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Critical Pedagogy and the Postmodern Challenge: Toward a Critical Postmodernist Pedagogy of Liberation

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The Postmodern Condition and the Pedagogical Challenge

Work within the field of critical pedagogy is currently being undertaken in the United States and Canada during what we consider a precipitous and precarious time. The present historical juncture may be singled out as a moment of particular urgency and importance for the future of democracy as we bear witness to two conflicting potentialities which manifest themselves in the struggle on an increasing worldwide basis between democratic forms of social life and those which can be labelled totalitarian and autocratic. A significant dimension of this crisis involves the politics of meaning and representation. We call attention to the present cultural logic or sensibility currently organizing

aspects of everyday life, a logic which has been variously theorized under the term "postmodern." Recognizing that there exists a lack of shared understanding of what constitutes a "real" postmodern political or cultural agenda, we use the term here only in its most general sense to refer to, among other things, the rupturing of the unitary fixity and homogenizing logic of the grand narratives of Western European thought--what Lyotard refers to as the *grands recits* of modernity (the dialectic of Spirit, the emancipation of the worker, the accumulation of wealth, the steady march of progress leading to the classless society, and the mastery of nature, etc.). We have also included under this term the cultural reproduction of subjects out of the consumer myths and images fed by the global dispersion of capital, the social construction of unfixed identities, and the levelling of the opposition between high art and popular art. In a very broad sense, we are also using this term to suggest the rejection of truth claims that have a grounding in a transcendent reality independent of collective human existence, an abandonment of the teleology of science, the construction of lifestyles out of consumer products and cultural bricolage, and cultural forms of communication and social relations that have evolved from the disorganization of capitalism.

The debate surrounding postmodernity is not only gathering momentum in literary journals, but also in journals dealing with social theory, cultural studies, education, and legal studies.¹ A central thesis of postmodernism is that meaning is increasingly becoming severed from representation. Peter Burger puts it thus: "in our society the sign no longer refers to a signified but always only to other signs, so that we no longer encounter anything like meaning with our speech, but only move in an endless chain of signifiers" (1989: 124). In other words, the unity of the sign and its ability to anchor meaning has been significantly weakened. The average individual lacks a language for making sense of everyday life. Burger writes that

The modern culture industry robs individuals of 'languages' for interpreting self and world by denying them the media for organizing their own experiences. The consciousness industry does represent a public sphere of production, but one that takes consciousness as 'raw material' or that constantly tries to sever the connection between concrete experiences and consciousness. (1984: xxviii-xxvix).

Lawrence Grossberg (1988b: 180) echoes this theme when he writes that:

Contemporary ideological structures seem incapable of making sense of certain affective experiences...But this does not mean

that we do not continue to live within and experience ourselves in terms of particular ideological meanings and values; simply that these are increasingly unrelated to our affective moods, that they cannot speak to them.

As a result of the postmodern condition, the alienation of the subject associated with modernism has been replaced by the **fragmentation of the subject**, what Madan Sarup (1989), citing literary critic Fredric Jameson and economist Ernest Mandel, refers to as "a refusal to engage with the present or to think historically...a random cannibalization of all the styles of the past...[an increasing incapacity] of fashioning representations of our current experiences...[and] the penetration and colonization of Nature and the Unconscious by contemporary forms of multinational capitalism" (1989: 145). Unlike Sarup, however, we do not hold that post-structuralist/postmodernist theories which have emerged in recent years to engage and explore our location within the postmodern condition are necessarily antagonistic to the project of self and social emancipation.

In our view, postmodernity positions us **within** the tension produced by modernist and postmodernist attempts to resolve the living contradiction of being both the subject and object of meaning. We refer here to two distinct ways of ordering reality discussed by David Holt (1989: 174). Holt describes these orderings as being reflected in the following questions: Does meaning generate life or does life generate meaning? The first question is posed within the discourse of modernity in which it is assumed that our lives should be lived out as an **explanation of a meaning prior to life**, a transcendental meaning that is codified in a conception of metaphysical truth. The latter question reflects the advent of postmodernity and the shattering of the notion of "truth" based on metaphysical assumptions. To **live life as if it generated meaning** is to live within the contingency and uncertainty of the present, a present in which ethics, tradition, and agency are revealed to be social constructions or cultural fictions. Living within the tension created by these two questions generates further questions: Do we act in order to represent meanings or do we act for the sake of the possible effects of our actions? Does action create identity or does action follow from identity? While these questions have always occupied the projects engaged in over the centuries by philosophers of various stripe, the postmodern condition has turned our attention more boldly to the **interface** between such questions. Throughout this paper we try to emphasize that **it is the educator's task to help students critically engage the politics and ideologies which inform these questions as students begin to understand themselves as both a product and producer of meaning**. We claim that it is precisely by critically engaging the dialectical tension between these two questions that we must assume our role as active

social agents. To live as a critical social agent means knowing how to live contingently and provisionally without the certainty of knowing the truth, yet at the same time with the courage to take a stand on issues of human suffering, domination, and oppression. This is the "postmodern" task of the critical educator--to live with courage and conviction with the understanding that knowledge is always partial and incomplete--a task to which this paper has been directed.

Bauman lists as characteristics of postmodernity "the widespread aversion to grand social designs, the loss of interest in absolute truths, the privatization of redemptive urges [e.g., self as opposed to social transformation], the reconciliation with the relative--merely heuristic--value of all life techniques, the acceptance of the irredeemable plurality of the world" (1988-89: 39). He notes that these characteristics are a consequence of the fact that the abolition of strangeness has been raised to the level of a universal human condition.

Ineradicable plurality is now a constitutive quality of existence and represents a refusal to overcome differences for the sake of sameness. Values so central to modernity--uniformity and universalism--have become ruptured, and replaced by coexistence and tolerance. Bauman writes that "in the plural and pluralistic world of postmodernity, every form of life is **permitted on principle**; or, rather, no agreed principles are evident which may render any form of life impermissible" (p. 40). Gone is the "surgical stance" of attitudes and policies of institutionalized powers and the opposition between ignorance over superstition. Bauman distinguishes between the modernist (cognitive) and postmodernist (post-cognitive) questions. Modernist questions "How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?" have been replaced by postmodernist ones: "Which world is it? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" (p. 40).

The so-called cognitive questions, upon closer inspection, turn out not to be cognitive at all, but questions that "reach beyond the boundaries of epistemology" (p. 42); they are fundamentally pre-epistemological. Modernist questions such as "What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it and with what degree of certainty?" are replaced by questions which do not locate the task for the knower but attempt to locate the knower: "What is a world? What kinds of worlds are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?" (p. 42). Questions demanding certainty, such as "How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?" are positioned against "What happens when different worlds are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?" (p. 42).

We take Bauman's insights into the shift from a modernist quest for certainty to a postmodernist attempt to understand shifting contexts to be extremely important, for they speak to a growing tension between these two

positions which possess both empowering and constraining potential for the struggle against oppression and the quest for human freedom. While we welcome the breaking down of grand theories informed by Eurocentric and patriarchal assumptions and epistemological certainties, we are aware that questions related to oppression and liberation have a greater propensity to become lost in a new postmodernist relativism, where the question of "How can we eliminate suffering?" collapses into the question, "What is suffering?" Bauman captures this tension when he writes: "It seems in the world of universal strangeness the stranger is no longer obsessed with the absoluteness of what ought to be; nor is he disturbed by the relativity of what is" (p. 42).

We do not wish to enter into an extended discussion of postmodernity here, except to note that there are both utopian and dystopian currents to the postmodern condition and post-structuralist theorizing. But what is important to recognize in this ongoing debate is that **postmodernity has brought with it not only new forms of collective self-reflexivity but also new forms of ideological colonization**. Critics as diverse as Andreas Huyssen, Todd Gitlin, and Fredric Jameson have pointed out that postmodernism has a specifically, though not exclusively, American strain. Cornel West (Stephanson 1988: 276) refers to this strain as "a form of Americanization of the world," what Anders Stephanson calls "the codification of life in Los Angeles" (p. 276) or what we would refer to as the "Los Angelesization of the globe." The rise of postmodernism has been materially tied to the rise of American capital on a global scale, dated to the late 1950s and early 1960s, an era of interimperialist rivalry and multinationalization. It has been argued by Fredric Jameson, for instance, that the persistence of *l'ancien regime* in Europe precluded the same kind of development there, but in the United States a whole new system of cultural production emerged and a new, specifically American cultural apparatus or "cultural dominant" began to serve as a form of ideological hegemony, forcing Third World countries in the untenable condition of "catch up" (Stephanson, 1988, 8). While the postwar Germans, for instance, were busy trying to reappropriate a suppressed modernism, the artistic avant-garde in the United States, faced with "cold war orthodoxy and corporate-sponsored smugness," launched a direct revolt "against the officially enshrined modernism of the postwar period" (Gitlin 1989: 105).

Postmodernity has also been described as the era of the death of the Cartesian subject and a retreat from history. In fact, MacCannell (1989: xiii) goes so far as to say, following Levi-Strauss, that after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the stockpiling of nuclear weapons by strategic nuclear planners, American society has deemed it too risky to have history and therefore has effectively abandoned it as its motive power of development, entering instead the "reversible time" of so-called primitive societies which, though they are immersed in history, nevertheless try to remain impervious to it.

One strand of contemporary postmodernism has grown out of the juxtaposing currents of American culture: emancipation and the rise of immigration in the late nineteenth century and assimilation into the American myth of the melting pot. It is within this type of postmodern juxtaposition that some critics have argued that "a love for the common people...[becomes]... indistinguishable from contempt" (Gitlin, 1989, 108). This is reflective of MacCannell's notion that a mere celebration of difference can become really an insidious higher form of "sucking difference out of difference, a movement to the still higher ground of the old arrogant Western Ego that wants to see it all, know it all, and take it all in, an Ego that is isolated by its belief in its own superiority" (1989, xiv-xv).

It is within the context of this discussion that we assert the following: a critical understanding of the relationship between the self and other is one of the crucial challenges of current pedagogical practices in the age of postmodernism. This is especially true in light of MacCannell's observation that two dominant activities shaping world culture are the movement of institutional capital and tourists to remote regions and "the preparation of the periphery for their arrival" and, more recently, the "rapid implosion of the Third World into the First" by which he means the movement of refugees and displaced peoples "from the periphery to the centers of power and affluence." For instance, in the case of the United States, MacCannell notes the profound implications which follow from cultural implosions such as the following:

Entire villages of Hmong peasants and hunters, recently from the highlands of Laos, have been relocated and now live in apartment complexes in Madison, Wisconsin. Refugees from El Salvador work in Manhattan, repackaging cosmetics, removing perfume from Christmas gift boxes, rewrapping them in Valentine boxes. Legal and illegal "aliens" work the agricultural fields of California. (1989: xvi).

The implication here for educators is to construct a pedagogy of "difference" which neither exoticizes nor demonizes the "Other" but rather seeks to locate difference in both its specificity and ability to provide positions for critically engaging social relations and cultural practices. (We will return to the theme of "difference" later on in the paper.)

We wish to point out that, like the cultural theorist Lawrence Grossberg (1988b), we do not conceive of postmodernity as a "total historical rupture" that constitutes the ideological representation of late capitalism, the commodification of our decentered subjectivities, the implosion of the difference between the image and the real, or the collapse of all meta-narratives, but rather as a sensibility or logic by which we appropriate in the contem-

porary context, cultural practices into our own lives. That is, like Grossberg, we wish to call attention to postmodernity as a process significantly less totalizing, as "determining moments in culture and everyday life" (Grossberg 1988b: 39). Postmodernity in this view refers to the "growing distance, an expanding series of ruptures or gaps, between these various aspects of everyday life, between the available meanings, values and objects of desire which socially organize our existence and identity, and the possibilities for investing in or caring about them which are enabled by our moods and emotions" (p. 39). Grossberg is referring here to a feeling or sensibility that life no longer has any fundamental purpose to which we can passionately commit our lives. He puts it aptly when he remarks that our "mattering maps no longer correspond to any available maps of meaning" (p. 40). Postmodernity is, in short, a crisis of meaning and feeling: "a dissolution of what we might call the 'anchoring affect' that articulates meaning and affect" (p. 40). One of the dangers of postmodern culture is the establishment of what Grossberg calls a "disciplined mobilization" by which he means "the construction of a frontier as an unbridgeable gap between the livable and the unlivable, the possible and impossible, the real and the unreal" (p. 37). A disciplined mobilization refers to the temporal and spatial articulation of texts through social practices which give us both stability and mobility within everyday life. It "defines the very possibilities of where and how we move and stop, of where and how we place and displace ourselves, or where and how we are installed into cultural texts and extended beyond them" (p. 36-37). Such a "typography of cultural practices" defines the sites within culture we can occupy, the investments we can make in them, and the places along which we can connect and transform them. Grossberg is specifically concerned here with the increasing ability of the New Right to develop ideological and affective alliances among social groups. That is, if we look at the postmodern frontier as a site of struggle among discourses, material practices, and representations, we can argue, along with Grossberg, that the New Right has been able to rearticulate, reconstruct, and reterritorialize the "national popular" (the family, nationalism, consumerism, youth, pleasure, heroes, etc.) against itself as affectively charged but ideologically empty. One example of this is the ability of New Class neo-conservatives to manipulate traditional populism (Picone 1987-88: 21).

Youth and Postmodern Apathy

Even in this postmodern era, the ideological hegemony in the United States, while irredeemably condemnable and undeniably powerful, is not without its contradictory moments. Students oftentimes see the critical educator's concern for community and social justice as a threat to their general ideological commitments. Critical pedagogy becomes, for many

students, an uncomfortable and self-contesting exercise. They are reluctant or refuse to question meanings, preferring instead to live them.

We don't want to absorb student apathy about politics and social change into traditional political categories and end up by offering yet another "blaming the victim" analysis of the ideological formation of today's youth. Rather, we want to acknowledge that there are historical conditions which account for youth resistance and apathy to schooling. For instance, Grossberg notes that "youth inserts cultural texts into its public and private lives in complex ways and we need to be aware of the complexity and contradictory nature of youth's social and political positions" (1988a: 139). Grossberg rightly recognizes that in our postmodern era, young people exist within the space between subjectification (boredom) and commodification (terror). Our media culture has become a "buffer zone," a "paradoxical site" at which the youth of today live out a difficult if not impossible relation to the future. In fact, Grossberg argues that American youth have largely been formed out of the media strategies of the "autonomous affect" in which politics, values, and meaning have been reduced to individualized images of morality, self-sacrifice, and community. They are living the surface identities of media images in which the politics of interpretive insight is replaced by the politics of "feeling good."

For instance, Grossberg points to one cultural struggle in which the New Right has taken the lead: the attack on the counterculture of the sixties and seventies, in part through its ability to reconstruct the history of the war in Vietnam. A brief treatment of such a reconstruction will help to illustrate Grossberg's point.

Vietnam was a war fought by youth (the average age of a combat soldier was nineteen) and became "the symbol of the moment when the identification of the postwar youth generations with America fell apart and consequently, the moment when America lost, not only its center but its faith in a center" (Grossberg 1988b: 56). Yet popular narratives in the media now attempt "to place the war back into the familiar frameworks of traditional war narratives or personal drama" (p. 57). The existence of the counter-culture at that time is generally ignored in popular representations of the war. Rather, the war is interpreted as an attack on America and its sacred values--"the moment when the postwar youth generations lost their faith, not only in America, but in the possibility of ever finding a center, an identity, in which it could invest" (p. 58). The effect of ignoring the counter-culture is to displace "the ideological content from youth culture and [transform] it into purely affective relations" (p. 59)--or "affective nostalgia." That there exist few grounds presently available to students upon which to imagine constructing an oppositional or counter-hegemonic pedagogical stance in a cultural center with no real ideological content--only feelings--makes the challenge of critical pedagogy all the more acute and all the more pressing.

Aside from youth's subjective formation through the "affective alliances" of mass media, part of the problem with the refusal of youth to engage in issues of class oppression and social injustice both inside and outside the classroom has to do with the fact that within the United States, the question of domination and oppression is not as overtly evident as it is, for instance, in many Third World countries. United States civil society is less simply structured by divisions based on the conflict of labor and capital. Consequently, class relations do not appear to cause social inequality and consequently there is a greater focus on oppressive instances of gender divisions, age differences, and ethnic conflict. In other words, we do not live within structures of terror such as those found, for instance, in El Salvador or Guatemala, where workers are frequently dispatched by a *coup de grace* through the forehead. Furthermore, collective action does not seem as necessary within a climate of political and cultural pluralism, although the presence of the black underclass and the homeless is somewhat changing this spectatorial detachment towards human oppression. The point is that class, gender, and racial oppression do exist, regardless of the perception by the public-at-large (Baum 1987).

Grossberg admits that given the New Right's incursion into the frontier between affect and ideology, where only or mainly emotional responses are possible without the benefit of ideological understanding or commitment, there is little room for Gramsci's "optimism of the will" so necessary for political struggle, for understanding and confronting affective commitment outside of the system of cultural power within which such an investment is constructed, and for assuming a necessary relationship between affective investment and external systems of meaning. For instance, the desire among conservatives and die-hard "patriots" to make flag burning a crime (whether by constitutional amendment or civil blasphemy statute) as a reaction against the recent United States Supreme Court ruling, is an excellent example of affective commitment in which patriotism is constructed, in Grossberg's terms, as an "empty center" devoid of the kind of ideological engagement that makes it impossible to undermine any definition of what America means other than absolute commitment to America itself.²

It is our view that in relation to what is happening on the popular front, critical pedagogy must become a strategic and empowering response to those historical conditions which have produced us as subjects, and to the ways we are inserted on a daily basis into the frontier of popular culture and existing structures of power. It is our claim that a clarification of some of the practices of critical pedagogy can, as a form of intellectual labor, have transformative effects, enabling us to deconstruct and move beyond affective investments "to a higher level of abstraction in order to transform the empirically taken-for-granted into the concretely determined" (Grossberg, 1988b: 68). We attempt such a clarification in the pages that follow.

Educational Responses to the Postmodern Condition

In the following sections we shall attempt to sketch out the emergence of critical pedagogy and respond to some theoretical dilemmas which still plague its development and confuse its relationship to the issues raised by postmodern social theory. We have chosen to focus on four major areas: the epistemological beginnings of critical pedagogy; the challenge of a feminist pedagogy of the colonized woman; the importance of critical pedagogy as a counter-hegemonic practice; and the construction of the self-reflexive agent.

Critical Pedagogy: Epistemological Beginnings

Curriculum theory developed out of the social efficiency movement of the early part of this century and its most conservative manifestation was primarily tied to behavioral management theory. At this time, education was primarily geared to prepare students to directly enter the adult labor force in order to stabilize the social order and its adjacent institutions. In the 1960s, a more progressive approach to curriculum theory and planning grew in popularity which was grounded in empirical research and served primarily as a means of making the curriculum more stringently subject to principles of scientific verifiability and infallibility and teachers more pedagogically accountable. During this time there was a strong push to make teachers more adept at predicting and measuring behavioral outcomes in students. By remaining under the guidance of an empiricist-oriented epistemology (by way of the scientific method), curriculum theory and practice turned itself into a quest for truth and reliability. Today, these two approaches still dominate the field of curriculum studies as the search continues for a causal theory to explain student learning behavior, preferably in a precise and clear conceptual language aided by an instrumentation suited to quantification.

A third approach to the study of curriculum and pedagogy first gained national attention in the United States and Canada approximately fifteen years ago, largely in response to the postmodern challenge to traditional scientific research and to the truth claims upon which such research was based. The critical education tradition owes its present theoretical development to a number of disciplinary trajectories and perspectives including, among others, social meliorism (social reconstructionism), the Frankfurt school of critical theory, the sociology of knowledge, and feminist studies. It is an approach which characterizes itself as "openly ideological" in nature, arguing that if we have entered into an era of "post-positivism," it is neces-

sary to define one's bias in favor of effecting transformative social change (Lather 1986). Here the researcher assumes the role of social critic whom, in Rosaldo's words,

is connected to a community, not isolated and detached. Rather than work downward from abstract principles, social critics work outward from in-depth knowledge of a specific form of life. Informed by such conceptions as social justice, human dignity, and equality, they use their moral imagination to move from the world as it actually is to a locally persuasive vision of how it ought to be. (1989: 194)

Since the early days of its development, the substantive task of this tradition has been--and to a large extent still is--to uncover the contradictions and mystifications of predominately liberal and conservative ideologies within dominant approaches to educational theory and practice, precisely as they have served in the reproduction of inequality and exploitative social and economic relations and practices.

In contradiction to empiricist and traditionalist approaches, the critical educational tradition--or "critical pedagogy," as it is sometimes called--is based on a philosophy of praxis engaged in an open dialogue with competing conceptions of how to live meaningfully in a world confronted by pain, suffering, and injustice. There exists, according to this tradition, the necessity of struggle because there exists in modern capitalist society instances of suffering and domination. (We are aware here that the term "tradition" as we are using it may exhibit a tendency to romanticize what is, in essence, a body of work which exists on the borderline between contemporary theorizing and pedagogical practice.)³ Domination manifests itself in different ways on the horizon of our lived experience. For instance, it occurs when teachers present students with interpretations of the world which mask or conceal the scope of political possibility and human capacity. At a more general societal level, we define domination after Brenkman as the "socially organized forms of exploitation, coercion, and nonreciprocity which structure the uses that one individual or group makes of another for the satisfaction of its own need... that individuals or groups are made to serve as wealth, as the source of others' satisfactions, without controlling the products of their own labors or enjoying the recognition of their own desires--this is the condition of domination" (1987: 230-31).

Those who work within the critical tradition tend to reject what some postmodern theorists consider to be inevitable: the flattening or disappearance of history into the commodification of the sign. Rather, critical pedagogy is essentially a politics of living in which teachers and students are

engaged in the work of history; as such, it is a pedagogy which deals with the concrete relations between individuals and the cultural and institutional forms in which such a social engagement takes place. In short, critical pedagogy is about the problematization of language, experience, knowledge/power, and culture, how they are mutually constitutive of subjectivity, and how their conflation generates a particular form of praxis that acts both in and on the world. That is, critical pedagogy wrestles with the question of how individual subjectivity is produced through language and also by social, historical, and economic relations. In so doing, critical pedagogy not only ruffles the complacency of most mainstream curriculum theorists, but is also committed to making critical theory an ally of teaching. In this view, the pedagogical encounter between teachers and students is one in which theory and practice are mutually informing.

While critical pedagogy has, in the past, been theoretically insistent yet often pedagogically underdeveloped, there is a growing need to take seriously what Henry Giroux (1988; 1989) calls making the pedagogical more political and the political more pedagogical. Making the pedagogical more political means inserting schooling directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle to define meaning and a struggle over power relations. Making the political more pedagogical means utilizing forms of pedagogy that embody political interests which are emancipatory in nature; that is, utilizing forms of pedagogy that treat students as critical agents and hold knowledge open to analysis and investigation.

Critical pedagogy is essentially a hybrid pedagogy; it is naturally amphibious. It is accustomed to differing intellectual climates yet it calls on one disciplinary domain its home. Critical pedagogy is ethically rooted in addition to being theoretically grounded; the ethical stance it assumes calls us as teachers, parents, students, and administrators to be held accountable as critical citizens to transform the maldistribution of wealth and resources, the pauperization of children, and the feminization of poverty caused by existing economic structures and the various and social practices which either directly or indirectly serve to sanction their operations. This means helping both students, teachers, and administrators develop a moral vision and practical ethics grounded in a politics of difference. That is, critical pedagogy aims to both affirm and render problematic the multiplicity of voices students bring with them into the classroom and transform them in the interest of social and cultural justice.

Critical pedagogy is concerned with the question of how societies reproduce themselves through their school systems and how schools reproduce social injustice by failing to produce a citizenry in which all individuals achieve equal educational outcomes. The main issue here, of course, is why, in the United States and Canada, groups such as Blacks, Hispanics, and native peoples drop out (or, as Hispanic students remark, are "pushed

out") in such epidemic proportions. Given this daunting scenario, it is imperative that we ask how teachers can affirm the voices of marginalized students, engage them critically, while at the same time assist them in transforming their communities into sites of struggle and resistance. For critical educators this means that within the context of the larger society, schools must be reconceived as sites of cultural disjunction, as convulsions within the operating logic of capitalism, and as counter-hegemonic spheres which generate unprecedented possibilities for social critique and utopian thinking.⁴

Empires in Retreat:

The Challenge of a Feminist Pedagogy of the Colonized Woman

We want to argue that our postmodern condition has made it more urgent for critical educators to develop a theoretical basis for a feminist pedagogy. This is especially true in the way in which postmodernist social theories have sometimes labelled themselves as "postfeminist." We draw attention to the way in which deconstruction of the female subject has been able to "reposition female subjectivity in the male subject" and promote this deconstruction as feminist (De Lauretis, 1987: 25). We also argue that a critical refiguration of feminist pedagogy should include as a primary referent the concept of women as a colonized people. When Robin Morgan formally posed an analogy between women and colonized peoples over twenty years ago, she was accused of "going too far" (Morgan 1968: 161). Yet over the past decade, we have witnessed a moderate re-emergence of this metaphor in the writings of a number of scholars. It is hardly surprising that the majority of this work is taking place within what is loosely described as the feminist terrain. Within this "terrain," there are only a few--primarily those feminists who define their scholarship as "socialist feminist," "radical," "meta-theoretical feminist," and/or "gyn/ecological"--who are addressing themselves specifically to this concern. To begin to consider the validity of the claim--that women are a colonized people--appears to necessitate the development of an epistemological shift characteristic of the liberationist strand of postmodernist social theorizing which has occurred in a number of theoretical orientations in which the condition of women has been traditionally studied.

The generation of a multi-layered dialectical approach inherent in the wide variety of feminist approaches is a response to the poverty of certain theories of oppression and/or sexism to describe the pervasiveness of the complexities involved in the concrete conditions of women's position within neocapitalism. As O'Brien explains:

The need to develop a theoretical basis for a feminism which can transform the world is an increasingly recognized need in the

women's movement. The difficulty is knowing where to start. We cannot philosophize out of thin air. (1983: 4)

In light of O'Brien's premise, our discussion of a feminist pedagogy begins with the assertion that women are a colonized people. This, in turn, leads to simultaneous investigations into both the historical evolution of women's situations in a variety of dimensions as well as research explorations into the type of "methodology" which would best frame our thesis. It is in the context of this kind of project that a dialectical process of a feminist pedagogy may be realized. For, as Goulet notes:

To think dialectically is to decree the obsolescence of cherished concepts which explain even one's recent past. One of the marks of a true dialectician, however, is the ability to "move beyond" the past without repudiating it in the name of new levels of critical consciousness presently enjoyed. (1974: vii)

Simply put, each level of research, as it relates to women and colonization, leads to higher levels of questions about, not only the sophisticated processual nature of how colonization is articulated within Western capitalist societies, but also the contextual epistemology necessary for beginning to understand the complexities of related practical conditions. Mary Daly labels this kind of dialectical approach "Gyn/Ecological," which, as she puts it "...says exactly what I mean it to say. Ecology is about the complex web of interrelations between organisms and their environment" (1978: 9). Embracing this kind of emergent epistemology advocated by Daly and others liberates the researcher to explore higher levels of inquiry into a complex system which we suspect best describes the "enigma" of the situation of women: colonization.

It is interesting to note that a number of "humanists" have found the metaphor of colonization appropriate for explaining the oppressed situation of particular races and/or classes of people. However, to apply this metaphor to an entire gender--encompassing over half the world's population--borders on the unthinkable. Consider Morgan's experience:

When I first proposed that we view women as a colonized people, the suggestion was met with incredulity, even from other feminists. But what was "going too far" yesterday inevitably becomes something already assumed, even taken for granted tomorrow. So has the theory of women's colonization been assimilated into feminist

thought. And so we go further from here. (1968: 160-62)

Over two decades after Morgan's observation, it is unfortunate to note that we have not travelled nearly as far as she had hoped. Nor has the overall oppression of women been significantly reduced, as the growing feminization of poverty makes so uncomfortably clear. As Bell Hooks points out, "it is evident that large numbers of individual white women (especially those from middle class backgrounds) have made economic strides in the wake of feminist movement support of careerism, and affirmative action programs in many professions. However, the masses of women are as poor as ever, or poorer" (1984: 59). This lack of a more expansive recognition of the real environment of women's condition leads to questions about the nature of the process of colonization. And these questions, in turn, lead to examinations of seminal studies describing and/or analyzing this complicated process. It is hardly surprising that most of this scholarship is written by--and is primarily about--men. Moreover, implicitly--and, in some cases, explicitly--this scholarship reflects a repugnantly anti-female bias. These writers, nevertheless, present powerful statements about the position of colonized peoples, and the modes in which the roles of the colonized are reinforced by both the colonizer and the positioning of the colonizer's dominant code. Rather than ignoring these works due to the outstanding lacunae in their analyses, a "meta-theoretical" feminist approach encourages us to:

...work by identifying the male bias in established approaches. These must be examined from the perspective of women and the implications for the field of incorporating the perspectives and interests of women followed through. (Smith 1979: 16)

The writings of Frantz Fanon, Paulo Freire, Albert Memmi, and Jean Paul Sartre most certainly lend themselves to a translation which identifies and explains the colonization of women. In addition, while recognizing the androcentricity of their theories, it does not follow that we must reject the totality of their projects.⁵ We can critically appropriate and apply many of their explanations of specific relations of colonized peoples to that of women. Also, Anne Summers' brilliant analysis of the colonization of Australian women can serve--along with previously identified works--as part of the primary texts contributing to a deeper understanding of this notion. To begin with, writers in this area make it evident that the term "colonization" is often misused and/or incomplete. The over-simplified connotation of the concept, related to strict economic imperialism, or as the Organization of Economic Development defines it: "Of, belonging to a colony," is hardly an accurate description of the realities of this complex and multi-leveled system. As Sartre describes it "the colonialist system is a form in motion" (Sartre 1965: xxvii).

What is made apparent by these critics, is that violence is the "heart and soul" of colonization. Moreover, much of this violence is never consciously recognized. It is often masked by terms such as oppression and/or exploitation (to name a few). In other words, one often finds euphemisms for what is, in actuality, colonization. As Paulo Freire explains:

Any situation in which "A" objectively exploits "B" or hinders his [sic] pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with man's [sic] ontological and historical vocation to be fully human. With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. (Freire, 1972: 40-41)

Indeed, the recognition of this common thread of violence embroidered throughout this polymorphic process, called colonization, radically reframes our perception. As Wilden points out:

We have watched the violence of the world economic system being directed at group after group on this tiny planet--physical violence, logical and psychological; violence verbal and non-verbal; violence sexual, political, ecological, and social. (1980: 35)

However, as Wilden acknowledges, "relatively little of this violence ...is aimed at male WASPS like me" (p. 35).

Therefore, whenever any group, race, or class are oppressed, women exist at the center of the violence. Women are a part of every people, and part of every situation where people have been forced into subordinate positions. Further investigation reveals that within oppressed groups, women bear a double weight. They are not only being oppressed by "dominant others," exploiting the particular race, class, or group to which they belong; they are also being oppressed by the violence directed at them by other members of their own class, race, or group; i.e., males. These women constitute what Rowbotham calls "a colony within a colony" (Rowbotham 1974: 206).

For an especially forceful illustration of this translated, colonized violence we can turn to Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize winning film, *The Color Purple*. Consider how Walker's protagonist, Celie, describes her husband's response to the news that she is leaving him:

He laugh. Who you think you is? he say.
You can't curse nobody. Look at you. You

black, you poor, you ugly, you a woman.
Goddam, he say, you nothing at all. (1982: 213)

Further evidence of the colonized nature of women's condition is revealed in Fanon's description of this process. Contrary to the dominant ideology, people are not born with a "colonized mentality." Colonial characteristics do not inhere in the genes of the dominant class, they are learned. False histories, false role models, and false expressions of a peoples' creative potential together with socially imposed constraints that perpetuate these false belief systems keep the colonized in their place. For the colonial is colonized historically, socially, politically, economically, and personally. The colonizer, through the use of "tokens" and the aid of "collaborators" ensures that the colonized remain in a state of "false" or "imaginary" consciousness. In other words, the colonized are taught to believe the dominant ideological myths about their collective being, and act accordingly.

Living under such a complexity of oppressive constraints, it is only natural that the colonized define themselves by what they are not. The non-white in white society finds an existence mediated by the white code, just as the non-male in male society finds an existence mediated by the patriarchal code. Under capitalism then, it is quite "normal" for the woman to find her life mediated by what she is not. She is not male, and concurrently, not represented symmetrically within socially defined relations of power. She is *la colonisee*. The number of levels of violence imposed upon women, however, is related to particular class and/or race associations.

On another level, women who constitute part of the dominant classes, races, and groups often do their part to oppress and violate those in subordinate positions. This is not to say, however, that these women--these "Dominant/Subordinate Others"--are not oppressed within the realms of the privileged. (For example, under capitalism, the privileged are those who are white, middle or upper-class, and male.) Indeed, the translations of violence to those who are defined as more subordinate is consistent with the colonized mentality. It is, therefore, the real paradoxes within this process which enable women from dominant groups to be positioned as Dominant/Subordinate Other. Dominant refers to their particular economic, social, and racial position, while subordinate refers to their status as second-class citizens within not only their own social sphere but also within society as a whole. Although the surface structure of male/female relations differ according to class and/or race, the deep structure is similar. Simply put, colonization is a collective experience which all women--regardless of race, class, or culture--share.

This is not to say that "collaboration" (our term to describe the role of female anti-feminists) is the exclusive domain of the Dominant/Subordinate woman. One of the foremost characteristics of this contradictory process is that the maintenance of colonization through its hegemonizing process

generates the complicity of the colonized in their own oppression. And this complicity is partly due to the role of collaborators. Hence, by concentrating on the differences between themselves and less fortunate women, rather than embracing the "sisterhood" of all women, they are reinforcing and perpetuating their own, and other women's, colonization.

Underlying Fanon's well documented analysis of the complexities embedded in this system is the importance of paradox, contradiction, and difference:

At opportune moments [the colonizer] combines his policy of brutal repression with spectacular gestures of friendship, maneuvers calculated to sew division, and "psychological action." Here and there he tries with success to revive tribal feuds, using *agents provocateurs* and practicing what might be called counter subversion. (Fanon 1961: 136)

Moreover, any questions we may have about the role of anti-feminists as collaborators are dismissed in view of their anti-abortion platform. As Summers reminds us:

Once women's bodies are recognized as a form of territory the description of their position as being one of colonization stops being metaphorical and assumes the status of political analysis. Women are colonized by being denied control over their bodies. The main purpose of colonization is to ensure that women will continue to reproduce. (Summers 1975: 200)

To respond to the challenge of the colonization of women in the present historical juncture, and in the North American context in particular, educators must find a way of making female voices heard in classrooms. This follows Hooks' dictum that "women need to know that they can reject the powerful's definition of their reality--that they can do so even if they are poor, exploited, or trapped in oppressive circumstances. They need to know that the exercise of this basic personal power is an act of resistance and strength" (1984: 90). To achieve this, pedagogy needs to be grounded in a meta-theoretical paradigm which is both contextual and reflexive. Our programmatic beginning is an argument against the Cartesian logic of one possessing a definitive theory to explain the complexities and levels of female subjectivity. Essentially, we are calling for further development and application of a meta-theoretical feminist pedagogical approach, one which is dialectical in nature. Through this process, rather than being deceived by absolute answers,

new levels of questions are raised.

As Gregory Bateson says, quoting e. e. cummings, "Always the more beautiful answer who asks the more difficult question" (Bateson 1979: 235). For feminists, then, that means forever criticizing what we think we know.

The following comment by Eichler captures the underlying essence of the approach we are advocating:

...to assess the contributions of feminist approaches to existing substantive areas within [sociology]...is difficult in that the components of feminist research...involve a blurring of current disciplinary and sub-disciplinary boundaries. (1985: 624)

It has been our intent in this section to promote further discussion of the need for this kind of "contextual/holistic" which O'Brien refers to as "meta-theory":

What is being proposed is the development of metatheory from a feminist perspective, with the assumption that theory of this kind is essential to the dialectical tasks of understanding and changing the world. (1981: 185)

In our view, the role of women as resisters to the prevailing cultural hegemony should not be modelled on some Hegelian vision of dialectical transcendence or some picture of a homogeneous community. In fact, the role of feminist pedagogy and feminist activism should take on, in our mind, Taussig's "decentered character of the shaman" who serves as a stage "on which the contradictions of society are acted out" (1986: 444). The shaman's effect lies in "juxtaposing to a heightened sense of reality, one of fantasy--thereby encouraging among the participants speculation into the whys and the wherefores of representation itself" (p. 445). In this view, the technique of criticism is not to be tightly bound to a notion of the truth hidden under layers of mystifications. Rather, criticism and discovery should become an "experiment" which employs a language and praxis "that breaks open the conventions of language and the signifying function of signs" (p. 442).

This model runs against the grain of modernist social theorizing which attempts to create a totalizing, homogeneous unity. As Taussig remarks, "forcing such unity may fit well with certain fantasies of maleness and fascism" (p. 442). In contradistinction to this, our view of feminist theory implies a better "fit" with Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image and with "the nonwhite, nonhomogeneous, fragmentedness of montage, which on account of its awkwardness of fit, cracks, and violent juxtapositionings, can actively embody both a presentation and a counterpresentation of the historical time which through conquest and colonialism matches signs with their

meanings" (p. 443).

In summary, we are claiming that women are, in reality, a colonized people. As such, their oppression is more specific and of more serious consequence than is suggested by most theories that seek to explain the oppression of women either by the "act of capitalism" or by the "fact of biology" alone. We have attempted to illustrate why and how many feminist theories have been unable to recognize and therefore unable to deal with the reality of colonization. Within this context, we are calling for a "meta-radical feminist approach" (as Daly describes it) as an important emphasis in critical pedagogical approaches that attempt to take the oppression of women in our culture seriously. Moreover, the development of this type of emergent epistemology is often mediated by the investigation of particular practical relations. In other words, there is a dialectical relationship between theory and practice. Zillah Eisenstein elaborates on the necessity of this emancipatory form of "collaboration" by voicing concern for "...constructing theory from reality rather than plastering one onto the other, with creating a dialectic between theory and practice rather than deriving one from the other" (1979: 2).

This helps to account for why our research has not included any claims to present any kind of definitive study and/or literature review of "feminist methodology." Nor do we have any pretensions about providing a "neat-theoretical solution" for changing women's position within the patriarchal hierarchy. Rather, our work has been designed to contribute to the on-going development of a radical epistemology to which we hope feminist educators will respond in their pedagogical approaches within the classroom. A commitment to this kind of meta-theoretical framework, we propose, identifies and clarifies the complicated nature of the colonization process.

Critical Pedagogy and the Construction of the Self-Reflexive Agent

In this section we wish to clarify the confusion that has developed around the topic of critical self-reflection, specifically the modernist position which asserts that the self constitutes itself through acts of will alone, and the postmodernist charge that the self is "always already" constituted as a fiction of discourse. While it is important to take seriously the conditions of postmodernity as they have been variously portrayed by Baudrillard, Lyotard, and others, we do not consider massified humanity to be so easily transmuted by the sign into hapless, passive dupes. Nor do we agree that the human subject can, in fact, be reduced to a pirouette of linguistic signs, regardless of how dazzling the theory.

While we do agree with the poststructuralists who remorselessly decry the essentialist readings of the "self," and who claim that we cannot

speak of the self as an essence or unmediated object of reflection, we disagree that the self is primarily constituted by the process of being interpellated by discourse. Human beings--bodies--are self-conscious rather than self-constituting. That is, they are constituted partly by their self-consciousness but also by conditions which lie outside of consciousness. That is, we are constituted as "selves" by that which we are both aware and unaware and that which we repress. This is not the same as agreeing with Althusser that the autonomous subject is merely a fiction of discourse upon which all other fictions of ideology rest. We agree that to recognize oneself as a self-aware ego to some extent depends upon ideological distortion and a repression of the constituents of our making. However, unlike Cartesian psychological selves, we do not individuate our own consciousness. But we are nevertheless self-conscious enough to recognize our own constitution outside of the exigencies of our own volition (Turner 1983). Our self-consciousness of the constitution of our self is what makes liberation possible. The task of critical pedagogy is to increase this self-consciousness, to strip away ideological distortion, and to assist the subject in its own historical remaking. As Freire (1985: 70) notes, "subjects are capable of entertaining the result of their action even before initiating the action."

Since we recognize ourselves most fully as subjects within a particular descriptive or explanatory language--or ideologies--we need a critical language that enables us to both identify ourselves and recreate ourselves as active subjects in history and distinguish our real needs from manufactured desire. Our needs are knowable only mediately through our understanding of the external social conditions which generate them and critical pedagogy in this context provides by way of strategic imperatives, a pedagogy that assists students and teachers in better knowing themselves (Giroux & McLaren 1987).

While critical educators may acknowledge, along with postmodern social theorists, that there is less stabilization in the referential dimension of mass culture than there used to be, there remains little room for cynicism about the possibilities which exist for transforming structures of oppression into structures of freedom. To be critical is to live a project charged with hope and what Giroux calls a "language of possibility" (Giroux 1983). We agree with Burger that "we can escape the dissemination of intentions into the chain of signifiers. The ideological ruptures within every historical situation enable us to develop alternatives of thought that do approximate an understanding of experience" (1984: xxix). To be critical, therefore, is not to be cynical. To be cynical is to believe, as some postmodern theorists tell us, that we, as human agents, are simply the invention of discourse. To be cynical is to extract hope from a vision of the future. To be critical, on the other hand, means to jettison any purely contemplative cognitive distance over and above the world, but to confront the contingency of the present with radical

hope (McLaren 1989)--that is, with a hope that, while eschewing certainty, seeks a praxis in the provisional unity of thought and action (McLaren 1989). We are speaking here about a praxis in which the knowing subject is an acting subject, a praxis in which we take responsibility for history and for a vision of the world which is "not yet" (Simon 1987: 370). This is not to deny the historicism of praxis but to embrace praxis more fully with a recognition that our responsibility as educators means seizing the stage of history in the unity of our thinking and doing, and bringing forth a new world at the command of our own voices and with our own hands. To be critical means understanding our relational engagement with the world and recognizing our active participation in the production of knowledge in its moral, political, and cultural dimensions. To be a critical educator is to reproach the world, to brand it as a tainted reflection of what it could, in fact, become. It is to conjure within the sociological imagination, a new image of the pedagogical agent. It is the image of the educator who possesses the willingness to engage the world so as to change it, an image of the educator who refuses to be extracted from history and who is determined to be fully conscious and present in history, that is, to be fully present in the everyday, sensuous and practical world of meaning.

Postmodern social theory has revealed to us that individuals are not external, unchanging entities but possess subjectivity which is shaped by the moment-by-moment contingencies of social life. People create meaning in unique ways not because of their genetic constitution but because of the constitution of their cultural histories and the language they use to mediate their personal experiences: in short, by the radical contingencies of life in the chamber of the social.

Critical Pedagogy as a Counter-Hegemonic Practice

In this section we wish to establish the position that in the postmodern era of neo-capitalism, critical pedagogy must take a definitive stance against oppression. When, under capitalism, the structural configurations of subjectivity become pathological, or when the logic of capital is mobilized within mechanisms of domination that can demonstrably be shown to reproduce pain and suffering among subordinate groups, then critical pedagogy must take on an important transformative mission. Critical pedagogy must become a means of counter-hegemony or a means to counter-hegemony. More specifically, it must become a theoretical and strategic method of uncovering the manner in which ideological contradictions are resolved at the imaginary level in the individual subject; it must also become a means of politically contesting the structures of domination within consumer capitalism. While acknowledging the priority of the social relations of capitalist produc-

tion and the will to power forged within the postmodern economies of representation as fundamental determinants of oppression, critical educators nevertheless insist that there is no way to completely obliterate the possibility of contestation and transformative struggle. The crucial insight here is that what is often mistaken as student failure due to personal attributes such as laziness or lack of ability, or cultural deprivation of some sort is, in effect, a form of resistance to class, cultural, racial, or gender oppression (Giroux, 1983; McLaren, 1989; Fagan, 1989). If this is the case, then as critical educators we must concern ourselves with making schools relevant to and transformative of the lives of students.

If we want to take seriously student resistance, then there are a host of questions we must attempt to answer: How are the identities, dreams, desires, and needs of students forged by the media, by television, by leisure activities, by institutions such as the family, and by cultural forms such as rock n' roll and music videos? How, for instance, are students' conceptions of politics socially constructed? How are their images of male and female socially constructed? It is imperative that as educators for the postmodern age we begin to examine issues such as feminization and masculinization of the body. We need to study how our desires and needs and those of our students have been shaped through dominant cultural forms.

But if we try not to treat questions of culture and the construction of subjectivity as isolated processes, antiseptically removed from larger economies of power and privilege, a more fundamental question comes into relief: How do we construct a new social order based upon compassion and solidarity out of the micropolitics of our classroom practices? This means not only interrogating the microeconomies of power and privilege in our classrooms and schools, but understanding how these economies work in relation to the larger social order. This means analyzing and challenging those aspects of both liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism which partake of the systemic roots of human suffering and degradation. We need a language in which, to quote Grossberg, we can "act locally and think globally" (Grossberg 1988: 146). This means, of course, an integration of microsocioanalysis and macrosocial theory as well as the development of a dialectical relationship among economic-material analysis, ideology critique, and a critical hermeneutics.

We want to argue that critical pedagogy needs to present a case, not for glorifying the act of interpretation or celebrating the contingency and partiality of knowledge, but for emphasizing its constitutive relationship to power and the social. Here we are sympathetic to Sarup's (1989: 148) call for "a model that overcomes the opposition between the individual and the social, because no political revolution can be completed until the 'character structures' inherited from prerevolutionary society are transformed."

Conclusion

It is important that critical educators do not choose to suffer from the chronic dream of totality and completeness in their theoretical formulations. Rather than undertaking the task of charting out a grand theory, critical educators should begin to connect the cause of social transformation to a more inclusive view of the project of critical pedagogy unburdened by the narrowness of vision that has characterized so many radical educational projects of the past which have allowed themselves to work simply within the context of ideology critique, class analysis, or gender analysis. By recasting the task of critical pedagogy in a language of possibility, it can be connected more persuasively and passionately with a view to what it means to be truly empowered. In doing so, critical educators must seek to create social spaces which break down the tightening grasp of social division and hierarchy and build upon what Roberto Unger calls "the embodiment of human solidarity" (Unger 1987: 212), a task that makes "it possible to achieve a wholehearted engagement in our societies that does not rest on illusion and bad faith" (p. 212). That is, it remains the task of critical pedagogy to construct a praxis for teachers that urges an active solicitude for the marginalized and dispossessed, both male and female, those who have been vanquished by the incursion of the logic of capital into both the rural and urban landscapes of North America.

The praxis to which we have spoken throughout this essay is one which is lived in solidarity with all victims (male, female, white, black, Hispanic) struggling to overcome their suffering and alienation. The irruption of the poor in our towns and cities over the last decade demands a relocation of schooling in a praxis of solidarity where the individual and personal is always situated in relation to the collective and communal (without the simple-minded cohesiveness that these terms usually imply). It is a praxis that seeks to engage history with the intent of helping the powerless locate themselves in it. This means calling teachers to a cosuffering with the oppressed as they struggle both to transcend and transform the circumstances of their disempowerment (Chopp 1985). In other words, we need to resituate the challenge of teaching as a task of empowering the powerless from states of dependency and passivity as both an informed movement for revolutionary social and economic transformation and as a means of achieving what Brian Fay calls a "state of reflective clarity" (1987). This is a state of liberation "in which people know which of their wants are genuine because they know finally who they really are, and a state of collective autonomy in which they have the power to determine rationally and freely the nature and direction of their collective existence" (p. 205).

In searching for the nonidentity constitutive of a genuine experience of liberation, we seek to avoid becoming trapped within a totalizing negativity

--what we refer to as an incipient anti-utopianism, left malaise, or an entrenchment of despair characteristic of those who have abandoned a language of hope and possibility. In addition, our theoretical approach is deliberately cast to avoid following a preestablished scheme, formula, or script, and it is self-consciously multidisciplinary as we have chosen to enter into collaboration with many different types of contemporary scholarship: semiotics, hermeneutics, critical theory, liberation theology, and post-structuralism. But in doing so, we maintain we are not moving away from the concrete but rather towards the complexity of the concrete. In the words of Mathew Lamb:

Theory is not an impoverished abstraction away from...reality. Instead theory as critical is a profound effort to understand processive reality ever more adequately. Theory, then, does not move away from the concrete, only to be returned to it in the form of some sort of practical application. Instead, theory is continually moving toward the complexity of the concrete and, in the measure that it is correct in indicating the underlying concrete and contradictory tensions in reality, it is capable of guiding the transformation of reality. (1982: 49-50)

The pedagogy of concrete to which we have been referring is grounded in a politics of ethics, difference, and democracy. It is unashamedly utopian in substance and scope, and articulates a vision of and for the future, maintaining that if we have no idea of what we are working towards, we will never know if, in our struggle for human freedom, those conditions have been met (McLaren 1989). Our thoughts and actions are thus deliberately designed to rupture the unitary fixity and cohesiveness of social life and resist attempts at asserting the homogeneity of the social and public sphere (Giroux and McLaren 1989). We are referring here to a pedagogy that is grounded in the importance of the "other" and the necessity of developing a common ground for linking the notion of difference to a publicly shared language of struggle and social justice (Giroux 1988). In engaging the concept of "difference," educational theorists need to free themselves from what Rosaldo calls "imperialist nostalgia," which refers to a longing for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed, a longing for the passing of what they, themselves, have transformed through their "civilizing mission." Rosaldo notes that "the social analyst is always a positioned subject and that the objects of social analysis are also analyzing subjects whose perceptions must be taken ...as seriously as we take our own" (1989: 206). Like MacCannell, we believe the positive potential within postmodernity "depends on its capacity to recognize and accept otherness as radically other...the possibility of recogniz-

ing and attempting to enter into a dialogue, on an equal footing with forms of intelligence absolutely different from [our] own" (MacCannell 1989: xv). However, Rosaldo makes the point that radical otherness may not be as radical today as it once was since:

Rapidly increasing global interdependence has made it more and more clear that neither "we" nor "they" are as neatly bounded and homogeneous as once seemed to be the case...All of us inhabit an interdependent late twentieth century world mauled by borrowing and lending across porous national and cultural boundaries that are saturated with inequality and domination. (1989: 217)

Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) work on the subject at the crossroads of culture, written from a Chicana lesbian perspective, gives us an indication of how the new postmodern subject, moving among a multiplicity of subject positions, might be situated:

The new *mestiza* [persons of mixed ancestry], she says, copes by developing a tolerance for ambiguity. She learns to be Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view. She learns to juggle cultures. She has a plural personality, she operates in a pluralistic mode--nothing is thrust out, the good, the bad, and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the ambivalence into something else. (cited in Rosaldo: 216)

We believe that teachers working in the schools, in the universities, and in other social sites, must actively engage their students as multiple subjects by assuming the role of transformative intellectuals (Giroux 1989); they must engage in emancipatory forms of intellectual labor and, as such, become bearers of critical knowledge, rules, and values through which they can consciously articulate and problematize the relationship among individual agency, popular culture, the state, forms of knowledge, and the wider community.

What we are arguing for is a critical pedagogy as a form of discursive production which drives emancipatory knowledge into the realm of the possible, putting aside levelled aspirations in favor of a present that is not yet. The critical pedagogy of which we speak works against the conflation of description with representation, information with knowledge, language with

reality, and the institutional and power arrangements such conflation serves. It also works against an economy of knowledge predicated on a masculinist vantage-point and an economy of difference placed in the service of the dominant culture. Critical pedagogy involves what Hooks calls "coming to voice...as an act of resistance...where one moves from being an object to being a subject" (1989: 12). Hooks' feminist classroom resonates critically with the pedagogy we have been describing, where the classroom becomes "a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is a visible acknowledgement of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm" (p. 51).

The polemic of critical pedagogy (the galvanizing aspect of which we have tied to a language of hope) is directed at encouraging, making possible, and enabling differentiated human capacities to be realized through the construction of social forms that inhibit the crippling distortions of social and moral regulation that deny individuals from speaking out of their own histories, traditions, voices, and personal experiences (Giroux 1988). We are speaking here of creating social forms which are non-hierarchical, reciprocal, and which ennoble rather than degrade human life. Instead of serving as custodians of the status quo by engaging in pedagogical strategies which remain atheoretical, ahistorical, and apolitical in their formulation and practice, we believe that educators should link a theory of ethics and morality to a politics in which community, difference, remembrance, and historical consciousness become foundational (Giroux 1988).

Towards a Pedagogy for the Postmodern Era

The job of the critical educator in the postmodern era is, as we see it, to construct an emancipatory curriculum which legitimates the postmodern condition of mass culture in order to help students both criticize and transcend its most disabling conditions. We cannot, therefore, as educators, profess indifference to popular culture because in doing so we abandon our critical project. Students are already struggling within the domain of popular culture and we abandon and disenfranchise our students by ignoring the politics of the mundane and the everyday. Of course, the personal experience of students sets the primary context for an examination of mass culture and social institutions, which in turn becomes the groundwork for the reconstruction of critical thought. This means taking seriously the stories students tell of their own histories, experiences, and dreams. But while we should be committed to affirming the *always already* gendered, raced, and classed voices of our students, we should at the same time help them achieve a critical voice

tempered by a politically informed intelligence. This is an important challenge and one which demands a new pedagogical language.

Understood as a form of social action both on and in the world, critical pedagogy can serve both as a counterpoint to the monodimensional way that meaning is constructed in the classroom and as a means of interrogating the normative political language most students--both male and female--acquire throughout schooling. In this way students can learn to acquire the strength to exercise a critical voice capable of challenging those voices of accommodation which celebrate a uniform public morality and a monolithic political reality based on labor market imperatives and cultural consensus.

In building our programs of critical pedagogy we must heed Freire's warning and avoid the North American logic of the "quick fix." Freire warns that curriculum programs which attempt to give step-by-step recipes are really forms which domesticate the mind. Rather than following somebody else's carefully formulated blueprint for critical teaching, teachers should work collectively in analyzing and examining the contextual conditions of their own classrooms and communities so that they can construct their own pedagogical models of teacher and student empowerment.

In closing, we would like to suggest that it is critical pedagogy's place to discover what we, as human subjects, have become--as teachers, as students, and as citizens of our communities--and what we have been unable to question and to challenge. While postmodern social theory has taught us that the concept of the self is often an effect of the conditions of human life which we seek to describe, and while it may be true that there is no privileged vantage point to subjectivity from which we can escape our own constitution in external technologies of power, it does not follow that we should submit ourselves without a fight to the processes which have made us who we are. Batestini writes that "The desire to build another 'I' is a choice which... creates our sense of freedom...a new dimension of the decolonized free 'I'" (1988/89: 129). The future does not belong to those who are content to remain as they are, and who unwittingly unlearn the meaning of hope, but to those who can think and act as critical remakers of history, and who choose to do so.

Notes

1. For an examination of postmodernity as it has been appropriated by educational theorists, see P. McLaren, "Postmodernism and the death of politics: A Brazilian reprieve," *Educational Theory*, 1986, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 389-401. Also, P. McLaren, "Schooling the postmodern body: Critical pedagogy and the politics of enfleshment," *Journal of Education*, in press. See also H.A. Giroux, "Postmodernism and the

discourse of educational criticism," *Journal of Education*, in press; H.A. Giroux, "Border pedagogy in the age of postmodernism," *Journal of Education*; C. Nicholson, "Postmodernism, feminism and education: The need for solidarity," *Educational Theory*, 1989, vol. 39, no. 3, pp. 197-206. Similar positions can be found in J. Arac (ed.), *Postmodernism and Politics, Theory and History of Literature*, 1986, vol. 28, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press; C. Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura*, 1985, Northwestern University Press; J. Fekete (ed.), *Life After Postmodernism*, 1987, New York, St. Martin's Press. For an excellent collection of articles on the postmodern condition from the perspective of literary theory and the social sciences, see *New German Critique*, Fall 1984, vol. 33. See also J. Habermas, "A philosophico-political profile," *New Left Review*, 1985, vol. 151, no. 15, pp. 75-105. For a critical look at Fredric Jameson's use of the term "postmodernism," see M. Davis, "Urban renaissance and the spirit of postmodernism," *New Left Review*, 1985, vol. 151, no. 15, pp. 106-13. For a discussion of Derrida's position, see H. Staten, "Rorty's circumvention of Derrida," *Critical Inquiry*, 1986, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 453-61; and Rorty's response, "The higher naturalism in a nutshell: A reply to Henry Staten," *Critical Inquiry*, 1986, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 462-66. See also Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thebaud, *Just Gaming*, trans. Wlad Godzich, in *Theory and History of Literature*, 1985, vol. 20, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press. Two important sources on the impact of postmodern thought include Q. Skinner (ed.), *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, 1985, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press; and C. Newman, *The Post-Modern Aura*, 1985, Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press. With respect to the tendency of postmodern social theory to lack an explicit political posture, Derrida himself has argued that certain American uses of deconstruction "work to ensure an institutional closure" which serves the dominant political and economic interests of American society." (T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, 1983, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, p. 148.) See also C. West, "The politics of American neo-pragmatism," in J. Rajchman and C. West (ed.), *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, 1985, New York, Columbia University Press, p. 269. While we agree with Hal Foster that there exists an oppositional postmodernism, we would argue that it still is an opposition couched in a language of critique, devoid of utopian possibilities. Our critique of postmodernism is directed mainly against what Foster refers to as the reactionary postmodernism of the neoconservatives and not explicitly against the postmodernism of resistance. The former calls for a return to the verities of tradition, while the latter refers to a deconstruction of tradition. But

- even the postmodernism of resistance fails to incorporate a language of possibility or the capacity for utopian thinking. It is one thing to deconstruct representations, it is quite another to reinscribe them in a language that takes seriously the discourse of democracy and emancipation. See H. Foster, (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays of Postmodern Culture*, 1983, Port Townsend, Washington, Bay Press. For a look at postmodernism from the perspective of critical legal studies, see R. Unger, "The critical legal studies movement," *Harvard Law Review*, 1983, vol. 96; R. Unger, "Round and round the bramble bush: From legal realism to critical legal scholarship," *Harvard Law Review*, 1982, vol. 95; D. Cornell, "Toward a modern/postmodern reconstruction of ethics," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 1985, vol. 111; O. Fiss, "Objectivity and interpretation," *Stanford Law Review*, 1982, vol. 34; M. Minow, "Law turning outward," *Telos*, Fall 1987, no. 73, pp. 79-100.
2. Myles Horton of the Highlander Center in Tennessee remarked recently that burning the flag is a "pretty sanitary way of destroying it." He remembers eating plenty of flags on the tops of cakes and cookies at political rallies. Furthermore, he finds it hard to understand all the fuss about the desecration of the flag since he can't remember "when the flag was consecrated." Personal communication.
 3. For further information on critical tradition, see L. E. Beyer and M. Apple, *The Curriculum: Problems, Politics, and Possibilities*, 1988, Albany, State University of New York Press; and in W. F. Pinar (ed.) *Curriculum Theory: The Reconceptualists*, 1975, Berkeley, CA, McCutcheon Publishing; in H. A. Giroux, A. Penna, and W. F. Pinar (eds.), *Curriculum and Instruction*, 1981, Berkeley, CA, McCutcheon Publishing. See also P. McLaren, *Life in Schools*, 1989, Albany, NY.
 4. For further information on how culture has been problematized by theorists in the critical tradition, see the work of R. A. Quantz, "Culture: A critical perspective," paper presented at the American Educational Studies Association, Toronto, November 1988. Also H. A. Giroux and P. McLaren, "Teacher education and the politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling," *The Harvard Educational Review*, 1986, vol. 56, no. 3, pp. 213-238. See also R. Johnson, "The story so far: And further transformations?," in D. Punter (ed.), *Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies*, 1986, London, Longman Inc., pp. 277-313.
 5. See for example, M. Miles, "Towards a methodology for feminist research," in Bowles, G. and D. Klien, Renate (eds.), *Theories of Women's Studies II*, 1981, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul; A. Oakley, "Interviewing Women: A contradiction in terms," in H. Roberts (ed.), *Doing Feminist Research*, 1981, London, Routledge &

Kegan Paul; V. O'Leary, "Feminist research: Problems and prospects," *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 1981, vol. 5, pp. 595-96; S. Reinharz, *On Becoming a Social Scientist: From Survey Research and Participant Observation to Experimental Analysis*, 1979, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass; J. Acker, K. Barry, and J. Esseveld, "Objectivity and truth: Problems in doing feminist research," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1983, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 423-35; and The Nebraska Feminist Collective, "A feminist ethic for social science research," *Women's Studies International Forum*, 1983, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 536-43.

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