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Postmodernism, language and culture[1]

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ABSTRACT

This essay charts two interrelated shifts in recent times which underlies theoretical developments across the range of disciplines in the humanities and social theory. It focuses on two notions, those of 'language' and 'culture', and attempts to understand the emergence of 'postmodernism' in terms of recent theoretical developments and changing conceptions in these two notions. In the last section, a postscript on education and cultural studies, I make a few brief remarks about the local context.

I: Postmodernism and Language

Postmodernism as the 'culture' of advanced industrial society or late consumer capitalism is an exploration of the margins, the borders and limits of high modernism. It is above all a central questioning of the absolutist and ahistorical categories and values, sustained and propagated through the symbolic unifying power of the grand narratives, by which 'man', 'reason' , 'history' and 'culture' were first projected in universalist European terms. Yet postmodernism is more than an internal critique of modernism and its interpretation of classical reason. Not only does it challenge the overly rationalist and elitist pretensions of modernism and modernity by exposing the gender, ethnic, class and sexual biases written into its founding, legitimating 'myths' or metanarratives, but it seeks an entirely new problematic for understanding the social construction and self-constitution of individuals as collective or social subjects.

This problematic, in its theoretical infancy, can be seen in the fact that the 'philosophy of consciousness' -- the tradition of subject-centred reason which inaugurated modern Western philosophy, pre-figured in Descartes' cogito and brought to fruition by Kant -- has been exhausted. This rich seam of European philosophy which in one way or another provided the foundations in epistemology, in the human sciences, and in many of the institutions and practices that still pervade contemporary life, has been thoroughly worked out. That this is the case has been acknowledged not only by post-structuralist thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard, but also by their arch-opponent, Jurgen Habermas (1987) and the leading American pragmatist, Richard Rorty (1979). Thomas McCarthy (1987, xvii) in providing an introduction to Habermas' recent reappraisal of the post-structuralists, Derrida and Foucault and their antecedents, writes:

> In sum, then, Habermas agrees with the radical critics of enlightenment that the paradigm of consciousness is exhausted. Like them, he views reason as inescapably situated, as concretised in history, society, body and language. Unlike them, however, he holds that the defects of the Enlightenment can only be made good by further enlightenment. The totalized critique of reason undercuts the capacity of reason to be critical.

What Habermas (1987: 295) offers us is a new paradigm of mutual understanding based on his 'model of unconstrained consensus formation in a communication community standing under co-operative constraints'. The move from the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness, to one of mutual understanding emphasises at once a recognition of 'intersubjectivities' in the realm of language. On this model validity claims immanent in ordinary talk may be discursively redeemed at the level of discourse. While Habermas can be distinguished from the post-structuralists in wanting to preserve the impulse of 'the project of modernity', in both alike there is the demand to recognise the importance of language and the centrality of a notion of culture. Habermas (1990: 127) most recently has sought to play down the differences by talking of 'a difference of rhetorical styles' and 'differing historical backgrounds'.

The new problematic, the emergent outlines of which can be discerned in a variety of methodologies and approaches across the disciplines, operates on the basis of a radical decentering that denies an epistemic or historical privilege to either the traditional cartesian notion of a 'centered', transparent, individual subjectivity or the humanist deal of a rational, autonomous and responsible self. These developments are clearly related to shifts in the centrality of both notions of language and culture in social science theorising in recent years.

In sociology, for example, Mike Featherstone (1989: 148) has noted the way in which an interest in culture up until the mid-1970s was 'considered eccentric, dilettantish, and, at best, marginal'. He charts the huge rise of journals in the English-speaking world concerned with theorisations of culture and indicates how 'feminism, Marxism, structuralism, poststructuralism semiology, critical theory, and psychoanalysis also helped to raise the profile of cultural questions'.

Eisenstadt (1989:6) more precisely, has detected a shift in the notion of culture with recent sociological analysis away from 'culture' conceived as 'fully structured according to clear principles, embedded in the very nature of the human mind, which, through the medium of a series of codes, regulate human behaviour' to one which emphasises, in a hermeneutical manner, the symbolic and expressive dimensions. Both the structuralist-functionist and the symbolic-expressive conceptions are motivated by underlying theories of language, giving the 'cultural' a greater importance in social theory than was previously the case. The shift itself from strictly structuralist accounts (based, historically, on the work of Saussure and others) to interpretivist, symbolic and hermeneutical models is directly related to developments in the theory of language and, in particular, those developments attributable to the work of Saussure, Heidegger, Gadamer and Wittgenstein, among others.

Most recently, the growth of interest in post-structuralism, deconstruction and postmodernism, also motivated by changing conceptions and theories of language, have helped to thrust questions of cultural (and aesthetic) interest to centre stage (Featherstone, 1989: 150). It is clear that these developments across a range of disciplines immediately focus on the interrelated concepts of language and culture. Certain views in philosophy of language, dating historically from different traditions - those of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Wittgenstein _ and Saussure - have provided an orientation towards a more anthropologically differentiated notion of culture in the first instance which emphasises at one and the same time its 'linguisticality', its historicity, its dependence on a 'politics of representation' and its role in socially constituting new 'inter-subjectivities'.

In the second instance, these views of language and of representation have been used as grounds for a series of hypotheses drawing on semiological insights and understandings, concerning the emergence of a system 'global culture', where local differences and knowledges are increasingly submerged in the endless torrent of a global consumerism which is circulated more effectively than at any time in the past by technological advances in telecommunications and world media, finding its way into even the most remote corners of the earth.

In a strong sense it seems pointless to argue for a more differentiated notion of culture over a notion which, under the form of late capitalism, is driven by the market imperative to ever more global dimensions. These notions are best seen as competing tendencies and countertendencies

within the culture of advanced industrialism or late capitalism which reflect the ambiguous nature of postmodernism. To that extent these forces of homogeneity and difference - of rationalisation and modernisation on the one hand and cultural difference and diversity on the other - represent the continuation of historical tendencies already evident within modernity and modernism.

Linda Hutcheon (1989:27) strongly influenced by post-structuralist developments, has indicated how representation 'can no longer be considered a politically neutral and innocent activity'. She understands 'culture' as the effect of representations (as opposed to their source) and asserts that the primary agenda of postmodernism is 'the investigation of the social and ideological production of meaning'. Under the influence of new developments in semiotics, structuralist Marxism, feminism, psychoanalytic theory, and post-structuralism, traditional concerns of language as an innocent representing activity has given way to an interest in the production and reproduction of 'meanings' more generally, which are seen to be embodied, and both socially and economically situated. To that extent the politics of postmodern representation as Hutcheon (1989:7) explains is concerned with 'the ideological values and interests that inform any representation'.

The early work of Jean Baudrillard here is exemplary. In the 'Political Economy of the Sign' (1981: 147) Baudrillard builds on a line of reasoning developed in La Societe de Consomination (1970) where he views 'consumption' as an active labour involving the manipulation of signs. He writes:

> Today consumption - if this term has a meaning other than that given it by vulgar economics - defines precisely the stage where the commodity is immediately produced as a sign, as sign value, and where signs (culture) are produced as commodities.

Clearly, in this early text, Baudrillard has made use of Saussurean insights to interpret consumer society as a semiological system of signs where commodities differentially related to other, comprise a signifying system and the consumer consumes not the object itself, but the whole system. As Levin (1981:5) puts it in his introduction to Baudrillard:

> It is this very condition of semiosis, engendered by the universalization of commodity relations, which privatises experience in the first place. As we 'consume' the code, in effect, we 'reproduce' the system.

Baudrillard's interpretation brings into focus the relations of 'language' and_ 'culture' _for consumer society is understood as a linguistic system. It also reminds us of its theoretical debt to Saussurean linguistics which first problematised referential theories of meaning. On the model of structural linguistics, semiology taught us to regard meanings not in terms of relations between language and the world but rather as a differential system where nothing is regarded as meaningful in and of itself but only as it differs from other elements in the system.

In the same way Derrida's view of language, building on Heidegger's 'destruction' of Western metaphysics, may also be usefully approached as a radicalisation of Saussure's insights into the nature of the sign and the relation between signifier and signified. As Brunette and Wills (1989:6-7) explain:

> Derrida sees this as an almost inadvertent breach of what he calls the metaphysics of presence, that system of thought common to Western tradition since Socrates holding that that which is, is that which is present or capable of being present. Also called into question is the attendant logocentrism of this metaphysics, which is that system of concepts such as 'truth', 'good', 'nature', and so on, which are regarded, throughout the entire history of Western thought, as being whole, internally coherent, consistent and originary. Invariably these concepts are seen to have opposites ('falsehood', 'evil', 'culture') that are always presented as in some way harmful, deficient, deformed, or secondary, in short as a falling away from the fullness and self-sufficiency of the primary term. What Derrida has done is to show that, just as in Saussure's analysis of language, these concepts can only -function because of their opposites, which then must inevitably be seen as constituting them.

The story of Derrida's deconstructionism is much too complex to enter into here. The purpose of rather to give glimpses of a 'changing landscape' in social theory and indicate how these changes

were in great part motivated by changing considerations of language. Not ~11 theoretical insights informing developments across the range of disciplines were grounded m structural linguistics or semiological theory. Certainly, elements of the Saussurean model had wide ranging effects clearly evidenced in anthropology (Levi-Strauss), in psychoanalysis (Lacan) and in Marxism (Althusser). But beyond this structural tradition stood developments in philosophy of language, phenomenology and hermeneutics which served as a different threshold for an emergent postmodern theory.

In particular, within the English-speaking world the work of the later Wittgenstein was crucial, serving almost as a fulcrum in Anglo-American analytic philosophy and tipping the scales in favour of a greater historicism both in philosophy of science and of language. His early work emphasised the logicality of language (and rationality) in the development of a logically perspicuous language; while his later work emphasised the liberation of language, and specifically 'grammar' from the bounds of strict logic. His writings and his influence in modem philosophy mirror this change. Thus, the early Wittgenstein's influence can be clearly seen in the writings of the Vienna Circle and in the doctrine of Logical Empiricism which dominated in philosophy and social theory until quite recently. The later Wittgenstein can be read, in part, as a reaction against his earlier view of language and logic, and his influence is clearly seen in the writings of Winch, Kuhn, Toulmin, Feyerabend and Rorty. In one sense, this movement can be considered as a reaction against the positivist extraction and formalist interpretation of one paradigm of knowledge (i.e. science) and the treatment and elevation of it to stand as the exemplification of rationality as embodying the standards of rationality that should be applied to the interpretation of all social conduct and action irrespective of time and place.

For Wittgenstein, the norms of rationality are seen to be internal to particular forms of life - - they are located within established practices. It follows from this that there is no neutral theoretical starting-point for philosophy. Questions of justification do not end in a series of inviolate propositions or a set of privileged presuppositions but rather in an ungrounded way of acting. The speaking of a language, he tells us, is part of an activity or form of life, and as such it presupposes not only an underlying 'deep' linguistic consensus -- an agreement in definitions and judgements -- but also a substratum of shared experience and behaviour. Wittgenstein (1953) stresses the organic unity of the 'language-game' by reference to his doctrine of semantic holism and 'argues' that there is no firm distinction between the world and our representations of it, between sentences which correspond to something and those which are deemed 'true' by convention. If this is so, then philosophy as an activity is deprived of its privileged epistemic status. A form of life, then, is a given -- an unjustified and an unjustifiable interconnected whole of human activity resembling a culture (Wittgenstein, 1953:223).

In the Investigations Wittgenstein comes to embrace a much wider view of language than that which characterised the Tractatus, holding, in general terms, that the meaning of a word is its use within a 'language-game'. The game analogy provides Wittgenstein with the means to emphasise, among other things, and against the prevailing model of denotative reference, the diversity of linguistic usage.

The work of the later Wittgenstein has served as inspiration for a number of 'postmodern' philosophers including Richard Rorty (1979, 1983) and Jean-François Lyotard (1984). Rorty presents a strain of 'pragmatic liberalism' emphasising the radical contingency of 'our' institutions and practices. His recent work (Rorty, 1989) has been criticised as a defence of liberal individualism against communitarian critics (Ball, 1990; Connolly, 1990).

Lyotard (1984), in a creative misappropriation of Wittgenstein's notion of language games, argues for a combative view of discourse in a general conception of 'an agonistics of language' which emphasises its pluralistic and conflictural nature. For Lyotard, following Wittgenstein, each of the various types of utterance -- denotative, prescriptive, performative, etc. -- comprises a language game, with its own body of rules defining its properties and uses. The rules are irreducible, and there exists an incommensurability among different games. Stich a reading of Wittgenstein is at the heart

of Lyotard's critique of a unitary classical reason. For Lyotard, as for Wittgenstein, there is no single principle of unitotality; there is no universal meta-language.

It may seem strange that a French post-structuralist such as Lyotard would selectively borrow from Wittgenstein and from Anglo-American analytic philosophy, yet as Lecercle (1987:21) remarks, there has been an 'indirect and selective importation of certain Anglo-Saxon concepts by French philosophers whose practice is far from analytic.'

Neither should we find this too surprising. A number of commentators recently have noted significant affinities between the thought of Wittgenstein and contemporary French philosophy, especially the work of Derrida (Staten, 1985; Ulmer, 1987; McDonald, 1990). Roy Harris (1988) further has noted the convergence in the language views pf Saussure and Wittgenstein, especially in the way that both seek to understand language through the analogy between language and a rule-governed game.

II: Postmodernism and the Move to 'Culture'

One author, Andrew Ross (1988:vii), surveying a collection of essays devoted to examining the politics of postmodernism, notes that for some theorists a politics of difference and a politics of the local and particular 'are not only symptoms of, but also essential strategies for coping with a postmodernist culture that advertises itself as decentered, transnational, and pluralistic ... ' He sees postmodernism as 'a belated response to the vanguardist innovations of high modernism ... the continuation of modernism by other means' (ix).

Another, Chantal Mouffe (1988), describing the reformulation of the socialist project attempted in an earlier work (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) indicates how such a project demands a nonessentialist epistemological perspective. This reformulation while acknowledging the role that the epistemological perspective of the Enlightenment played in the emergence of democracy, now sees it as an obstacle in understanding the new form of politics which is characteristic of our times. An appropriate understanding, we are told, is to be gained from using 'the theoretical tools established by different currents of what can be called the postmodern in philosophy and of appropriating their critique of rationalism and subjectivism' (my emphasis, Mouffe, 1988:33). By 'the postmodern in philosophy', Mouffe clearly means post-structuralism, the philosophy of language of the later Wittgenstein and post Heideggerian hermeneutics, as she acknowledges in a footnote. She writes:

> To be capable of thinking politics today, and understanding the nature of these new struggles and the diversity of social relations that the democratic revolution has yet to encompass, it is indispensable to develop a theory of the subject as a decentered, detotalized agent, a subject constructed at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject-positions between which there exists no a priori or necessary relation ... ' (Mouffe, 1988:35).

This reappraisal represents, of course, a revision of the Marxist concepts of class and class struggle. To a large degree these notions were important in helping to inspire and to formulate the philosophies of feminism and de-colonialization, in elevating them to universal concerns. With the continued growth and fragmentation of the new social movements, which have taken place largely outside organised class interests and institutions, traditional Marxist notions increasingly seemed to be reductionistic. The emergence of social and cultural difference could not be captured theoretically or explained adequately in terms of simple 'class interests'. In one sense this juncture represented a conceptual shift from 'class' to a more anthropologically differentiated notion of 'culture'. This is not to deny the importance of Marxism, itself, in influencing the 'cultural tum'. One has only to think of the seminal works of Raymond Williams or E.P. Thompson in this respect and their combined effect in devising new approaches to the study of cultural history or in helping to initiate and delineate cultural studies as a field of legitimate academic interest (see Johnson: 1986).

Indeed, it was Raymond Williams who first took a 'democratic' approach to the definition of culture and emphasised the modern diversity of cultural experience in which 'working-class culture'

could no longer be denied its own existence. In a later work Williams (1983:87-93) maps the range and overlap of meanings of the word 'culture'; its early use as a noun of process; its metaphorical extension to human development through until the late eighteenth century; and its status as an independent noun for an abstract process which marks the history of its use in modem times. His analysis is comprehensive. Williams maintains that the use of 'culture' in French and German as a synonym for 'civilisation' was to undergo a marked change of use in Herder, who challenged the assumption of universal history which pictured 'civilisation' or 'culture' as a unilinear process 'leading to the high and dominant point' of eighteen century European culture. This was first and foremost a reassertion of the idea of the Volksgeist -- an emphasis on national and traditional cultures -- and later it became the basis for attacking the abstract rationalism and 'inhumanity' of emerging industrial 'civilisation'. After Herder, it became possible to speak of cultures' in the plural: 'the specific and variable cultures of nations and periods, but also the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation' (Williams, 1983; 89). The dominant sense of the word as it prevails in modem social science is to be traced first to Klemm 's 'decisive innovation', and later following Klemm, to Tylor 's usage.

In addition to these usages, Williams (1983:90-91) also identifies a third and relatively late use of 'culture' as an 'independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity'. He indicates that the opposition between 'material' and 'spiritual' that bedevilled its earlier usage, in modem terms is repeated in the disciplines: archaeology and cultural anthropology refer to material production whereas history and cultural studies make reference, rather, to signifying or symbolic systems. To his mind this confuses and conceals the central question of the relations between 'material' and 'symbolic' production which he develops in providing a socialist theory of culture (see Williams, 1981).

Williams' observations are important not only for their theoretical contributions but also because they offer a stand-point to recognise the complexity of actual usage, the problems which arise from the conflation of different senses, and the way in which the history of the word 'culture' is still active, still in the making.

Thus, he notes the coining of culchah (a class mime-word) and culture-vulture (American) as signs of hostility to the notion when it has been used as a basis for making claims to superior knowledge, refinement and 'high' art; and, at the same time, he indicates how this hostility has diminished as the sociological and anthropological uses of the term (eg. in sub-culture) have been steadily extended.

To these specifically modem developments we can add enormously: 'the cultural industry' (Horkheimer and Adorno); 'mass culture' (Irving Howe); 'consumer culture'; 'the culture of narcissism' (Lasch); and even more recently 'information culture', 'popular culture', and most recently, 'global culture'. What these terms variously attempt to describe is 'culture' in its ambiguous relationship to late capitalism or advanced industrial society. In a word these epithets attempt to characterise what I will call 'postmodernism'. It is a word to which Williams (1989:48) himself, takes exception. He regards postmodemism as 'a strictly ideological compound from an enemy formation'. In taking this position he is not alone. In a now classic formation Jameson (1985) theorises postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism, although, significantly, he leaves open the possibility that it may have the double capacity to also resist that logic. Hal Foster (1985) was, perhaps, the first to name this ambiguity by announcing a 'postmodernism of reaction' and its antithesis in a 'postmodernism of resistance'. Others such as Hutcheon (1989:21) have taken his lead to emphasise the complicity of postmodernism with late capitalism while at the same time seeking an agenda for resistance, maintaining that since the advent of 'postmodernism' representation can 'no longer be considered a politically and theoretically innocent activity'.

Jameson (1989a; 1989b; 1990) has had cause to modify the 'starkness' and purity of his original position. He indicates that his thoughts are to be understood 'as an attempt to theorise the specific logic of the cultural reproduction of that third stage' of capitalism, following Mandel, and not as 'yet

another disembodied cultural critique'. He calls for 'the renewal of historical analysis itself' and confronts the paradox of asserting a totalizing, unified theory of differentiation by challenging the levels of abstraction: 'a system that constitutively produces differences remains a system' (Jameson, 1989a: 343). The logic of capital he maintains is 'a dispersive and atomistic, "individualistic" one', which, contradictorily, yet stems from its own systemic structure: 'the very concept of differentiation ... is itself a systemic one' (35). Even so, he argues, the mode of production is not a 'total system' in the forbidding sense alluded to by Foucault and Weber for it, includes a variety of counterforces and new tendencies within itself, of 'residual' as well as 'emergent' forces, which it must attempt to manage or control (Gramsci's conception of hegemony): were those heterogeneous forces not endowed with an effectivity of their own, the hegemonic project would be unnecessary.

In this transitional period in which earlier economic forms are being restructured on a global scale, he maintains, a new international proletariat will eventually emerge. Does Jameson here betray a sense of a pluralism which admits of a distinctively postmodern politics of resistance? He asserts elsewhere (Jameson, 1989b: 11) in an interview with Anders Stephanson, that the idea of a cultural dominant does not exclude forms of resistance and he emphasises that postmodernism has both positive and negative factors. He suggests, for instance, that the democratisation of culture 'cannot be altogether bad' and that 'even heterogeneity is a positive thing': He writes, 'the point is that many of these seemingly negative features can be looked at positively if they are seen historically' (1989b: 13). His major emphasis is on the fact that: 'these developments have to be confronted as a historical situation rather than as something to be morally deplored or simply celebrated' (12). In an interview with Stuart Hall in Marxism Today, Jameson (1990:28) elaborates his analysis. Within a 'relatively anonymous systemic culture' it becomes 'problematic to talk about ruling classes in the old way'. A sign of postmodernism as a 'tendentially complete modernisation' is the 'plebianisation of culture':

> the way in which much larger sections of the public now consume culture on a regular basis and live within culture in ways that they didn't have the occasion to do before, that's a crucial part of post-modernism, which underscores its ambiguity. One cannot object to the democratisation of culture, but one must object to other features of it. These mixed feelings have to be preserved in any analysis of the postmodern (Jameson, 1990:29).

It seems that the notion of 'class culture' becomes less applicable in new circumstances emphasising a systemicity. Rather, looked at from the outside, from the perspective of the non-West, the old term 'cultural imperialism' is more relevant. In this sense the real object is North American culture as an expression of corporate capitalism 'which is exported and implanted by way of media technology'. The crucial point is that such 'consumer culture' is now more systemic, more regulated and rationalised, than it has ever been before. Cultural production has reached a stage where reflexive, critical distance from it is both less obvious and less possible. Even oppositional and critical forms have become fully enmeshed or integrated into the system of cultural production, to the point where there is no public space left for critical reflection on the system or its relation to the economic and political systems. Stuart Hall advances the central problem in lucid terms. The question is, whether what is going on in the postmodern is simply a dominant system producing marked differentiation as part of its own logic of domination: or whether there really has been a shift, representing the power of the marginalised or subordinated cultures and people to make what you called, earlier, a real difference (Hall 1990: 30).

If it is the case that the system is producing its own differentiation 'then the "logic of history" in a classical Marxist sense is still operating, while going through one of its many epochal changes'. If, on the other hand, the second scenario holds true, then these changes may in fact represent the suspension of the 'logic of history' and the end of the meta-narrative of classical Marxism.

Jameson (1990: 30) is certainly clear on the fact that it is politically positive that subgroups and subcultures have been able to attain 'a certain collective existence that they didn't have before'. And yet at the same time he comments on how these developments clearly fit into 'a kind of cultural

commodification on the part of the industries that now have a new submarket and produce new things for it'. He is pessimistic about a purely cultural politics and agrees with Hall how the sense of totality, collective action and solidarity has been undermined by the new logic of 'difference'. Yet he is adamant, nevertheless, that the new phase of global capitalism also carries with it a new class logic which 'has not yet completely emerged because labour has not yet reconstituted itself on a global scale' (Jameson 1990: 31).

Others have recognised the tension (contradiction?) between forces of cultural homogenisation and those of cultural heterogenization within 'the global cultural economy' (Appadurai, 1990). In this context some theorists have sought to emphasise 'a postmodernism of resistance'. Mike Featherstone (1990:2), for instance, embraces a positive and optimistic reading of postmodernism. He writes:

> Postmodernism is both a symptom and a powerful cultural image of the swing away from the conceptualisation of global culture less in terms of alleged homogenising processes (theories which present cultural imperialism, Americanization and mass consumer culture as a proto-universal culture riding on the back of Western economic and political domination) and more in terms of the diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses, codes and practices which resist play-back systemicity and order.

From his perspective, sociology must develop new modes of investigation which renders problematic not only conceptions of society tied exclusively to the bounded nation-state but also assumptions inherent in models of rationalisation, modernisation and industrialisation. 'In effect', he writes (1990:3), 'the assumption is that we have moved beyond the logic of the universal "iron cage" nationalisation process' and he encourages us to discard the binary logic which seeks to understand culture in terms of mutually exclusive opposites: homogeneity/heterogeneity, integration/disintegration, unity/diversity.

In another contribution to the same issue, Anthony Smith (1990) fleshes out the argument that proceeds from analyses of late capitalism and/or post-industrialism in the following terms. The main thrust of such analyses, he suggests, is a move away from small-scale community towards a world of cultural imperialism which is technical and elitist in terms of its cultural base, promoted 'from above', with little popular or public participation.

A global culture, so the argument runs, will be eclectic like its Western or European progenitor, but will wear a uniformly streamlined packaging. Standardized, commercialized mass commodities will nevertheless draw for their content upon revivals of traditional, folk or national motifs and styles in fashion, furnishings, music and the arts, lifted out of their original contexts and anaesthetized. So that a global culture would operate at several levels simultaneously: as a cornucopia of standardized commodities, as a patchwork of denationalized ethnic or folk motifs, as a series of generalized human values and interests' as a uniform 'scientific' discourse of meaning, and finally as the interdependent system of communications which forms the material base for all other components and levels (Smith, 1990: 176).

He adds that today's emerging global culture is contextless in the sense that it is tied to no place or period. It is also timeless in that it is cut off from any past. Yet having built up this picture he then asserts that the project of a global culture (as opposed to global communications) is somewhat premature. Collective identity is always historically specific and dependent upon showed memories and a sense of continuity between generations. Smith (1990: 183) believes that national cultures, 'inspired by rediscovered ethno-histories, [will] continue to divide our world into discrete cultural blocks, which show little sign of harmonisation, let alone amalgamation'.

His analysis, while mindful of world cultural diversity and the power of unifying systems of non-Western national symbols, underplays, to my way of thinking, the influence of market forces in global terms. Various studies (including those of Sennett, Lasch, Richards and Rustin) have examined the process of identity formation in the West and, particularly, the way in which young people now grow up in the market rather than at home. Richards (1984: 134), for instance, writes:

> Finding one's identity means establishing oneself in a particular niche in the world of commodities; it means putting together, from the available elements, an idiosyncratic style of consumption. Selfhood is thus increasingly dependent on consumption and less so on secure intrapsychic identification with other persons (my emphasis).

Rustin (1989: 121), plotting parallels between postmodern thought and the evolution of post-Kleinian ideas, suggests that the undermining of transcendental certainties is in part the cultural concomitant of consumer society, 'a way of rationalising (and celebrating) the experience of an overload of meanings, cut off from their integral location in historical time and social space'. He continues: 'Identity is both fragmented by the multiplicity of choices, and also depleted in its sense of depth by discontinuities, by the seemingly untenable and provincial quality of any definite cultural affiliation'.

Part of the point I wish to make by reference to Richard's and Rustin's observations is how young people growing up as the first generation heir to global telecommunications and to an emerging global consumer culture, rapidly take on the characteristic behaviours of consumers, defining themselves in terms of the styles of clothing, food, music, and the host of available products in the market. This is so as much for young people from more traditional cultures as it is for white bourgeois and 'working class' youth, especially for those living in the modem metropolises, which function as large but segmented niche markets for consumer products. Sometimes the process is one of fusion rather than fission but from this situation it is possible to gain some insight into the incipient global processes. The fact that television 'family sit-corns' in Latin America are delivered in Spanish or that the 'cult of celebrity' in Hong Kong movie-making ventures revolves around indigenous 'stars' does not alleviate the point of argument: the recipes, the format and the logic of the production of culture are the same.

Arjun Appadurai (1990) also typifies 'homogenization' arguments as emanating from 'the left end of the spectrum of media studies'. These 'subspeciate', he asserts, into an argument about Americanization or into an argument about commodification; very often the two are closely linked. Yet these arguments, he maintains, ignore the way 'metropolitan forces' are indigenized and adds that for the people of Irian Java, Indonesianization may be more worrisome than Americanization, as Japanization may be for Koreans, Indianization for Sri Lankans, Vietnamization for the Cambodians, Russianization for the people of Soviet Armenia and the Baltic Republics (Appadurai, 1990:295).

In an essay inspired by Jameson 's original piece, Appadurai (1990:296) maintains that the new global cultural economy cannot be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models, or even in terms of models postulating multiple centres and peripheries. It has to be understood rather 'as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order' with 'fundamental disjunctures' between the economic, cultural and political spheres. His own effort, he tells us, is an attempt to restructure the Marxist narrative in this way while avoiding the dangers of obliterating difference within the 'third world', of eliding the social referent ... and of retaining the narrative authority of the Marxist tradition, in favour of greater attention to global fragmentation, uncertainty and difference (Appadurai 1990:308).

He provides an 'elementary framework' for exploring such disjunctures in terms of the relationships between five dimensions of global cultural 'flows' which he specifies as: ethnoscapes; mediascapes; technoscapes; finanscapes and ideoscapes. Ethnoscapes are produced by flows of people including tourists, immigrants, refugees and exiles. Mediascapes involve flows of images and ideas in terms of telecommunications, magazines, films and newspapers. Technoscapes are plant and machinery flows through the conduits of multinational and national corporations as well as government organisations. Finanscapes refer to flows of money in the stock exchanges and currency markets; and ideoscapes, in Mike Featherstone's (1990) words, are 'linked to flows of images which are associated with state or counter-state movement ideologies which are comprised

of elements of the Western Enlightenment worldview - images of democracy, freedom, rights, welfare ... '

In providing this analysis, Appadurai (1990a: 4-5) is stressing the role of the imagination as a social practice in the global cultural process. He is consciously bringing together the old idea. of images (as mechanical reproduction, from the Frankfurt school), the notion of the 'imagined community' (in Benedict Anderson's sense), and the French 'structuralist' idea of the 'imaginary', as a constructed landscape of collective aspirations. His point is that the complexity of the current global economy hypothesised in terms of fundamental disjunctures (between the economic, the political and the cultural) constitutes as an area which 'we have barely begun to theorise' (Appadurai, 1990:296).

III: Postscript on Education and Cultural Studies

I have attempted to trace some of the main developments in recent attempts to theorise 'culture'. It would be negligent of me to exclude all reference to education and to the field of education in New Zealand. There is now a vast literature in education which refers to 'cultural studies'. Indeed, it is the case that educational theorists were instrumental in launching British cultural studies, especially in its second generation. In this regard I am thinking of the work of Paul Willis and Angela McRobbie. Certainly, also the work of Bourdieu and Passeron, from a different perspective, has had a profound impact on the field of education and; in particular, sociology of education, as has the work of Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren on the question of social reproduction and 'resistance theory'. The recent influence of poststructuralism is beginning to make its influence felt in education, providing a distinctively new perspective on cultural questions, especially when it comes to questions of language and representation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to review these developments either internationally or at the local level, although I might mention a few local examples based around the contributions and interests of my colleagues in the Department of Education at Auckland University, who make up the Editorial Board of *Access.*

First, cultural studies in education in New Zealand cannot but take account of what we might broadly call Kaupapa Maori by which I mean not the work that flows from anthropology as a discipline, even although it may have its disciplinary roots in that subject. I am thinking more of a kind of indigenous theory which can be defined in the work of Linda and Graham Smith - their students and The Research Unit for Maori Education - on Maori education. It is diverse in that it draws upon a number of theoretical strands, including: the early work in the sociology of education of Michael Young focused on questions of knowledge and control; the writings of Paulo Freire on critical literacy and 'empowerment'; the 'philosophy of decolonisation' based around Cesaire, Fanon and more recently, those theorists such as Said and Bhabha who set the contemporary agenda for the contested field of the 'postcolonial'; the Marxist political economy of Bowles and Gintis; and the emergent field of cultural studies. This work has a distinctive practical focus centering upon the struggle for control over Maori knowledge and its praxis is defined by the project of Kaupapa Maori schooling. Within this general project which embodies a commitment to Maori epistemologies, concepts, values and practices there are a number of other elements in critical literacy and the schooling of Maori children (Kuni Jenkins), in the contestation of Maori colonial history with The Native Schools Project (Judith Simon), and bilingual language development (Margie Hohepa).

Second, one can point to Alison Jones' (1991) work as a particularly influential example of the 'cultural studies' approach embodying its various assumptions in a critical ethnography of differences in cultural reproduction for Pacific Islands and pakeha girls at secondary school. The diversity of feminist theory and approaches including both neo-Marxist and 'post-structuralist' accounts, involve the intellectual labours of Alison Jones, Kay Morris-Matthews, and Kuni Jenkins. Kay Morris-Matthews recently completed her Ph.D thesis on the history of Women's Studies in New Zealand.

Third, there is the strong tradition of political sociology of education, centered around education policy and the state, represented by the internationally-renowned work of Roger Dale. Fourth, Pacific Islands education is the basis of Lita Foliaki 's interests and those of Eve Coxon, who, in addition, has interests in the politics of development in the Pacific region.

Fifth, is the work of James Marshall (and myself) in the area of philosophy of education, adopting 'poststructuralist' approaches to focus upon political, cultural, and policy issues in education. James Marshall has, in addition, been largely responsible for the introduction of a study of Foucault's work, while my own interests center around post-structuralism more broadly. We have been recently joined in educational philosophy by Jacqui Fisher and Nicole Bishop. Sixth, there is Stephen Appel 's work in the areas of sociology of education, psychoanalysis and cultural studies. Finally, we are to be joined by Peter Roberts who has a strong interests in critical literacy and the work of Paulo Freire. Together these interests of the Cultural and Policy Studies Group in Education at Auckland University define the scope for the new orientation we have given to *Access* in order to take into account not only questions of education but cultural questions and approaches, broadly defined.

Lawrence Grossberg (1993:89) has written that cultural studies 'encompasses a set of approaches that attempt to understand and intervene into the relations of culture and power'. He outlines three commitments of cultural studies as an emerging critical practice: that reality is made through human action and that, therefore, contestation is a basic category; that the 'popular' is regarded as the 'terrain on which people live and political struggle must be carried out in the contemporary world' (90); and that cultural studies is committed· to a radical contextualism which means that cultural practices cannot be reduced to or simply treated as texts. He invokes the notion of 'articulation' to argue that 'the question of the politics of culture ... involves the work of placing particular practices into particular relations or contexts, and of transforming one set of relations, one context, into another' (90).

With Grossberg's comments in mind let me turn briefly to the New Zealand cultural context and conclude by making a few remarks upon the cultural transformation we have undergone since 1984. Inescapably, the fundamental change we have both witnessed and contested in various ways is the set of policy changes that have originated with the New Right. The popular metaphor here is that of 'restructuring' and we have experienced a distinct sequence of restructurings: the restructuring of the economy towards greater liberalisation (eg., the abolition of subsidies, floating of the dollar, deregulation of finance market); the restructuring of the 'core' public sector, that is, corporatisation and privatisation of state trading organisations (eg., The State-Owned Enterprises Act 1986); the restructuring of the 'residual' public sector --- the commercialisation and privatisation of health, welfare and education. More recently, we have faced an unparalleled cultural restructuring which is advertised under the slogan of 'enterprise culture' (see Peters, 1992). 'Enterprise culture' represents the latest attempt by the National Government, together with elements of big business, to 'restructure' a national culture so as to create a fully privatised market society. It is a notion that has been contrasted with a welfare state 'culture of dependency' and its advocates are committed to institutionalising the game of enterprise as a generalised principle for the organisation of society as a whole. This principle involves a form of neo-liberal individualism which ultimately means fashioning one's own life as the enterprise of oneself: the individual becomes the entrepreneur of himself or herself. This is particularly noticeable in education policies which are driven by the human capital interpretation of work as comprising a genetic endowment and an acquired set of aptitudes produced as a result of private investment in education. Here clearly education and economics join hands to reconstruct culture and society. It indicates strongly to me both the necessity for a critical approach in education which traverses the combined territories of 'policy' and 'culture' and the fact that we are unlikely to run out of work!

Notes

1. This 'paper' was written originally at the behest of the editors of *Access,* Linda Smith and Stephen Appel, who asked me to provide some 'notes on culture' for an editorial to service a new orientation of the journal. Recently, within the Department of Education the group responsible for the publication of *Access* chose to change its name from 'Policy Studies' to 'Cultural and Policy Studies', in order to reflect its broader interests and, in particular, to characterise the emphasis within the group - one of two academic groups within the Department - of an institutional commitment to Maori education and Pacific Islands education. The original paper was designed to provide something of a backdrop to the recent theorisations of 'culture' in social theory. The editors then asked me to develop the original 'notes' into a paper to help express a new and wider set of interests for *Access.*

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