

“Resisting Resistance”: Historicizing Contemporary Models of Agency

Robyn Kliger

They do not know it, but they are doing it.

—Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*

[I]n contrast to a certain hagiographic and rhetorical stylization, the harsher the oppression, the more widespread among the oppressed is the willingness, with all its infinite nuances and motivations, to collaborate.

—Primo Levi (1986:137)

Introduction

Analytic models within the academy reveal a relatively recent concern with microstrategies of resistance. The current intellectual zeitgeist is one in which notions of individual “strategies” (Bourdieu 1977) and “tactics of resistance within everyday practice” (de Certeau 1984) are valorized in the literature. According to Michel Foucault, “[w]here Soviet socialist power was in question, its opponents called it totalitarianism; power in Western capitalism was denounced by the Marxists as class domination. But the task, of analyzing the mechanics of power could only begin after 1968, on the basis of daily struggles at grass roots level, among those whose fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power” (1972:116). I am suggesting, in Foucauldian terms, the emergence of an epistemic shift: one in which the post-colonial subject, as an identity constructed by Western social scientific discourse, is far more empowered than the subject of colonialist times. This “other” of postmodern times is vibrant with agency and the will to resist. Today, the truth of the subject is told through a narrative of microstrategic resistance, as part of a larger post-colonial discourse which attempts to recuperate the savage of colonialist times, in order to repent for our previous sin: the denial of consciousness in the “savage other.”

As historian Susanna Barrows (1981) has shown, French “men of letters” threatened by the resurgence of strikes, riots and demonstrations in the 1880’s, and 1890’s, channeled much of their uneasiness into a purportedly objective study of crowds. In analyzing the crowd, these intellectuals constructed new, dramatic and revealing metaphors of fear: crowds, they argued were primitive creatures, alcoholics, victims of hypnosis, and hysterical females. Although these theorists claimed to have discovered a scientific paradigm for crowd behavior, their work shows that their writings are best understood as reflections of bourgeois anxiety at the end of the century. Similarly, it may be profitable to view the preponderance of microstrategic resistance models—at the end of the twentieth century—as reflections of intellectual anxiety.

Recall the E. E. Evans-Pritchard's famous monograph of the Nuer (1940), assigned to most graduate students. Recall as well, the representation of the native, according to Evans-Pritchard's depiction: "[a]fter a few weeks of associating solely with Nuer, one displays, if the pun be allowed, the most evident symptoms of Nuer-osis." With respect to the accuracy of these representations, Evans-Pritchard himself readily acknowledges: "[i]n case it can be said that I have only described the facts in relation to a theory of them and as examples of it, and have subordinated description to analysis, I reply that this was my intention. It is difficult to know how far one is justified in pressing an abstraction" (1940:261).

My argument is that the contemporary fetishism of microstrategies of resistance is, in part, an attempt to return dignity to the "post-colonial other." One of the postmodern projects is to re-write the other with agency, in order to recuperate him/her from previous social scientific abuses. Hence, one finds works such as *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott 1985), in which a high level of agency is imputed to even the smallest acts; i.e., the Malaysian peasant who steals the chicken is doing much more than "acting out" anger in a psychological sense, but rather, in Scott's rendition, this "post-colonial other" is vibrant with consciousness and resistance against the landowner (1985:59).

In the closing chapter of his book, Scott proclaims: "[i]f revolution were a rare event before..., it now seems all but foreclosed. All the more reason to see in the tenacity of self-preservation—in ridicule, truculence, irony, in petty acts of non-compliance, in foot dragging, in dissimulation, in resistant mutuality...a spirit and a practice that prevents the worst and promises something better" (1985:350). It is with this sentiment in mind that Scott develops his argument, making small acts of self-preservation gargantuan acts of symbolic resistance. This paper argues that, in fact, these actions are most probably viewed "as an aspect of revolutionary praxis or precursors to it"—(see Scott's discussion on how these small acts can inadvertently lead to large scale revolution, such as the Russian revolution, 1985:293)—precisely in order to compensate for the fact that they are *not* inherently inchoate, symbolic forms of revolution. It is a matter of interpretation, and this interpretation is historically biased. It is my sense that the disillusionment and despair over the absence of a proletarian uprising is, in part, responsible for the contemporary and utopian politicization of everyday acts.

In the academy today, we are theorizing the "other's" psychological responses to the dominant in a radically different manner than did Frantz Fanon, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Evans-Pritchard. Today we are imputing consciousness and resistance where once none was assigned. The goal of this paper is to show an analytic shift in our thinking about resistance and to next attempt an analysis to account for this epistemic shift. In order to articulate how these representations of the "other" are "complex refractions of the twenty-first century intellectual culture," and, in order "to fathom the layers of meaning embedded in their rhetoric" (Barrows 1981:viii), this paper briefly discusses changes in the focus of North American social scientific theory, analyzing resistance models according to Frantz Fanon, Marx and Freud; and secondly, problematizes models of resistance within medical anthropological discourse. The final section of this paper ties these theories into a brief discussion of postmodernity and post-colonial guilt.

Theorizing the Other: How The Other is Used by the Social Theorist

The creatureliness is the terror.

–Kierkegaard (1957:217)

According to Lila Abu-Lughod (1991:313), “[t]erms like voices, subversion, dissidence, counter-discourse and counter-hegemony, as well as resistance, circulate through such widely diverse enterprises as French feminist theories (e.g., Kristeva 1981) and social scientific studies of specific subordinate groups, e.g., slaves in the American South and the Caribbean, Southeast Asian peasants, and subaltern groups in colonial India...as well as among various groups of women in this country and elsewhere.” Abu-Lughod goes on to argue:

the popularity of resistance studies provokes a number of interesting questions...Unlike the grand studies of peasant insurgency and revolution of the 1960’s and early 1970’s (e.g., Scott 1976; Wolf 1969) what one finds now is a concern with unlikely forms of resistance, subversions rather than large-scale collective insurrections, and small or local resistances not tied to the overthrow of systems or even to ideologies of emancipation. Scholars seem to be trying to rescue and to restore to our respect such previously devalued or ignored forms of resistance. (ibid.)

Abu-Lughod then remarks, that in some of her own work, and in the work of other theorists, “there is perhaps a tendency to romanticize resistance, to read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated” (1991:314). This is quite a different version of human resistance than one reads in Marx (whose views are discussed in a later section).

Edward Bruner (1986), in a fascinating paper, argues that:

In the 1930’s and 1940’s, the dominant story constructed about Native American culture change saw the present as disorganization, the past as glorious, and the future as assimilation. Now however, we have a new narrative: the present is viewed as a resistance movement, the past as exploitation, and the future as ethnic resurgence. The theoretical concepts associated with the outmoded story, such as acculturation and assimilation, are used less frequently and another set of terms has become prominent: exploitation, oppression, colonialism, resistance, liberation, independence, nationalism, tribalism, identity, tradition, and ethnicity.... The ethnographic problematic is now one of documenting resistance and telling how tradition and ethnicity are maintained. (1986:140)

This renewed—or simply, new?—interest in resistance as the micropolitics of everyday life can be seen in a few different epistemic orientations. For example, some researchers have chosen to focus upon how the ritualization of everyday life serves to maintain the social structure” (see Goffman 1967). Additionally, since 1974 there has been a burgeoning interest within anthropology in the study of women and microstrategies of resistance (Lamphere 1975). Initially, feminist theorists focused upon questions of universal sexual asymmetry and the universal oppression of women (see Lamphere and Rosaldo 1974). The second wave,

according to Lamphere, turned away from questions of universality to focus on individual women and their strategies of resistance.

At a certain point in social science development we begin to locate in the literature a politics of individual agency, micropower and individual strategies of resistance (e.g., Bourdieu 1977; de Certeau 1984; Foucault 1976; Thompson 1978). Historian Aletta Biersack (1989:91) corroborates this point:

Within Western Marxism, there is a tradition that seeks to supplant mechanistic base-superstructure models with models in which the human subject becomes the “ever-resurgent” subject of his or her own history (see E.P. Thompson’s *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, (1978). Railing against the structural Marxism of Althusser and using a less idiosyncratic language than that of Bourdieu or Sahlins, Thompson insists on the historical subject’s ability to “make” him or herself... Making, because it is an active process, which owes as much to agency as to conditioning, as much to action as to structure...Thompson’s agenda thus aligns itself with that of Sahlins and Bourdieu.

In general, this “return to the actor” (Touraine 1988) can be identified as an epistemological shift which emphasizes human agency over structural determinism, micropractices over macropractices. This is most evident when reviewing work such as Durkheim’s sociology and Radcliffe-Brown’s structural functionalism: “[t]he social phenomena we observe in any human society are not the immediate result of the nature of individual human beings, but the result of the social structure by which they are united” (Radcliffe-Brown 1949:191). Functionalism, with its metaphors of organic equilibrium and human physiology, as well as Kroeber’s notion of the superorganic, depicted society as a superorganic entity, capable of functioning without the individual actors intentionality or agency.

Durkheim argued that “the determining cause of a social fact should be sought among the social facts preceding it and not among the states of the individual consciousness” (1938: 25). Durkheim stated that “a social fact is to be recognized by the power of external coercion which it exercises or is capable of exercising over individuals and the presence of this power may be recognized by the resistance offered against every individual effort that tends to violate it.” The rules of the social guide human behavior and hold society together, through either mechanical (“primitive”) or organic (complex) solidarity.

From this vantage point we can begin to construct varying versions of how cultural power is exercised and therefore resistance stimulated. Based on these earlier models, control and power moves from the social to the individual, with the individual carrying out and reproducing the imperative of the social order. In these models, both resistance and mechanisms for change—if they exist at all—become a challenge to ferret out; in part because these earlier theorists were interested to answer the question of what holds societies together; and in part because earlier social theorists thought of change in macrostructural terms, as a relatively slow process or as a rare event, not an everyday individual practice: “[s]tructural forms may change with revolution and military conquests” (Radcliffe-Brown 1949:193), certainly not with microlevel acts. The shift today is toward viewing social structure as a

dialectical process created extemporaneously and dynamically *vis-à-vis* human interaction. In this vision of society, power is manifold and productive.

Marx, Freud, and Fanon

New narratives open up new spaces of discourse that arise precisely from the gaps and silences of the previous era.

–Foucault (1973:207)

My purpose in invoking Marx and Freud is to suggest that what we can learn from their theories how the truth of the subject is told in historically specific terms, and in so doing, makes clear the hegemony of certain paradigms in particular historical moments. Briefly, Marx discussed resistance in terms of macroscale revolution and spoke of man's oppression in terms of ideology:

Everything appears reversed in competition. The final pattern of economic relations as seen on the surface, in their real existence and consequently in the conceptions by which the bearers and agents of these relations seek to understand them, is very much different from, and indeed quite the reverse of their inner but concealed essential pattern and the conception corresponding to it. (1990:111)

For Marx, ideology is what serves to obfuscate, to hide the real social conditions. In effect, for Marx, as long as human beings are unable to resolve the contradictions that inhere in practice, they will project them into ideology, into consciousness; this then serves to mask the real conditions of their lives. This perpetuates a vicious cycle in which ideological distortion hides the real conditions, thereby perpetuating the same cycles of domination.

As controversial as Freud is, his models of the "psychic apparatus" are a brilliant attempt to discuss individual actors' responses to, and reactions against, power and domination. Freud saw false consciousness as pervasive, as a lived reality, which the "psychical apparatus" perpetuated (1949:1). The superego, according to Freud, is what keeps our deep libidinal instincts in check, repressing them in order that we may live the lie that is everyday social life. Terry Eagleton (1991:176) comments:

Freud's writings are faithful to the central contention of the tradition we are examining—that the mind itself is constituted by a chronic distortion or alienation and that ideology is thus its natural habitat.... In this sense, we might say that Freud's theory of ideology is of an Althusserian cast.... It is from Freud himself, via the detour of Lacan, that Althusser derives his notion of ideology as lived relations which exist largely at the level of the unconscious and involve an inescapable structure of misrecognition.

What Freud points to as the fundamental mechanisms of the psychical life are the structural devices of ideology: projection, displacement, sublimation, repression, idealization, rationalization, disavowal: all of these are at work in the text of ideology, as much as in dream or fantasy; and this is one of the

richest legacies Freud has bequeathed to the critique of ideological consciousness. (1991:185)

Eagleton goes on to argue that the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw human existence as “ideological to the core” (1991:185) and, that while Marx understood political practice to be a palliative to oppressive ideology, Freud understood psychoanalysis to be a palliative for psychic oppression. In fact, Freud defined psychoanalysis as the “staging of practical relations of human subjects” (1949:113). Both revolutionary practice and the scene of psychoanalysis involves the painful reconstruction of a new identity. For both Marx and Freud, theory comes down to an altered practical self-understanding. Yet, for both theorists, practice and ideology are experienced as ontologically divided, such that once ideology unifies itself with practice, it becomes transformed through the consciousness practice necessarily evinces in the actor. This conscious awareness of ideology, culminating in revolutionary practice, must precede resistance; resistant praxis cannot be ontologically prior to ideological illumination.

Thus, from both Marxian and Freudian perspectives authentic subjectivity is contingent upon transforming the ideological—the unseen or repressed—in one’s life; whether it be psychic false consciousness or social false consciousness. In both models, human agency is thwarted by what it does not know to exist consciously: we are unable to resist openly in these paradigms because we are unaware of the conditions of our own oppression; to become agents of social and psychic change, we must first become conscious of the role of ideology in our lives. Again, according to Terry Eagleton (1991:75):

[M]y image in the mirror is in some sense me, and at the same time a ‘second best’ phenomenon. Why Marx and Engels want to relegate consciousness to this second-hand status is clear enough; for if what we think we are doing is actually constitutive of what we are doing, if our false conceptions are internal to our practice, what room does this leave for false consciousness? Is it enough to ask George Bush what he thinks he is doing to arrive at a satisfactory account of his role within advanced capitalism?

From both Marx and Freud’s perspectives then, analytic models which normalize and popularize prosaic acts of everyday resistance are highly problematic, precisely because everyday, individual acts of resistance imply an awareness of oppression that neither theorist is terribly optimistic about. The possibility of the masses being spontaneously freed from the social and psychological grip of ideology, and hence, of being aware of one’s own oppression to the point where one is capable of acts of everyday resistance appears remote; hence, the clarion call for the establishment of an intellectual vanguard or enlightened psychotherapist to stimulate resistance! Recall that Marx and Engels, in *The Communist Manifesto*, feel the urgency and necessity of making the proletariat into a conscious class, so that they can organize against the conditions of their exploitation. However, the proletariat have not yet formed a class, do not yet have class consciousness, and as such, they are, by and large, unable to politically act upon the conditions of their oppression.

Recall the theories of Radcliffe-Brown, Durkheim and Kroeber, in which the individual actor appears culturally and structurally insignificant. These actors do not “naturally” and normatively exhibit the agency synonymous with resistant action (unlike

contemporary analytic scenarios, in which human actors everywhere are capable of the will to resist). I would argue, that in some senses, the emphasis upon, and romanticization of resistance, is a direct backlash to years of social scientific theory in which the actor is lost, understood to be blinded by false consciousness or mechanisms of repression.

Frantz Fanon: Psychological Theories and the Absence of Individual Resistance

Fanon was a Black psychiatrist who toiled to articulate the psychology of oppression among the colonized. He was greatly distressed over the suffering of his own people, and sought to explain, in detail, the psychological processes by which the oppressed become debased, devalued, and finally, by "submitting to oppression invariably condemn themselves to psychological, social and historical death" (1968:127). According to one author, "Fanon boldly analyzed violence in its structural, institutional and personal dimensions" (Bulhan 1985: 138).

In Algeria, Fanon directly observed the horrors of war, as well as the anomie that takes place as the oppressed begin to take control back. In the first chapter of his book, *Wretched of The Earth* (1968), Fanon elaborated the dynamics of violence and of human suffering in situations of oppression. His main concern was to articulate a psychology of oppression that would lend insight into the complicity offered by the colonized, while simultaneously avoiding a blame-the-victim posture. He wrote:

In prolonged oppression, the oppressed group willy-nilly internalizes the oppressor without. They adopt his guidelines and prohibitions, they assimilate his image and his social behaviors, they become agents of their own oppression. The oppressor without becomes an introppressor—an oppressor within. Because of this internalization and its attendant but repressed rage, the oppressed may act out, on each other, the very violence imposed on them. They become auto-oppressors, as they engage in self-destructive behavior injurious to themselves...the oppressed acquire a victim complex and hence view almost all actions and communications as further assaults and indications off their victim status. (1968:126)

At this point, we find ourselves a long way theoretically from an analytic model that assigns motives of resistance to everyday acts. It is a broad leap from Fanon to James Scott. Fanon is theoretically and morally beholden to these people; he has suffered with them and he is one of "them." His primary conundrum is to explicate both the reality and mechanisms of complicity (i.e., how do the colonized internalize their colonizers and how to explain false consciousness):

The colonizer resides not only without, but also within. There is no occupation of territory, on the one hand, and independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfigured, in the hope of final destruction. Under this condition, the individual's breathing is an observed, and occupied breathing. It is a combat breathing. (1968:65)

The colonized man will manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when the niggers beat each other up, and police and magistrates do not know which way to turn when faced with astonishing waves of crime. (1968:52)

One has only to delve into the literature to find researchers who made similar psychological discoveries of self-destruction and complicity under situations of extreme oppression (e.g., Bettelheim 1960; Levi 1986) Bruno Bettelheim, who developed the popular psychological construct known as "identification with the aggressor" (1960), was also a concentration camp survivor who wrote about how concentration camp victims identified with the Nazi guards psychologically, in order to gain the strength to survive. In fact, according to Bettelheim's research, concentration camp victims, were more likely to help their enemies, rather than resist them, in order to gain even an iota of human kindness or sympathy. Bettelheim noted how Nazi prisoners emulated the Gestapo by dressing like them and behaving like them out of a kind of perverse admiration for their power.

Hinkle and Wolff (1956) documented this same phenomenon among Russian prisoners of war. They did extensive research into communist "ideological remoulding institutes," claiming that:

all indoctrination programs have much in common. When a man's [sic] relations with his environment is disrupted, man is strongly beset with motivations to adjust, at all costs. The subject is faced with pressure upon pressure, and discomfort upon discomfort, and none of his/her attempts to deal with the situation leads to an amelioration of pain, an individual reaches the point psychologically that he or she 'learns helplessness.' (1956:11)

In other words, the oppressed often learn to capitulate in situations of oppression, in order to survive. In the models of these psychological theorists, resistance is a distant luxury. So, where does the motivation to resist come from, in such situations of oppression? Until we can account for the motivational rationale and will to resist, social scientific theories of resistance will continually fail to convince others of pervasive resistance, either in consciousness or action.

In a recent article, Mahoney and Yngvesson (1991:44) argue:

That subordinates have resisted relations of domination is clear. Explanations of such resistance are unsatisfying however, because they emphasize the force of political economy and dominant cultural discourses and shy away from theorizing about the way relationships of power (whether based upon class, gender or legal entitlement) are constructed psychologically and reproduced through everyday practice. Without an account of how subjects experience these relationships of power, we cannot explain what impels them to resist domination and to make change.

According to Fanon, it was the search for security in conditions of oppression, the quest for personal harmony in circumstances of social violence, or the wish for private success at the cost of betraying collective aspirations that drove "the oppressed [to] submit for fear of physical death, but because they submit, they die" (1968:127). In Fanon's rendition of

oppression, there is very little motivation to resist; in fact, the psychological motivation to survive engenders *capitulation, not resistance*.

How do we reconcile these psychological arguments with our contemporary anthropological focus upon resistance? Mahoney and Ygnvesson (1991:40) offer the following reconciliation:

While acknowledging the importance of anthropological theory that emphasizes the production of selves and meanings at the intersection of overlapping structures of power, we suggest that an explanation of resistance requires a theory of the subject as not being simply produced in relations of power but as making meanings in her relationships with others.... [I]t is in this dialogue that the disjunctures and conjunctures of culture are reshaped into the subjective forms of desire, empowering subjects who are not only complicit but capable of as well of resisting relations of domination.

It is necessary that anthropologists give greater thought to the internal psychological states of their informants, and seek to incorporate the insights of psychological and psychoanalytic research in order to furnish a more nuanced understanding of "intrapsychic" understandings of resistance. While it has been this author's experience that symbolic analysis is permitted within the academic anthropological discourse as it pertains to cultural meaning systems, it is disallowed when symbolic analysis is attempted to explicate the individual "intrapsychic" realm. Greater rapprochement between anthropological insights into culture and psychological insights into intra-individual experiences of reality are called for, particularly with respect to contemporary theories of resistance.

Exaggerating The Symbolic

...[A]t no other time in the history of anthropology has interest in the symbolic character of cultural phenomena been more clearly pronounced than during the last two decades.... So fundamental, in fact, has the concern with symbolic meaning become that it now underlies whole conceptions of culture.

—Basso and Selby (1976:1-2)

The current focus upon the more overt, visible and collectible aspects of cultural phenomena—a focus encouraged by Geertz's insistence that culture is a public phenomenon—is problematic. Much of peoples' experience is not articulated in overt forms, (i.e., overt acts of resistance); nor, as Rosaldo reminds us, is quantity of expression a reliable indicator of depth of meaning (1989).

In his book, *Despair Viewed Under the Aspects of Finitude/Infinitude*, Soren Kierkegaard wrote that man fails in life when he refuses to face up to the existential truth of his situation—the truth that he is an inner symbolic self, which signifies a certain freedom, and that he is bound by a finite body, which limits that freedom. The attempt to ignore either aspect of man's situation, to repress possibility or to deny necessity, means that man will live a lie. For Kierkegaard, too much possibility is the attempt by the person to overvalue the power

of the symbolic self. It reflects the attempt to exaggerate one half of the human dualism at the expense of the other (See Kierkegaard 1957; Becker 1964).

This is my concern with the emphasis upon, and at times, fetishization of resistance: ultimately, it is an overexaggeration of the symbolic specifically with respect to interpretations of the body (plentiful within the medical anthropological literature). Stallybrass and White write:

Fetishism or repression is equally likely to occur in attempts to 'think' the body. The body cannot be thought separately from the social formation, symbolic topography and the constitution of the subject. The body is neither a purely natural given, nor is it merely a textual metaphor.... To this extent. the critique of the carnival...is valid for the body. It has been a major aspect of our project to reveal how intimately these realms are interconnected in the definition of status and subject identity. Celebratory invocations of the body, like celebratory invocations of carnival, emerge out of similar mechanisms of symbolic reterritorialization. (1986:192)

Like Stallybrass and White, much anthropological research views the body as a symbol, a culturally specific and socially affected physical reality (Comaroff 1985; Douglas 1966; Turner 1985). In *Natural Symbols*, Mary Douglas states that "natural expression is culturally determined.... There can be no way of considering the body that does not involve at the same time a social dimension" (1966:65). Because the term resistance in medical anthropological literature raises questions about how the human body is used symbolically to communicate states of being, it renders necessary a discussion of how the body is experienced and understood cross-culturally. In other words, it requires that we ask about the relationship between subjectivity and physical embodiment.

In order to establish the authenticity of acts of resistance, then, we must first articulate the contingent relationship between modes of bodily resistance, culture and individual subjectivity. As historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg powerfully establishes in her work, *Disorderly Conduct* (1985), resistance is inherently identity-specific; Smith-Rosenberg makes a similar argument with respect to resistance and revitalization movements. She states that during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Second Great Awakening's violent upheavals and, theological and liturgical disputes transformed American Protestantism—and temporarily the religious experience of women. New sects emerged, and women were their most zealous adherents (ibid.:129). Yet Smith-Rosenberg warns that we must be careful how we interpret this data:

Silenced in Christian churches since the days of Paul, women now seized sacred space.... Wild bodily behavior and physical disorder frequently characterized women's religious enthusiasm... Their religious experiences fell within the category of what anthropologists have defined as religious anti-ritualism.... At the same time that women's religious responses span class distinctions, their diverse and changing nature within class (not all bourgeois or marginal women espouse anti-ritualism, some who do soon renounce it) defeats any effort to generalize from similarities across class to the existence of women as a monolithic social or cultural group.... Much

new research must be done before we can unreservedly assert that anti-ritualism voices the experience of structural movement or marginality. It is especially necessary if we are to understand the complexity and changeability of anti-ritualism as a symbolic or metaphoric language, for I will argue, anti-ritualism conveyed differing meanings depending upon the social group.... Rooted in different experiences, women's and men's anti-ritualism constituted two quite distinct metaphoric languages. (1985:136-7)

She goes on to argue that this same conversion experience did not necessarily indicate resistance for many male religious rebels because they were not undergoing upheaval in gender relations at that time (1985:138). My point here is simply this: we need to exercise extreme caution in our imposition of resistance models cross-culturally, intraculturally, and transculturally, as Rosenberg has shown us, particularly when we speak about the body: "[t]he state, the body, society, sex, the soul, the economy are not stable objects, they are discourses" (Foucault 1972:137).

"Resistance" and Medical Anthropology

Contemporary analysis has tended either to fetishize or repress the savage....This fetishism is equally likely to occur in attempts to 'think' the body.

—Stallybrass and White (1986:192)

How does culture affect the way an individual uses the body to express pain, stress and sickness? Pierre Bourdieu emphasized the way in which not only the emotions, but the use of the body as well, is culturally constructed. Bourdieu documents the use of mimetic representations, in which implicit analogies are made between parts of the human body, daily life, the social structure, and the cosmology of a given culture. These relationships are incorporated into culture through the socialization process, and understood to be natural, inevitable and unquestionable—a situation Bourdieu termed "doxa" (1977:82). If we accept this theory, we must acknowledge that what is resistance within one cultural context may be nothing of the sort in another. The ways in which people may resist—indeed, the very notion of resistance itself—is historically and culturally specific. Therefore, in order to fully understand the possibilities for resistance, one must exfoliate layers of enculturation—the familial, societal, cultural, economic, and historical contexts from which a particular body emanates.

At this point, I would like to assess the place of resistance within medical anthropological paradigms, in which bodily praxis is viewed as a form of resistance in contrast to psychiatric/biomedical interpretations. I do this in order to once again suggest an epistemological/theoretical transition, as exemplified by models in which the body is marked as resistant.

Somatization models articulate that the body and its illnesses are forms of resistance. Power and repression are decoupled; in this instance, power produces resistance in somatic forms. In some medical anthropological paradigms for example, the body is a trope, a key symbol, the terrain and site upon which theories of resistance are practiced/enacted (e.g., Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1986, 1987, 1991). Theoretical frames are imposed upon the body.

It is a hermeneutic clash, however, for biomedical and key psychiatric paradigms view the body as unconscious; its collapse into illness is the inevitable succumbing to power. In the biomedical model, sickness is not equal to resistance (see, for example, the psychiatric handbook for professionals: the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III revised, under Somatoform Disorders).

Theorists have argued that resistance–body praxis–(i.e., somatization), is a “language” of the body. Yet the polemic between the biomedical and critical anthropological community remains: is the body resisting through somatic processes or is that too symbolic, too romantic a depiction of the sickness experience? In what follows, I focus upon the somatization debate as a key trope for contemporary notions of resistance and the body.

The Somatization Debate: Is the Body “Resisting” or Collapsing?

Somatization is a form of body praxis which has been interpreted by leading medical anthropologists to be a form of resistance (Dunk 1989; Low 1989; Martin 1989; Nichter 1980; Racy 1980; Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987, 1991). The process of somatization is difficult to discuss for two reasons: first, because the meaning of the term is debated between the fields of biomedicine and medical anthropology; and second, because within the subdiscipline of medical anthropology there are different interpretations of its meaning. One rather traditional definition of somatization seen frequently within the medical anthropological literature is: “[t]he expression of physical complaints in the absence of defined organic pathology, and the amplification of symptoms resulting from established physical pathology” (Kleinman 1982: 12). In this definition, Kleinman, a biomedical physician whose work, *The Social Origins of Distress and Disease*, stimulated much discussion about the somatization process, cautions that somatization must be interpreted as a “particular cognitive-behavioral type whose adaptive or maladaptive consequences involve assessment of social, cultural and personal variables” (1986:60). This last statement is a reference to the biomedical model, which considers the use of the body to manifest distress as indicative of psychopathology, or of emotional dysfunction. The term somatization is, in fact, used in biomedicine, particularly in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders to indicate psychopathology .

Kleinman (1986:434) discusses the way in which somatic expression changes according to cultural setting and historical context:

Somatization appears to have had an even higher prevalence rate in the West prior to the emergence of an increasingly psychological idiom of distress in the Victorian middle class. This psychologizing process has been related to the cultural transformation shaped by modernism...That is to say, affect as currently conceived and even experienced among the middle class in the West is shaped as “deep” psychological experience and rationalized into discreetly labeled emotions that were once regarded and felt as principally bodily experiences. As bodily experience, “feeling” was expressed and interpreted more subtly, indirectly, globally and above all, somatically.

The experience of somatization, then, is historically unique. According to this argument, somatic experience has drastically changed in the West; and consequently, one would suspect

this would be true for the phenomenology of somatization itself (is somatization still an expression of resistance in a culture where somatic expression is the dominant mode of expression?). Traditional Chinese medicine, for example, gives utmost importance to somatic expression (Kleinman 1986), while in the industrialized Western countries, psychologization has become the predominant mode through which one is socialized to express distress.

Within contemporary biomedical praxis, somatic manifestations of psychic distress are interpreted as "secondary" (Kleinman 1982), despite the fact that anthropologists have revealed that, worldwide, the appearance of somatic complaints is the most common manifestation of "psychobiological affect" (Ots 1990). According to the physician-researcher Thomas Ots: "It is most common in third world countries; next, in Europe, and third, in North America. In Europe it is more common in less industrialized countries" (Ots 1990:24). Ots, like Kleinman, argues that somatization—or, the "language" of the body—is directly shaped by a person's historical/cultural context. If contemporary studies about the somatization process suggest that the body is employed cross culturally as a vehicle for experiencing, interpreting, and communicating about emotional and social issues (see Kleinman 1986; Martin 1989; Nichter 1981; Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987), and, that "somatic idioms of distress indicate that the body feels and expresses social problems" (Kleinman 1986: 194), *are somatic idioms of distress still to be interpreted as a transculturally constant form of resistance?*

I find this proposition suspect given that somatization appears to be a dominant, not a counter-dominant form of expression. If somatization is so prevalent, this renders somatization hegemonic. And, if this is the case, why are structural changes so rare, given that most people resist?

Postmodernity and Resistance

I defined postmodernity as incredulity toward metanarratives.... Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside?

—Lyotard (1990:167)

Foucault considers the attempt to locate historically the strands of practice and discourse dealing with the subject, knowledge, and power to be the genealogy of the modern subject. According to Foucault, what is distinctive about Western culture is that we have given so much importance to the problem of the subject in our social, political, economic, legal, philosophical, and scientific traditions (1980). In a far more humble endeavor, I suggest that part of the distinctiveness about "postmodern" Western intellectual thought is its emphasis upon microstrategies of resistance. As one author proclaims:

There is a growing awareness that other cultures, non-European, non-Western cultures, must be met by means other than conquest and domination, as Paul Ricouer put it more than twenty years ago, and that the erotic and aesthetic fascination with 'the Orient' and 'the primitive'—so prominent in Western culture, including modernism—is deeply problematic. This awareness will have to translate into a type of intellectual work different from that of the modernist intellectual who typically spoke with confidence of being able to speak for others.... It is easy to see that a

postmodernist culture emerging from these political, social, and cultural constellations will have to be a postmodernism of resistance.... Resistance will always have to be specific and contingent upon the cultural field within which it operates. (Huysen 1984:113)

During this “epoch of colonial guilt” (Ong 1992, seminar lecture) perhaps the intellectual tendency to impute meaning—that is, to render meaningful the practice of everyday life *vis-à-vis* the construct of resistance—is a way for social theorists to rectify the sins of colonialist paradigms.

Ultimately, this paper claims that today, the truth of the subject is constituted *vis-à-vis* empowerment theories; theories which intend to show that the truth of “the other” is one of agency, consciousness and, ultimately, resistance. This then implies that it is us, the producers of theory, who are resisting—or writing back and against—our own previous accounts and theories of consciousness, or unconsciousness/false consciousness, as articulated by Marx, Freud, Fanon and others. The refutation of Marxist notions of ideology and false-consciousness is evident in much of the post-structuralist thought.

In a sense, and admittedly climbing out on a psychoanalytic limb, my argument is that the more “they” begin to look like “us,” the more agency, resistance and consciousness we will impute to them. And since this is postmodernity—the globalization of the local and the localization of the global, it is indeed a time, unlike Evans-Pritchard’s and Malinowski’s, in which the noble savage is known, and even sends tribal elders dressed in native costume to global events, such as the bio-diversity environmental conference, to represent their own interest. The more theorists are forced to reconcile the images we have constructed of the noble savage, with images of ourselves (because so many non-Western “others” in contemporary society now hold positions of institutional authority), the more “we” will humanize “them.” Today, we are forced to reconcile our social theories with a living, interactive reality: the “savage/peasant/other” who speaks back.

Marcus and Fischer discuss this phenomenon in their book *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986). In it they discuss the impact of postmodernity upon the anthropological endeavor:

It is commonly thought that with advances in communications and technology, the world is becoming a more homogeneous, integrated and interdependent place, and with this process, the truly exotic, and the vision of difference it held out, is disappearing. Our consciousness has become more global and historical: to invoke another culture now is to locate it in a time and space contemporaneous with our own, and thus to see it as part of our world rather than as an alternative to ourselves, arising from a totally alien origin. (1986:134)

My own sense is that this has significantly impacted the psychology behind our theories. I am suggesting that social theorists are resolving the tensions evoked by the disappearance of the exotic, and their subsequent reappearance as “part of our own world” (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 134), by re-writing the colonial others’ psyche in terms that are empowering precisely because they have become us. “New narratives do not arise from anthropological field

research, as we sometimes tell our graduate students, but from history, from world conditions.... Different narratives are foregrounded in the discourses of different historical eras" (Bruner 1986:152).

Theoreticians are being increasingly forced into a greater awareness of the subjectivity of their truth-claims; and, concomitantly, into an increased awareness of the ways in which "our truth" reflects our own psychological processes (such as the need to appropriate notions of revolution into postmodern academic rhetoric in order, ultimately, to deflect our own anxieties about the failure of Marxism(s). Or to put it another way, some theoretical views allow the members of the academy to feel justified in seeing themselves as part of a political vanguard, (not merely as part of a privileged institution in which theory and practice are separate and opposed endeavors).

Theoretical narratives create ways of seeing the world. Discourse and "reality" are "codependent" entities, mutually creating one another. It has been the task of this paper to ask why the academic zeitgeist has so emphasized potentials and mechanisms for individual resistance. To what end and as a result of what influences? I hope that this brief foray into alternative conceptions and perceptions has helped to clarify that, at the very least, our theories are goaded on at every moment by a constellation of emotional, social, political and intellectual pressures. The preponderance of theories of resistance did not generate itself (as a lizard's tale does) through some self-perpetuating DNA type impetus. These theories stem from the failure of certain metanarratives, Marxist especially, to make good on their promises. Those of us who hold out hope for social changes are currently inspired to look toward possibilities other than widespread revolution. And so, we turn toward other potential pockets of resistance, such as individual microstrategies, to bolster our weary optimism. As Wittgenstein aptly put it, "[a]ll that one knows could be otherwise. All that one sees could be otherwise" and I suggest that today we are searching for the "otherwise" in microstrategies of resistance.

Theoretical penchants do not arise in a vacuum; they are the result of specific historical political tensions: "Narratives are not only structures of meaning but structures of power as well.... The resistance narrative is a justification for claims of redress for past exploitation" (Bruner 1986:144). It will serve us well in our future intellectual endeavors to keep in mind the reasons for our newfound devotion to particular discourses, lest we tend to see them as natural and therefore more truthful than other potential ways of seeing and knowing otherwise. For "the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity', be" (Nietzsche 1989:119).

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