For this class, I will use “queerness” in two linked ways. First, it is an umbrella for lives and practices outside cis-heteronormative rules. Second, it is a reading lens that resists fixed boxes, because the boxes keep changing with language and power. Bronski shows how labels moved from “sodomite” and “crimes against nature” to “homosexual,” then toward “queer,” and how communities sometimes reclaimed slurs like “fag” and “dyke.” That history reminds me not to treat any single word as timeless truth. At the same time, Godbeer warns us not to project modern ideas like “orientation” onto Puritan New England; their legal-theological world organized sex very differently.

I define “dissent” as intentional, public criticism of prevailing norms or authority. I borrow Collins & Skover’s three attributes—**intention**, **criticism**, and **public character**—because they help me judge acts across periods without stretching the term too far. If there is no intent to communicate, calling it dissent becomes strange; and without a public footprint, it is closer to private doubt than dissent.

As a case of **queer dissent**, I point to Queer Nation’s early-1990s reclamation of “queer” and direct street actions. Activists turned a hostile word into a banner of unity during the AIDS crisis and spoke openly against heteronormative culture and state neglect—this meets intention, criticism, and publicity. Bronski notes how this reclamation quickly entered mainstream culture (e.g., *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*), showing how language politics can remake common sense.  I also like the them.us reminder that “queer” still feels empowering to some and painful to others; for me, that tension is exactly why it works as both identity and lens in our class.