

Postmodernism and Anthropology: Conflict or Cooperation?

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*What do you get when you cross a postmodernist and a gangster?
-- You get an offer you can't understand.*

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Ought we not . . . treat postmodernism as a social fact?

Vincent Crapanzano, 1995

Introduction

Today, humor may seem to be the only way to deal with the effects of post-modernism on a variety of academic disciplines. However, when one considers the Harvard University Library catalog lists over 800 books with "post-modern(ism)" in the title,² Crapanzano's plea for acceptance seems justified. Post-modernism has incurred no less of an effect on anthropology than on other disciplines. In a presidential address to the American Anthropological Association in 1993, Annette Weiner (1995), claims the discipline of anthropology itself has reached a moment of critical transition, one concerned with the relationship of anthropology to postmodernism. She defines anthropology's condition today *as* post-modern, one in which the discipline must incorporate and explore the reconfiguration of local and transnational interests and its relationship to the economic and political destinies of human and non-human populations around the globe. The post-modern movement within anthropology involves a differentiated, fragmented local response to today's globalization, including the way power is disguised yet potently at work in both unifying and diffusing these responses to create new locations for capitalism's control. This "new terrain" offers an opportunity for anthropology to use its main strength - interdisciplinary breadth - to become a theoretical impetus for critical evaluation. Not only within the discipline, but also against the history of Western theory and practice in hopes of keeping anthropology in the vanguard, rather than at the margins of intellectual thought.

Weiner's comments justify a more critical evaluation of postmodernism as it relates to anthropology. She is an optimist. She accepts postmodern fragmentation as an opportunity to integrate diversity more centrally into departmental and interdepartmental interests by dismantling former boundaries. This allows anthropology a central role in academia and in

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public policy debates. However, her optimism is not shared by everyone. Anthropologists like Scheper-Hughes (1995:417), see postmodern anthropologists as fleeing from the "local" in search of a borderless and transnational world that does not exist – in effect, they deny reality. Holden (1993:1641-42) sees a serious schism forming between the various sub-disciplines which sometimes creates a sociobiology and behavioral genetics versus deconstructionist and cultural investigators. Anthropology is unique regarding the scope in which it tries to understand the human condition. If we are in fact living in different realities concerning postmodernism and its potential for polarization, is the schism Holden describes inevitable?

This paper hopes to answer this question by exploring and analyzing both the historical roots of postmodernism and the shifting of "epistemology" it has created. It also examines the incorporation of this epistemology and the conflicts that rise in tandem with such a shift. Finally, it describes an anthropology which "sees" the postmodern movement as a "refractory" rather than a "contrary" movement to modernism. We can then begin to imagine a merger of theoretical insights (and epistemology), or a "partnering", one which would combine the tenets of postmodernism with the rigor of our modernist roots, to guide anthropologists into the next millennium.

The Roots of Postmodernism

Huyssen (1990 [1984]:355) in his essay, "Mapping the Postmodern" provides an excellent historical entrance into the postmodern movement and highlights its influence on anthropology. He believes the origins of postmodernism may be found through the initial use of the postmodernist perspective in the 1950's by literary critics looking back "nostalgically"³ on what they perceived to be a richer past (Huyssen 1990:31). Though the movement gained momentum in the 1960's, it was only during the mid-1970's that it began to impact other disciplines such as architecture, dance, theater, painting, film, music, and eventually anthropology.

During the 1960's post-modernism was a movement by critics and artists alike who shared a sense of a fundamentally new situation. This situation was a "rupture" with the past (i.e. modernism), and was felt as a loss; a loss of art and literature's claim to "truth" and human value: "the belief in the constitutive power of the modern imagination was just another delusion" (361). Modernism had been domesticated in the 1950's and had become part of the liberal-conservative consensus of the times, and turned into the "cultural-political arsenal of Cold War anti-communism" (362). Modernism, having been perverted into a form of affirmative culture in France, West Germany, and the United States, witnessed the creation and the revolt of "post-modernism" - ironically, as a result of modernism's success (ibid.).

Huyssen's arguments supporting the early phases of post-modernism as uniquely American⁴ also illuminate the roots of postmodern movement that began to creep into anthropology in the 1960's. An air of crisis and conflict created by the civil rights movement,

3. The term, "post-modernism," was first used emphatically by literary critics such as Leslie Fieldler and Ihab Hassan, who held widely divergent views on post-war literature.

the Bay of Pigs incident, campus revolts, the anti-Vietnam war demonstrations and a consistent counter-culture movement made this particular "avant-garde" a specifically American phenomenon. High art, or "institution art", played an essential role in legitimizing hegemony in terms of the cultural establishment and its claims to aesthetic knowledge. These "claims" (i.e. the legitimizing discourse of high art) were demystified in the past in Europe via the historical avant-garde. However, in the United States during the 1960's, the "postmodernists" assumed this role. For the first time in American culture an avant-garde (postmodern) revolt against a tradition of high art occurred and, more importantly, this attack on the discourse of hegemony and the machinery of meaning was a source of energy and inspiration. In other words, for the first time these actions made *political* sense. The "atmosphere" of the United States at this time was one of "adversarial" relationships, and the attack on institution art was seen as an attack on "hegemonic social institutions."

This "attempt to validate popular culture as a challenge to the canon of high art" introduced terms such as "post-white", "post-male", "post-humanist", "post-Puritan", and "Eurocentrism", which created a new relationship between high art and certain forms of mass culture (366). Through this relationship, minority cultures began to assert themselves and emerge into public consciousness. This new awareness undermined modernist belief that high and low cultures have to be categorically kept apart. The 1960's postmodern movement essentially set the stage for a more critical assessment of the relationship between dominant culture and the "others" (i.e. minorities, women, and working class). For anthropology, this meant a more critical assessment of how we look at "others", specifically, non-Westerners and our discipline in general.

The critical assessment which began during the 1960's gained momentum through the 70's and 80's – a momentum which would eventually reject the early postmodern optimistic attitudes toward technology. For example, television was now seen by some as "pollution rather than panacea" (368). Huyssen characterizes the 1970's as follows:

... by an ever wider dispersal and dissemination of artistic practices all working out or the ruins of the modernist edifice, raiding it for ideas, plundering its vocabulary, and supplementing it with randomly chosen images and motifs from premodern and non-modern cultures as well as from contemporary mass culture... It is also no coincidence that the diversity of mass culture was now recognized and analyzed by critics... It was especially the art, writing, film-making, and criticism of women and minority artists, with their recuperation of buried and mutilated traditions, their emphasis on exploring forms of

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4. Huyssen argues that the post-modern movement could not even have been invented in Europe and his reasons are worth mentioning. First of all, he notes that in the aftermath of the Third Reich, West Germany was preoccupied with the discovery of its own modernity. The only "true" post-modernism to emerge from West Germany was in the 1970's in architectural developments. France's relationship is mentioned only in terms of "post-structuralism," and concludes that "post-modernism does not seem to imply a major break with modernism in France, as it does in the United States." (ibid.). For a comprehensive philosophical review of modernism and post-modernism, see *New German Critique*, Number 33, Fall (1984).

gender- and race-based subjectivity in aesthetic productions and experiences, and their refusal to be limited to standard canonizations, which added a whole new dimension to the critique of high modernism and to the alternative forms of culture . . . Of, course, such new insights can be interpreted in multiple ways, and the debate about gender and sexuality, male and female authorship, and reader/spectatorship in literature (for anthropology: ethnographic texts) and the arts is far from over, its implications for (a) new image (are) not yet fully elaborated (369-70).

As postmodernism developed in the arts through the 1970's and early 1980's, specific "themes" begin to influence anthropology, such as pluralism and gender differentiation.

In the section "Whither postmodernism?" Huyssen explores the sustainability of a post-modern effect in the future. Here, his comments apply most to the current "effect" in anthropology. For example, he aptly points out that Modernism (an old way of looking at things) and the avant-garde (a new way of looking at things - postmodern) are closely related to social and industrial modernization as adversarial cultures. However, they draw their strength from their proximity to the "crisis" brought about by modernization and *progress* (371). The idea of progress is a Euro-American idea in which the modern was a world-scale drama played out on the European and American Stage. Postmodernism realizes there is no "one-way history" of modernism "unfolding toward some imaginary goal." Rather, postmodernism sees artists, critics, and anthropologists exploring the contradictions, contingencies, tensions and internal resistances to modernism's perceived "forward movement" (ibid.). Huyssen concludes his analysis on postmodernism by offering several ideas for sustaining a post-modern culture in the arts which also apply to anthropology. First, anthropologists must recognize and expose the culture of "modernity" as always being one of inner and outer imperialism which will not go unchallenged either politically, economically, or culturally; Second, the women's movement will play a vital role because directly and indirectly this movement has "nourished the emergence of women as self-confident and creative force(s) in the arts, in literature, film, criticism (and anthropology)" (374); Third, questions of ecology and the environment must continue to be addressed within political and regional subcultures, in alternative life styles and in the new social movements in Europe; And, finally, the growing awareness that other cultures - non-European and non-Western - must be contacted by means other than conquest or domination. This contact, which in the past was one of Western aesthetic fascination with "the Orient" and the "primitive", is deeply problematic, and must translate into a different kind of intellectual work where the modernist intellectual - standing at the cutting edge of time and able to speak for others - is replaced by Foucault's notion of the local and specific intellectual. If Huyssen (1990), and more recently Sahlins (1995), are right to address the way we are locked into our *own* cultural traditions, we must find a way to continue to recognize and expose these limitations.

Postmodernism and Anthropology Today: Exposing the Limitations

Today the post-modern movement focuses on cultural anthropology's main methodology - the ethnography and its many limitations. Beginning in the 1980's with critiques by Clifford and Marcus (1986), Crapanzano (1980), Marcus and Fisher (1986) which "struck critically" at the heart of anthropology's most revered methodology - fieldwork and its subsequent literary representations, anthropology has been questioning the many ways we

accumulate and disseminate knowledge (Weiner 1995:15). Anthropologists, such as Downey and Rogers (1995:271) point directly to Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) as a central feature of postmodern criticism in anthropology. Specifically, the historical workings of anthropology are examined in terms of how anthropologists gather and *legitimize* knowledge (Downey and Rogers 1995:270-1). The virtue of postmodernism has been to force attention to the power dimensions of knowledge development and its use as an integral part of knowledge content (*ibid.*). Examining the limitations present when gathering knowledge during fieldwork (and the subsequent ethnographies) are the central features of a postmodern anthropology.

Downey and Rogers (1995:269) examine Lyotard's (1984) analysis of modern science regarding three sets of hegemonic relationships: relations between the West and The Rest, relations within the West, and relations between humanity and nature. The postmodern critique has shown that rather than being the vehicle of human emancipation, the modern West has been an expansive, imperialistic civilization that has used its scientific and technological capabilities and its account of progress to conquer other people (*ibid.*). During the post-war era, the West has assigned inferior identities in Eurocentric terms such as *primitive, underdeveloped, less developed, developing, and third-world* to peoples whose cultural roots were not in Europe (*ibid.*, emphasis in original). As a result, cultural anthropology has specifically sought out ethnographies of cultures and societies of anyone who is not Western, white, male and middle class. In doing so, anthropology has not only exploited the people studied, but also elevated the ethnographer to an unwarranted position of dominance (Downey and Rogers 1995:270). The focus of the post-modern movement within anthropology is to expose the relationship(s) of power and dominance that exist between the anthropologist and the people we study.

Certain post-modernists have tried to expose the ambiguity and contradictions present in the notion of "progress" – which is rooted in the modernist view of the world as noted previously with Huyssen. Downey and Rogers have examined how the notion of progress is related to a variety of current issues in anthropology. Issues of dominance, class, race, gender, and sexual orientation; scientists as cultural elites, and relations of domination and subordination that prevail within institutionalized techno-science are all factors at play within the notion of progress. Specifically, an example of post-modern anthropology is the recent ability of feminist critiques to expose and call attention to the problems present in all three examples (*ibid.*).

What lies at the heart of all post-modern criticism is the "crisis of representation", which highlights an Enlightenment separation of humanity from nature and thought from reality:

While modernist science and technology may have delivered substantial benefits to humans, they have also produced an ecological disaster and threaten to erase humanity from the face of the earth in a nuclear holocaust . . . The history of science as a unified account of progress in knowledge becomes a story of diverse sciences using the image of progress to protect their authoritative status . . . Accordingly, scientific texts constitute both the reality they represent and authoritative selves of scientist authors. (1995:270)

According to Downey and Rodgers, post-modernism and anthropology combine to create an exposing power. It is an attempt to expose the power relationships that affects the knowledge that is gathered, interpreted or legitimized. Specifically, they remark that "the

ethnographer's claim to be an objective representation of native cultures is an assertion of hegemonic power legitimized by literary conventions that create the appearance of objectivity", (270). This connection between "knowledge and hegemonic power" that constitutes "the sciences" are exposed through the recent post-modern critiques of anthropology.

These critiques of science involve two strategies in terms of imagining a non-totalitarian activity of academic theorizing (or theory building). The first strategy contradicts postmodernism by preserving the authority of science by finding in scientific practice inherently destabilizing moves that undercut the dream of total knowledge. Specifically, Downey and Rogers view this strategy as using an epistemological base of nonlinear mathematical models, such as chaos theory, which will help to provide new metaphors for both understanding and bridging the gap between the natural and social worlds: "This strategy poses an epistemological challenge to deterministic theorizing in science, yet it also reaffirms the traditional authority of science by simply replacing one account of reality with another, while preserving the established politics of academic theorizing" (271). Cultural anthropology has only participated in the above-mentioned strategy in limited terms and "to adopt it completely would be to champion the discipline as a science" (*ibid.*).

What makes cultural anthropology unique is that it has always "held the sciences and humanities in productive tension by maintaining an ambiguous position between them" (*ibid.*). They cite James Clifford's introduction to *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) where, summarizing the volume's challenge to totalizing ethnographic knowledge, Clifford points to the idea of "partial truths." Downey and Rogers confirm that this was not a direct appeal to chaos theory *per se*, but nonetheless it was a political strategy whereby the rejection of knowledge and the adoption of a literary trope were used to maintain the authority of truthfulness. For example, the use of "the following is a partial account" is supposed to absolve the author in advance of the "sin" of making totalizing claims. What really happens is a continued sharp division between knowledge and power which can serve as a "legitimizing tack in an ethnography" that won't change much otherwise (*ibid.*). For the post-modern anthropologist this first strategy is an incomplete paradigm to use, because it overlooks one of the basic assertions of post-modernism: the relationship between power and knowledge.

The second, however, is a direct assault to scientific authority. It rejects the inherent totalitarian impulse in most academic theorizing by advocating a replacement of hegemonic power relations to relations built on egalitarianism. This is a strategy (or paradigm) that both "resists" and "subverts" the authority of science by celebrating diversity and advocating pluralism. According to Lyotard (1984:61), "(the person) who finds hope in paralogy, or pleasurable acts of resistance through creative language moves in the pragmatics of knowledge"; and this person also "creates an implicit hope that celebrating pluralism will bring into existence egalitarian methods and practices that will transform the politics of academic theorizing and work toward restoring the harmony in nature that modern science and technology have threatened to destroy." One of the areas of debate in cultural anthropology is how this second strategy is incorporated into ethnographic writing. Downey and Rogers (1995:272) comment that "this emphasis on literary tropes leads the post-modernist critics of ethnography to vest the potential for change in a search for egalitarian strategies of authorship, especially forms of

dialogic writing.” What has happened in cultural anthropology, however problematic it may be, is the use of “critique” and subsequent “deconstructive ethnography” as a paradigm for postmodern theory building.

A Shift in Epistemology – Deconstructive Ethnography

Thus far postmodernism has been traced from the “critical assessment” period of fine arts that emerged during 1960’s to its into relationship to the sciences in the 1980’s. Today, postmodernism has spurred an epistemological shift throughout much of anthropology. In his text, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture*, Hassan (1987:53-4) questions “whether a valid episteme of postmodernism, (or) a new organizing principle of culture and mind, can be enunciated at this time . . .” He goes on, however, (1987:55) to describe postmodernism as “The New Science”:

The Marriage of Earth and Sky . . . Religion and science, myth and technology, intuition and reason, popular and high cultures, female and male archetypes (or stereotypes) begin to modify and inform one another; everywhere we may witness attempts to ‘cross the border, close the gap’. Beyond the ‘two cultures’, beyond ‘mystics and mechanists’, beyond ‘Arcadians and technophiles, lineaments of a new consciousness beginning to emerge. Hence the un - ‘silent spring’ of ecology, the ‘new alchemists’, the ‘Tao of physics’, and perhaps even a ‘unitary sensibility’, calling for an *epistemological shift in the order of our knowledge*, (p. 67, emphasis added).

Applying these polemics to cultural anthropology and its central methodology – ethnography -- means a shift in the way we gather, accumulate and transmit knowledge. Linstead (1993), in particular, has analyzed what this shift means to ethnography.

...run(ning) epistemologically against the enlightenment emphasis on reason, logic and rationality as the foundation of scientific method and the basis for the establishment of ‘truth’... (postmodernism) challenges the claims of science to establish authoritative or absolute knowledge, exposing its social nature as a practical accomplishment by scientists as a community (Kuhn 1962; Hassard 1990) and seeking to impose its own models on reality. The logical incremental growth of knowledge by confirmation and proof is contested by a *para*-logical movement of disconfirmation and disproof, in a mood of suspicion rather than optimism (Lyotard 1984) . . . the authority of ‘meta-narratives’ and any transcendent governing principle of authority or authenticity is challenged, blurring, or dissolving the “division of labor’ between genres, literature, philosophy, science and poetry (Geertz 1983) . . . the underlying principles which determine it, a movement from the hermeneutics of interpretation to the poetics of representation . . . the medium of transmission (language, symbol, or the mass media) and the creative possibilities or the ‘reader’ are emphasized. *Knowledge becomes relative, not absolute* . . . (p.97-8, emphasis mine)

Post-modernism then, is the *epistemological opposite* to all historical aspects of scientific knowledge gathering. Post-modernism strikes at the core of cultural anthropology -- ethnography -- by calling into question the historical paradigms used to gather knowledge.

Linstead (1993:112) feels that the use of deconstructive ethnography is a way for postmodernists to avoid the charge of "nihilism" present in many of the current ethnographies today. He cites Birth (1990) who sees postmodern ethnography as looking for "fact" in every representation, but refusing to come to any final conclusions (Linstead 1993:113). Linstead wants to know how a postmodern ethnography can contribute to praxis. He realizes that acknowledging the falsity of meta-narratives of truth does not inevitably lead to the post-modern pragmatism of Rorty (1979) and Lyotard (1984) in which truth and power become more or less equated. However, he builds on philosophical arguments made by both Lyotard (1984) and Rorty (1979, 1982) to support deconstructive ethnography in the following way. Lyotard (1984) has particular relevance for organizational ethnography because he understands:

... the old patterns of centralization and control breaking down under postmodernity, as the influence of information technology fosters the growth and diffusion of influence of information technology fosters the growth and diffusion of information networks. As these networks become more densely interactive, the need for absolute legitimating truths will dwindle, and truth will be based on a consensus of whatever is held to hold true for a given society at a given stage in its cultural evolution (Linstead 1993:112).

Morgan (1983) has extended Rorty 's (1979, 1982) concept of 'reflective conversation' into the methodology of the social sciences. Where this methodology involves the appreciation of a variety of voices in the conversation of research, the adoption of a tentative rather than absolute status for any truth claims, a detachment from normal presuppositions, and an increased awareness of improving choice of research strategies and their modification (Linstead 1993:114). Although others, such as Jackson and Wilmott (1987) point out various flaws in conducting "reflective conversation," the point is made that "conversation" is the center and starting point of consideration for ethnography. Thus, "Deconstructive Ethnographies" as a paradigm begin not with the question, "is this fact?" (Birth 1990), but looks for ways to explain "how could this come to be considered fact?" and "what are the consequences of treating this as fact?" (Linstead 1993:15). The post-modern paradigm of deconstructive ethnography is grounded in philosophy - "philosophies that succumb to ideology lose their epistemological sense, where philosophies that try to bypass or repress ideology lose all critical thrust and risk being repossessed by what they foreclose" (De Man 1985). This philosophical foundation gives attention to the historicity of epistemology (Rabinow 1986), as well as its textuality, and works to demystify both traditional theoretical concepts and the workings of common-sense or naturalized perception (Linstead 1993:115). The paradigm of "deconstructive ethnographies," if effective, will be a self-regulation model used to reveal internal contradictions through demystifying the representations (i.e. linguistic, symbolic, and "textual") of its authors.

An Exemplar of a Postmodern Anthropology

One of the major names associated with post-modern anthropology is Stephen Tyler. Tyler is known for his cognitive research in the 1960's, and as McGee and Warms (1995:480) note, Tyler, like many American cognitive anthropologists who focus on hermeneutics, or the study of the interpretation of meanings, drew from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger argued humans cannot have knowledge about the world that is not tinged by a particular bias. Following Heidegger, hermeneuticists such as Gadamer wrote that the sciences did not allow humans to see beyond their culturally-shaped contexts (Applebaum 1987, in McGee and Warms 1995:480). Because we cannot separate our ways of knowing from our culture and our language, we all interpret the world around us in our own way. Tyler has built on these ideas and incorporates them into his view of a postmodern anthropology. For example, in his review of poems by Paul Friedrich he states:

These . . . collections of poems by Paul Friedrich are important not only as poetry but because they tell us that anthropology in the postmodern world has taken a 'poetic turn', manifested both in the writing of poetry and in an interest in 'poetics' - in the form and functions of discourse and rhetoric. This turn to poetics is also a 'turning away' from formal linguistics and modern logic as the dominant models of discourse, for it acknowledges figurative synthesis as the previously constituted ground of all analysis and as the enabling discourse that analysis can neither fully explicate nor transcend (Tyler 1984:328).

Tyler goes on to quote Friedrich (1982:2) directly:

The world is uniquely metaphorized by language . . . and a language is pervasively poetic . . . Culture as well as language is a structure-in-process involving meanings and contexts, and many of the relations among its symbols are analogous in part to poetic figures . . . Culture is, to a significant degree, a work of art.

This "turn to poetics" is a rejection of the discourse of science and more specifically the social sciences, and is motivated by a number of shortcomings within the discourse of science. Mainly, a preferred trope of mechanistic rationality focusing on the relation of parts to parts (Tyler 1984:335). This requires a strict separation of fact and value, of objectivity from subjectivity, and thus attempts no fusion of relative perspectives and ultimately places description ahead of integration. Tyler (1984:338) believes that anthropologists who continue to employ this mode of discourse are deceiving themselves or hypocritically deceive those who are keepers of scientific ideology and dispensers of its rewards. He sees anthropologists "as victims of a kind of mental illness" that is created by the guilt of pretending to do what they know cannot be done. What cannot be done, according to Tyler is the idea of objective science. He sees the crisis of contemporary anthropology, which to him is a crisis of (scientific) discourse, as "a mode of discourse whose master trope and ideology condemn us forever to failure, hypocrisy, and neurosis" (Tyler 1984:335).

Why such discontent in anthropology? Tyler (1984:335) offers three circumstances that have unfolded to contribute to the above-mentioned situation and warrant a new figurative integration in anthropology: First, a disillusionment with the ethnographic genre itself (Who sets out to write an ethnography? [See also Marcus and Cushman 1983; Clifford 1983]); Second, a

new tentativeness in the relationship between the anthropologist and his or her informants (Who can do fieldwork and remain blind to its dimensions of power and ideology?); And third, a fear of outsiders who question the worth of anthropology itself. Building on these ideas, Tyler remarks that postmodern anthropology is relativistic in a new sense for "it denies that the discourse of one cultural tradition can analytically encompass the discourse of another cultural tradition" (1984: 328). Postmodern anthropology then reduces the idea of system (i.e. cultural tradition) -- in both its mechanistic and organismic versions - to a trope, or a way of speaking relative to the purposes of a discourse, a figurative way, or, in other words - poetry. What unfolds is a new anthropology which takes the discourse as object itself, in which it "does not demonstrate by logical proof alone; it reveals by paradox, myth, and enigma, and it persuades by showing, reminding, hinting, and evoking" (339). Ultimately, Tyler is not advocating a postmodern anthropology where poetics reign supreme; rather, he envisions an anthropology dedicated to exploring the possibilities of a figurative integration, searching for new means of discourse, and "dedicated more to honesty than truth" (335).

A Tylerian view of a postmodern anthropology is not without its detractors. McGee and Warm's (1995:482) are quick to point out that many scholars have defended anthropology as an empirical science, and at the same time note that ethnographic data collection is at times subjective, but nonetheless it is not impossible to do empirically objective anthropology. O'Meara (1989:354-369), for example, in his article, "Anthropology as Empirical Science," takes exception to Tyler's (1984) remark that anthropologists are "dedicated more to honesty than truth", and systematically dismantles postmodern anthropology by proving the anthropology's ability to exist as an empirical science. He ultimately sees the aim of anthropology to operate as an empirical science -- one which not only represents human affairs, but *explains* them -- and concedes that the scientific goals and the humanistic goals of anthropology should be complementary, not contradictory (O'Meara 1989:366). This is a point to which this paper wishes to draw attention.

Postmodernism Creating Conflict

A recent exchange between two archaeologists, Trigger (1995) and Tilley (1995), demonstrates quite clearly how debates between post-modernist and non-post-modernists (or in the case of archaeology; post-processualists and processualists) can lead to polarization between anthropologists, and create schisms which threaten the discipline of anthropology in general. Trigger's essay (1995), "Archaeology and the Integrated Circus" and Tilley's (1995) response, "Clowns and Circus Acts," both published in *Critique of Anthropology*, represent quite different epistemologies, and more important, distinctly different world views as they relate to the gathering of information (i.e. knowledge) by archaeologists and anthropologists alike. Trigger (1967, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993a, and 1993b) has written extensively on the subject of archaeology as it relates to Marxism and believes in a materially-based scientific approach to interpreting the archaeological record. In his article, "Archaeology and the Integrated Circus," he often attacks post-modernism (i.e. extreme post-processual archaeology) by exposing its weaknesses and dangers. First, he examines the postmodernists' denial of objectivity and their refusal to distinguish objectivity between issues of "truth" and "falsehood." Objectivity is a tricky subject, and Trigger (1993:320) is quick to point out that "post-processualists who deny the possibility of objectivity seem to regard their approach as if it

alone where objective (Watson 1990; Laudun 1990). For Trigger (1993:320), extreme post-processualists or “hyper-relativists” who deny there is any way to distinguish between the relative truth of interpretations by amateurs and professional archaeologists alike, would be better served by simply identifying subjective elements present when interpreting the archaeological record than creating ideological confusion. The concern here, which has been repeated by others (see Watson 1990; Laudan 1990), is that extreme post-modernism, through its unmasking of subjectivity in the interpretations of archaeology and other human sciences, actually disempowers these social sciences from contributing anything positive to an understanding of the past and present human problems that exist. Specifically for archaeology, this “intellectual nihilism” is accomplished by denying that archaeology has anything objective to contribute to debates about humanity’s past and hence, says nothing about its future (Trigger 1993:321).

Another attack levied on postmodernism by Trigger (1993) centers around Marchak’s (1991) book *The Integrated Circus: The New Right and the Restructuring of Global Markets*. The book documents how the privately-funded neo-conservative ideology of the 1950’s has reshaped society in accord with their own laissez-faire beliefs (Trigger 1993:322). Marchak (1991) also describes how this neo-conservative hegemonic thinking has assaulted rival beliefs and compelled complacent liberals and democratic socialists to adhere to this agenda (Trigger 1993:322). Neo-conservatism, similar to post-modernism, discourages “objective” ideas that run counter to its own, so when post-processual archaeologists deny the possibility of creating objective knowledge about human behavior, they are in fact denying that they are able to produce credible alternatives to neo-conservatism. By reflecting rather than resisting the political alienation and disenfranchisement in their midst, they are unwittingly aiding the ascendancy of neo-conservatism. Trigger speculates that this explains why the privately-owned media cover post-modern ideas which are trumpeted as embodying “the spirit of the age” in publications aimed at more educated readers. He also cites Kristiansen (1988) and Bintliff (1993) who suggest post-modernism is a viewpoint most attractive to academics who disapprove of the current social and economic order but feel powerless to oppose it. The price that is paid for adopting this attitude is the lack of an ability to criticize right-wing ideas effectively and to fall into the trap like that of the German intellectuals whose self-centered and hyper-relativistic idealism led the way for extreme right-wing political ideas to flourish in the early twentieth century. Thus, Trigger likens post-processual archaeologists to “post-modern nazis” (1993:323).

Trigger (1993:323) does concede that post-processualists, with their relativist orientation, have helped archaeology by exposing racism, gender prejudices and ethnic stereotypes in the record. He also congratulates them for their promotion of the contributions that technologically less complex societies have made for the betterment of humanity. His concern, however, is that post-processualists will eventually reduce all of human knowledge to a common level. For Trigger the issue is a relativistic agenda versus an agenda for “true knowledge” when interpreting the archaeological record (or developing a world view).

The search for true knowledge incorporates ideas of evolution and materialism when interpreting the archaeological record. Realizing evolution may have become a “dirty word” through its use to justify ethnocentric behavior (Gordelier, 1986), Trigger stresses evolution in terms of “potential” versus “externally imposed inevitability” (1995:324). The idea of potential actually allows for the possibility of cultural transcendence and development, as opposed to the

idea of relativism, which, when carried too far, creates the justification for maintaining the status quo as well as an excuse for ignorance and oppression. Trigger is a student of eighteenth-century Enlightenment perspectives on evolution, values he feels were created by a class fighting for its own liberation. He contrasts these with racist evolutionary perspectives of the nineteenth century which he feels to be the reflection of a bourgeois world view. He strives for what Gamble (1992) has called a "progressive cultural evolutionism" (Trigger 1995:324).

Trigger also makes the point that the history of archaeology reveals that it is possible to move toward a more complete and accurate, if never perfect, understanding of the past. When talking about social and cultural prejudices and how they influence data (1995:324-5), he demonstrates that most of the striking abuses of archaeological data have occurred in either areas in the early phases of the discipline or from regions where few archaeological data has been collected. He concedes that recent work may be too close to the present to have its ideological biases exposed, but he argues as more rigorous protocols are developed, the ability for data to be ideologically manipulated decreases. Of course, a point is never reached at which ideological biases are removed, yet over time the "distortion decreases" (1995:325).

According to Trigger, "rigorous protocols" involving classical Marxist thinking increases the accuracy of the archaeological record. Other scholars agree. Gathercole (1984), Kus (1984) and Bloch (1984), feel one of neo-Marxism's most serious blunders is the rejection of classical Marxist's materialism. Both the Frankfurt School and French Marxist anthropology have influenced many radical archaeologists (i.e. post-processualists) to think of progressive thought with an idealist epistemology. Contrary to this belief, Trigger (1995:326) feels classical Marxism is itself based on a respect for facts that has more in common with empiricism, or even positivism than it is currently fashionable to admit. According to Trigger (1995), classical Marxism creates more rigorous method in archaeological inquiry by incorporating more scientific method into its fundamental epistemology.

Trigger (1995:330) argues against the post-processualist's position that evolutionism is hegemonic and racist, and in the end seeks to expose the radical post-processualist's deconstructive attempts at archaeology as a the means by which they insert their own specific political and cultural agendas. His real fear is that professional archaeology will not remain in the forefront of disciplines attempting to understand the past - a past that can only be achieved through the pursuit of "true knowledge" via a materialist theoretical framework grounded in classical Marxist (i.e. scientific) thinking. Trigger realizes that relativism and evolutionism cannot remain critically opposed to each other. Instead, he encourages the need to "synthesize" the two epistemological points of view into a "multifaceted understanding" of social and cultural change; however he offers no immediate guide to accomplish this endeavor.

Tilley's (1995) response to Trigger's (1995) assault on postmodernism (i.e. post-processual archaeology), in his article, "Clowns and Circus Acts," offers yet another perspective on the general definition of postmodern archaeology (and anthropology). When dissecting what Trigger has to say on issues of post-modernism, and more specifically, Marxism, Tilley (1995:337) begins by separating "living ideas" from "dead wood." When dealing with Marxism, living ideas, for Tilley, are the reformulations that have occurred in Western Marxist thinking - namely the Marxism and the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School. Trigger's attempts to cling to the dead wood of inadequate positivist, historicist and deterministic elements, which occur in

some of Marx's writings, must be avoided. Tilley cautions against other aspects of dead wood, such as Trigger's dependence upon "white mythology" (1995:338), a notion Tilley considered more damaging than any other in the social and historical sciences. Tilley makes a strong point when he poses the question, who should be allowed to determine the hierarchy of myths -- a Trobrian islander or a Western intellectual?

Despite their differences, Trigger and Tilley agree on one point: more recent interpretations are too close to the present for their biases to be recognized. However, Tilley points out it has only been in the last ten years that gender in relation to the archaeological record has been exposed as an enormous interpretive weakness. Who is to say in one hundred years that current archaeology texts may look as bizarre as nineteenth century text look to us today? He also stresses the need to understand that the past cannot be understood in a vacuum and is not separate from the present. In fact they *dialectically* create each other. Ultimately, he argues for the need to get rid of all the "old, tired nineteenth-century dualism's haunting Trigger's perspective, because there is no single true and universal past. Instead, multiple interpretations of evidence exist because of the complexities of past and present human culture. Today the social and historical sciences have nothing to do with neo-conservative politics (He refers to this as a crude conspiracy theory on Trigger's part.), but rather, have everything to do with aiding our understanding of the complexities of culture, as well as an understanding of alternative aspects of the mosaic.

Tilley (1995:341) indicates that any archaeologists regardless of theoretical orientation can have work with authoritative power for society because they *think through* empirical evidence which has the capacity to resist theoretical and interpretative appropriation (emphasis his). The complexity and polysemous nature of archaeological information calls for different and competing theoretical and interpretative frameworks which both *foster debate* and *empower archaeological research* (40, emphasis added). Tilley (1995:341) sees Trigger's (1995) solutions as being "too simplistic to be seriously entertained." By stressing "truth" and "absolute knowledge," Trigger is living in a "modernist" fantasy. He wants theory and practice to come together and not remain immune to criticism and debate (Trigger (1995) holds 'classical Marxism' above this type of scrutiny.) Ideas of "fostering debate" and "pluralistic discourses" are part of the postmodernists ideology and are justified when considering the overall complexity of the world and the archaeological record which demands more than one interpretation. There are no simple explanatory formulas. Tilley (1995:341) sees Trigger as a "traditional Marxist" clown because of his adherence to *an* explanatory formula able to solve *all* problems by reducing the human condition into sequences of archaeological evidence.

When examining these opposing arguments, it seems that agreement on how to interpret the archaeological record may be impossible. Divergent views such as Trigger's (1995) "scientific" - classical Marxist view and Tilley's (1995) post-processualism modern critique create a schism in archaeology similar to schisms in cultural anthropology such as the Tyler - O'Meara debate. As entertaining as name-calling can be, little is accomplished in maintaining solidarity in anthropology today. The significance of the Trigger - Tilley exchange for anthropology is realizing that, although differences between archaeologists exist, they also create a common ground to synthesize both of their epistemologies. Trigger's (1995:330) realization concerning the need of processualist and post-processualists to synthesize their ideas in order to create a multi-faceted understanding of social and cultural change. And, Tilley's (1995:339)

realization that different theories help us to understand the complexities of culture and alternative aspects of this mosaic; in effect, *have the same meaning*. Both of their ultimate goals speak not for obtaining "one truth," but for incorporating different meanings into archaeological research to allow for a better chance of explaining the "many truths" that exist in the past.

Beyond the 'Politics of Rebuttal'

The Tilley – Trigger exchange demonstrates not only the need for anthropology to move beyond the politics of rebuttal, but also highlights the major challenge facing anthropology as we enter the twenty-first century – namely, incorporating seemingly divergent epistemologies into a synergistic paradigm. We can no longer reject post-modernism – it has become a *social fact*; (see the Schepher-Hughes – D'Andrade, 1995, debate for alternative views on the effects of post-modernism on anthropology). This proposition seems valid when considering the historical roots of the postmodern movement across disciplines and the early critiques and revaluations of anthropology. At the very least, there is a trend to rethink the way research and theory building was done historically in anthropology and how we should proceed in the future. Pushing ardent anti-post-modernists such as O'Meara or Trigger into some kind of surrender may be impossible. However, suggesting a merger of theoretical insights can only enrich anthropology as a whole. The work of Downey and Rodgers provides a starting point to begin this process. They offer the concept of "partnering" (1995:272). Partnering would replace the oppositional politics of rebuttal with exchange relations among post-modernist, feminist and other alternative forms of theorizing that seek to recognize politics as an ever-present component of themselves. Using cultural anthropology and the debates which surround post-modernism as an example, they see rebuttals to post-modernism taking two forms: first, charges by non-postmodernists that postmodernist partake in a "relativistic nihilism"; and, two, a charge that postmodernism will not acknowledge its own hegemonic politics - while pointing the finger at everyone else. As Downey and Rodgers (*ibid.*) point out, these rebuttals work well to "resist" postmodernism and more importantly, *channels of exchange are eliminated*.

Downey and Rogers discuss four types of partnering strategies (1995:274-8): partnering between academic Disciplines, partnering within Academic disciplines, partnering within a Western Context, and partnering within a Non-Western Context. The second strategy, "Partnering Within Disciplines: Beyond the Politics of Rebuttal" deals specifically with polarization of anthropologists. Downey and Rogers are aware that hegemonic control of an academic discourse brings respect, rewards, and successful careers at top universities. However, from a partnering perspective a discourse needs to be created that allows for the exchange of ideas. Arguing that Marx, Durkheim, and Weber "traveled together" for a century as theoretical opponents, they point to the transformation to postmodernism as creating a implicit compact between the theories of the three (i.e. partnering).

What would be the implications of "partnering within disciplines" in terms of changing the politics of rebuttal? First, anthropologists must "recognize and treat our allies, our opponents, and indeed our students as partners whose respective legitimacy's are outcomes from shared processes of exchange" (Downey and Rogers (1995:275). Second, in order to strengthen these partnerships anthropologists must shift "authoritative, truthful knowledge" of academic theorizing to "knowledges that inform popular theorizing (non-academic) in desirable ways"

(*ibid.*). In other words, anthropologists must incorporate folk knowledge and common sense into academic theorizing. Using the example of the initial opposition and eventual conflation of materialism and idealism, they examine how academic theorizing over the years can lead to a merger with itself and popular theorizing. According to the authors what is important is not what shapes human action (i.e. structures of thought or structures of material reality) but that through popular theorizing human action is shaped by “transcendent structures” (Downey and Rogers 1995:275).

Improving the politics of rebuttal within disciplines involves anthropologists to explicitly write about how the politics of theorizing contributes to the conceptual contents of knowledge claims, *including* one’s own (Downey and Rogers 1995:276, *emphasis mine*). In this context, Downey and Rogers stress exposing the “means of production of our knowledge (*ibid.*), (i.e. how to get grants, or jobs, how to build and maintain contacts with informants and colleagues, how to build records of teaching and publications, etc.). Focusing on the question, “Whose knowledge is it?,” strengthens anthropology’s role in the intellectual arena and continuously forces a look inward when dealing with the discipline in general and in our dealings with the “other” as well: “By calling attention to the relations between academic theorizing and popular theorizing, partnering could offer hope for producing an academy (an anthropology) that serves society as a source of valued knowledges without helping to produce and reproduce hegemonic relations” (Downey and Rogers 1995:278). In other words, removing the boundaries of “binary distinctions,” such as West versus the Rest, or tradition versus modern, allows anthropologists to empirically explore relations with an appreciation of differences and an openness towards “new metaphors” (*ibid.*). Simply put, academic theorizing becomes inclusive – incorporating all views, versus exclusive – reserved for the academy.

Whether or not a partnering strategy will help to strengthen anthropology as a discipline in the future remains to be seen. Very few examples of this new strategy exist. However, Downey and Rogers (1995:277) do argue that by adapting a partnering strategy the anthropologist becomes “activist” by admitting that all knowledge claims have power content. Scheper-Hughes (1995:419) has recently argued for a “Militant Anthropology” where the recent (postmodern) “critique of anthropology is not a retreat from ethnography but rather an ethnography that is personally engaged and politically committed.” D’Andrade (1995) responded to her position by arguing for the opposite -- an anthropology that keeps its politics and science separated. Their exchange has created yet another conflict within anthropology regarding epistemology. Quite possibly this is the fate of anthropology. Geertz (1973:29), arguing more than twenty years ago for the merits of an interpretive anthropology, was correct in asserting, “anthropology... is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other.”

Optimism: Towards a Future of Cooperation

Post-modernism has forced its way into academia and brought with it new ways of looking at the world. For anthropology specifically, post-modernism has provided the catalyst for a re-evaluation of how we have historically looked at the “other”, while simultaneously making the discipline more self-reflexive. Post-modern critiques and analysis does represent an

epistemological shift from scientific paradigms in hopes of creating a discourse within anthropology which incorporates issues of power, hegemony, gender, race, class and ethnicity. The theoretical effects within anthropology are vast, and include the development of Tyler's "ethnography as poetics", Scheper-Hughes' "militant anthropology" and D'Andrade's and O'Meara's plea for the return of a "scientifically based" anthropology. Others, such as Nader (1995) have recognized this development and remarked:

We need quantitative and qualitative models, we need humanism and some kind of science, we need good writers and good thinkers. But we do need an anthropology with a deep respect for integrative thinking and for empiricism also.

I share Nader's optimism. The seemingly endless fragmentation that has always existed in anthropology will continue to do so in the future. Weiner (1995:18,19) has urged the academy to see a post-modern anthropology as one that can use this fragmentation as a "radical new strength" at a time when much is at stake for the discipline. Anthropologists who choose to incorporate the tenets of post-modernism either directly or indirectly into their work will keep the discipline in the vanguard of intellectual *and* popular thought.

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