the sub-cultural textual community. Off-kilter forms of resistance, in particular, may be efforts to confuse/disrupt - without negating - this requirement to conform to the sub-culture, as much as they are efforts to confuse/disrupt the larger field of
domination. To the extent that the sub-culture may nurture these off-kilter forms, off-kilter resistance becomes a sort of conforming non-conformity in its stance towards external domination, and a sort of non-conforming conformity in its stance towards internal discipline.

The mutuality of oppressed peoples, the creation and maintenance of resistant discourse, and the infrapolitics of subcultural groups are all bound to spatiality: material spaces are co-opted, appropriated, or borrowed; symbolic landscapes are subverted, recoded, or purposefully "misread." It is possible, therefore, to imagine landscapes of resistance. The attempt to identify and name these social-spatial sites, however, often relies on the conceptualization of a sharply bifurcated social world where the powerful and subordinate occupy mutually exclusive spaces. While this may facilitate a progressive theorization of the geography of power relationships (depending, as it does, on the agency of the oppressed to win or carve out spaces from the grip of the powerful) it once again reproduces a familiar dualism: a dualism that precludes the more subtle and, perhaps, less confrontational uses of space associated with off-kilter resistances. In the next section we introduce the concept of "Third Space" as a way to imagine a less dualistic way to understand the spatiality of power and resistance.

**Third Spaces of Resistance**

As we suggested earlier, resistance exists only in the micro-realm of practice, and is therefore constituted wholly in and through the immediacies of time and space. The tangible, material world of the local is, in many ways, "ideology made manifest," and as such, is the immediate focus of resistance. Any fruitful understanding of resistance - off-kilter or directly oppositional - requires attention to this contingent spatiality of social life. Bhabha's notion of "Third Space" provides a fruitful avenue to begin exploring the spatiality of power and resistance, without falling into the reductionism of imagining "pure" spaces of resistance. Bhabha, in a discussion of the ambiguity of socio-cultural forms, states:

> [I]t is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.

Elsewhere, he forges a vague link between resistance and this Third Space, by suggesting that "the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different,
something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." Third Space is "...that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness."

Pile builds from Bhabha to imagine Third Space as an epistemological terrain for interrogating those foundational dualisms that he thinks underpin the social constitution and policing of rigidly bounded cultural identities (e.g. man/woman, rational/irrational, white/non-white), and that underwrite the naturalization of domination and subordination. Still using Third Space in a largely, although not entirely, metaphorical sense, Pile suggests that "this space is a location for knowledge, which elaborates the 'grounds of dissimilarity' on which dualisms are based, acknowledges that there are spaces beyond dualisms, and accepts that this Third Space itself is ‘continually fragmented, fractured, incomplete, uncertain, and the site of struggles for meaning and representation’. The concept of Third Space thus allows Pile to imagine "a politics of location which recognizes the 'social construction of dualisms as part of the problem', as well as 'places beyond the grounds of dissimilarity - collectively named the Third Space'."

As elucidated by Bhabha and Pile, "Third Space" is both a significant ontological category - all spaces are Third Spaces and should be theorized as such - and a descriptor for particular spaces that have been produced from particular types of discourses and social interactions. The first use of the term suggests a general Third Space sensibility, which we think is highly commensurate with our conceptualization of resistance as comprised of hybridized, ambiguous, cautious, and often somewhat accommodative local practices. We wish to focus here, however, on the second way to use the concept, and assert boldly what remains largely implied in Pile and Bhabha: that the deliberate construction of Third Spaces is a strategy particularly amenable to the circumstances of the radically disempowered - those condemned by their location in a field of power to struggle, not to win, but merely to fight another day. If the Third Space is a space of "ambivalence and not fixity of the construction of identity," continually "fragmented, fractured, incomplete, uncertain," then it is also perhaps a space highly commensurate with agonism, that lifestyle of continuous and opportunistic resistance, focused on chances to exploit the ambiguities of power, to disrupt subjectifying dualisms, to "pursue games of power... played with a minimum of domination."

This suggests that the characteristics of actual Third Spaces may be most amenable to what we might term "off-kilter," rather than directly oppositional, forms of resistance;
those that are directed "at an angle" to specific exercises of power. The ambiguous nature of Third Spaces may allow resistance to construct or utilise discursive terrains beyond dualisms. At the same time, however, we think a Third Space sensibility can allow the radically disempowered to discursively reconstruct actual spaces in ways that allow them to engage more productively in directly oppositional resistance. The first of the examples presented below - from northern Pakistan - illustrates briefly how practices of off-kilter resistance can both create and exploit an actual Third Space. The second example - from nineteenth century Ontario - describes a Third Space of more-or-less directly oppositional resistance into which practices of off-kilter resistance were also tactically insinuated.

**Third Space and Off-Kilter Resistance**

The village of Shimshal is located at an elevation of 3000m in the Karakoram mountains of Northern Pakistan, about two days' walk from the nearest road. Shimshalis are mainly subsistence farmers and herders. The community also earns considerable money from portering; mainly from carrying tourists' luggage from the Karakoram Highway along a well-worn trail to the village. This, of course, involves Shimshalis in a highly exploitive labour relation, inextricably entwined with several other "faces of oppression": powerlessness, marginalization, cultural imperialism and violence. The practice of these various modalities of oppression is embedded in and constituted through the long and winding space of the trail; specifically, where porters carry trekkers and their loads across streams, where they bring trekkers hot tea at the end of a long climb, where they abandon their own travellers' shelters to trekkers weary of sleeping in tents, where they assemble as supplicants hoping to be hired, where they line up to be paid.

If we follow Pile's assertion that 'Third Spaces" are places to some extent beyond dualisms, places which transcend the grounds of dissimilarity, then we can imagine the space of the trail as a Third Space - a space that has long been both local and global - as well as a liminal space between the local and the global, the inside and the outside, the indigenous and the metropolitan. Neither the trekker in search of an authentic experience, nor the villager reliant on portering income, desires to constitute this trail as either purely local or purely global space. But, imposed on this "space beyond" one set of dualisms, is a highly dualistic labour relation, which in various ways constructs one party as brown, beast, servant, ahistorical, natural, and the other as white, beast-master, master, historical, social.
At least occasionally, Shimshali porters engage in tactics to utilise the Third Space of the trail to introduce some ambiguities into the fixed, naturalised, and dualistic identities of the parties in the labour relation. They use - and reproduce - the characteristics of Third Space in order to engage in the off-kilter resistance of those condemned by their location in a field of power to struggle, not to win, but merely to fight another day. For Shimshalis, the useful characteristics of the trail as Third Space are that it enforces a spatial proximity, and imposes a shared task (of getting people and baggage from one end of it to the other), between local employee and Western employer. To borrow from Hägerstrands’s “time geography,” the trail embroils trekkers and porters temporarily in a similar set of "stations," "paths" and "projects." This has two benefits. First, it enables (sometimes requires) porters to communicate directly with tourists, often against the explicit instructions of guides and village elders, who fear any loss of control over the labour relation. Second, the sense of comradeship engendered by sharing stations, paths and projects provides an opening for porters to insinuate their own interpretations of the landscape and of the trek into the tourists' emerging discourse of the trek. Specifically, those numerous porters who speak some English engage trekkers in conversations that rehearse Shimshal’s pre-colonial history, emphasize the community’s subordinate position within a contemporary set of global and regional interactions, enumerate Shimshal’s unfortunate experience of a history of colonial exploration in the region, and link the tourists' own histories and activities with these ostensibly distanced (in time and space) processes. Because these conversations occur on the trail and at resting spots - while porters are portering, and tourists are touring - they can be illustrated with gestures toward the landscape, and with implicit reference to the material practices enacted in the trek. Trekkers, for the most part, are pleased to be privy to such interpretations, which prove they are having an "authentic experience," a meaningful relationship with the "other." Some trekkers at least, are also unnerved to discover that their own histories of colonizing are Shimshal's history of being colonized, and that these histories are being recreated before their eyes, and with their complicity, in the liminal space of the trail. Crueler still, trekkers discover there is little they can do about it. They are simply unable to carry all their own baggage or make their own tea, and porters insist - emphatically - on carrying them across streams and providing a hundred other small services that imprint the legacy of colonial exploration on the trekking experience. The dilemma that porters thereby insinuate into the Third Space of the trail is rendered even less resolvable by the question that inevitably arises: "in any case, what would be gained by denying Shimshalis the opportunity to earn money from providing these services?" The porters clearly do not want that either.
Shimshali porters are giving tourists what they want: direct and meaningful interaction with the "natives," access to "native authenticity," and a chance to conspire with the "real" locals against efforts by "Westernized" guides and village elites to prevent transcultural interaction. At the same time, however, porters are refiguring tourists' experiences of the trek and their understandings of the trail. Doubt, unease, hesitation, a sense of complicity, even guilt, have become part of the trek, and the cost of the much-sought "authentic" interaction.

This is off-kilter resistance, which directly opposes nothing, but which nevertheless exploits the ambiguities and opportunities of a Third Space, in order to insinuate two opposing, naturalized identities into a common discourse. It is an example, we think, of how the ambiguous nature of an actual Third Space may allow resistances - especially those directed "at an angle" to specific exercises of power - to construct or utilize discursive terrain beyond dualisms. It may not seem like Shimshalis have resisted much, or gained much, through the practices described here. That is one of the hallmarks of off-kilter resistance: it is not designed for posterity. But the discomfiture tourists experience as a result has its benefits for Shimshali porters: their enjoyment of that discomfiture; the material benefits (in terms of wages, tips, lighter loads, gifts, reference letters) of working for "softened-up" employers; and their satisfaction in the knowledge that tourists' discursive appropriation of the landscape has not been complete. In this case, the agonal effect of off-kilter resistance is simply to avoid being written out of the discourse.

**Third Spaces and Direct Confrontation**

The landscapes of a Mississauga reserve in Alnwick township, Ontario (from 1837 to 1876) were, most obviously, rife with symbols of the ever more intrusive forms of acculturation/assimilation policies of colonial, and later, federal governments. The mission compound, the church, and the manual labour school made up the physical and ideological centre of the reserve. Rectilinear lots, symbolizing individual labour and private occupancy of land stretched away from this core along a carefully surveyed main thoroughfare. In this context, the Mississaugas were faced with a comprehensive reorientation of material and cosmographical worlds.

More interesting, was that there was no single response from the Mississaugas to these incursions of power. Some accommodated cultural change, though on their own terms. Others openly rejected the reserve and all that implied by leaving for good or for months at a time. Still others demonstrated their resistance through what was identified as chronic "bad behaviour" (viz. indolence, drunkenness, immorality,
religious "backsliding," and prostitution). This latter group is perhaps the most significant.

Because these socially peripheral activities were so symbolically charged, detailed reportage of their occurrences became a common feature of correspondence emanating from the reserve. Interpretation of this latter set of actions seemed fairly straightforward -- this was clearly oppositional behaviour. Also seemingly clear was that this group of Mississaugas were able to work the Third Spaces of the reserve to their advantage. On one hand the public spaces of the reserve bespoke the inability to gain liberty from the Indian Department and the Euro-Canadian world that had so completely enveloped the community. But on the other, this group of Mississaugas were able to insinuate, by briefly appropriating the central spaces of the reserve, an alternative discourse that highlighted the cracks and fissures in ostensibly ironclad control of the community: neither the band council nor the Indian agent (representative of the federal department responsible for governing Native communities) were able to enforce punitive sanctions against them with any kind of consistency. Eventually, the more disruptive, and in their terms, the more successful they became, the less transparent the apparition of planned and all-encompassing control became. There is, for example, good evidence to suggest that the openly contentious Mississaugas were eventually able to use the introduced promiscuity of public spaces to recruit others to their cause.

But, complicating interpretation greatly is that these peoples also embraced the machinery of power structures and used them to their advantage where possible. As a best example, the openly resistant Mississaugas were instrumental in supporting a proposed relocation of the reserve far to the north in 1868-- in effect supporting Indian Department decisions and opposing the greater portion of their community. Support of the Indian Department was, however, off-kilter to institutional agendas. Removal would provide benefits. First, the new reserve would be in an ecological niche (the Canadian shield) that would barely, if at all, support agriculture. But it was also in a territory that was as yet free of Euro-Canadian settlers and full of game animals and therefore suited to support a lifestyle seemingly favoured by this group. It was also further away from population centres and thereby could provide a modicum of freedom from constant surveillance. Second, removal would also provide the means to rid themselves of those Mississaugas who, at least in part, advocated an assimilationist discourse. Newly emerging Indian policy even provided them the means to do so. Many of the pro-accluration Mississaugas had no desire to move, and especially not to such a difficult location. But by suggesting recourse to new and highly unpopular legislation designed
to promote assimilation, the dissenting Mississaugas tried to effect the enfranchisement of these individuals, a move that would allow/force them to stay behind and thereby also effectively remove them from the community and from the positions of relative power that they held. In this case, the power relationships often openly challenged by the dissenting Mississaugas became the cornerstone of the resistance effort. The Mississaugas needed the reserve and all it stood for: the continued sponsorship and aid afforded by the Indian Department, and protection from unscrupulous white settlers.

Clearly, the group of dissenting Mississaugas had adopted an agonal persona -- the documentary record suggests that they used almost any community issue to draw attention to resistant discourse and were able to use the contexts of power in both oppositional and off-kilter tactics. Furthermore, the strategies they employed were never intended to free them from the Indian Department, but, perhaps, to create the opportunities for further resistance. And, they were also able to make use of the ambiguities afforded by Third Spaces as part of this ongoing resistance. The fleeting control they could exert over the public spaces of the reserve were often enough to disrupt the seemingly fixed bureaucratic, and distant, control of the community. Directly oppositional resistance was complemented by off-kilter tactics. Together, they confronted the Indian Department with the unsettling experience of being simultaneously challenged, ignored, accommodated, and courted.

**Conclusion**

Resistance theorists, in their preoccupation with delineating what should count as resistance - or at least, what sorts of resistance are worth studying - have concentrated on two increasingly reified and separated categories of directly oppositional struggle: transcendental social action (often revolutionary), and those often anonymous, disguised, opportunistic, cautious, compromised, and largely unorganized, oppositional micro-practices conventionally described as everyday (or protean) resistance. While examinations of everyday resistance tend to be more sensitive to the ambiguities of the relationship between power and resistance than are studies of revolutionary resistance, neither typification can easily incorporate an analysis of the sorts of survival tactics commonly employed by the subaltern subjects of our empirical work - nineteenth century Mississauga Indians in Ontario, and late-twentieth century trekking porters in northern Pakistan - or, we suspect, many other subaltern populations. These groups have had little hope of finding a pure space (either physical or discursive) outside the field of power in which they are situated, from which to launch a direct
oppositional assault on those powers that dominate or oppress them. Rather, the physical and discursive context of these -and, we argue, most other - populations may be best described using the term "Third Space": a physical and discursive terrain that is "continually fragmented, fractured, incomplete, uncertain, and the site of struggles for meaning and representation." All spaces are, in varying degrees, Third Spaces. Subordinated groups often work actively (as in the case of our empirical examples) to nurture the Third Space characteristics of their milieu, in order to create circumstances in which the power that is often aligned against them can be safely unsettled, circumvented, and productively employed, rather than directly and dangerously confronted. In other words, Third Spaces - and a Third Space sensibility among subaltern populations - manifest a set of contingencies that enable "off-kilter resistances": those practices that are directed "at an angle" to specific exercises of power, and that attempt to construct or utilize discursive terrain beyond a strict power/resistance dualism. Increased attention to Third Spaces and practices of off-kilter resistance, is necessary if we are to understand the full range of subaltern survival tactics. A recognition that, finally, all spaces are Third Spaces and all resistances are compromised, may help to bridge an unproductive dualism within resistance scholarship between revolutionary social action and less ostensibly transformative practices of everyday resistance.

Footnotes

3. Foucault, 142.


8. Foucault, 142.


10. Wendt, 264.


12. Thiele, 918.


17. Foucault, 119.


22. De Certeau, 26.


26. See Wendt, 263.

27. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.


32. Cresswell.

33. See, for example, Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.


35. Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), 211.


40. Simons, 86.

