
Textuality and the postmodernist neglect of the politics of representation

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Abstract (Article Summary)

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[Headnote]

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ABSTRACT

Those in the vanguard of postmodernist theorising, who have collectively been labelled "skeptical postmodernists," have produced a discourse that has said much about the issues of textuality and the 'linguistic turn'. In the rush to dismiss modernity and view the world through an optic of textuality, we are left with a view of the individual as a mere textual creation, with an identity that is disembodied and fragmented, making its appearance in scattered traces. The attempted textual exegesis of the subject simultaneously does away with the tools of modern inquiry, namely causality and agency.

Whilst this rendering of identity is itself contested terrain, what has been repressed or neglected is the text as a product and site of political struggle. The issues of agency and the politics of representation seem to vanish with the disposal of the subject and the author. We, however, find these issues have an unacknowledged presence in skeptical postmodernist theorising. Having outlined the argument in this manner, we use the optic of dialectics to reframe the question and revisit the issues of identity and agency afresh. The central argument that we pose is that text is both a product and site of political struggle, and only by understanding text in such a way does the multi-authorship of identity itself become understandable along with the limitations and possibilities for self-authorship of identity.

THE RISE AND RISE OF TEXTUALITY

The social-philosophical discourse has, in recent times, carried much that refers to the issue of text. A new vocabulary has emerged that includes the variant terms pretexts; subtexts; contexts; intertextual; extratextual, pantextual, and heterotextual. The intellectual trajectory of this discourse owes much to the theorising of poststructuralists and postmodernists. Seen in its most general application, postmodernist thinking represents a ludic development of the poststructuralist

'linguistic turn' - the notion that there are no 'facts' other than those that gain an appearance in language. Alternatively expressed, there are no external claims to authority that validate a text, as texts must be taken on their own terms and 'reality' is merely that which gets presented in linguistic form. Although postmodernists use the term text in a broad sense, referring to all phenomena and all events, it is language that commands centre stage for much of their theorising and analysis.

The optic used by postmodernists frames the relationship between author, text, and reader in a manner that overturns the familiar view. Conventionally, language is conceived in terms of a sign-representational model in which there is some kind of fixed relationship and understanding of what words and other signifiers are meant to represent. Language is referential in that it seeks to connect with something other than itself, and, in so doing, becomes an object to be interpreted. In modernist formulations, it is the author who, as the creator of the text, holds the privileged position of being the ultimate authority of his/her creation. In the postmodernist formulations, however, the reader and the text are privileged over the author in that the reader is given freedom to create textual meaning, regardless of the intentions of the author or pretensions to objective content. Crudely put, one could say, "the author should die once he (sic) has finished writing, so as not to trouble the path of the text" (Eco 1983:7). This "death of the author" (Barthes 1977: 148), however, doesn't mean that a specific reader becomes the new authority for a text, as no reader has the authority to claim particular insight above any other readers. Meaning arises from the interaction of the reader with a text, and this meaning will vary depending upon matters such as the past experiences of the reader. Furthermore, as time passes, the meaning of a text may change for that same reader. The text has an importance in and of itself although it is inextricably intertextual, in the sense that texts relate necessarily to other texts in an intertwined and repetitive manner.

To explore the multiple 'hidden' meanings that a text may 'contain', postmodernists suggest, in order to make language the object of its own scrutiny, the reader employs a range of 'techniques' (e.g.: deconstruction; playfulness; the clash-of-opposites; intertwining form and content; an appeal to metaphoricality). We have argued elsewhere that the various techniques and the general orientation of postmodernists represent a revival of surrealism (see Carr 1997, 2001; Carr & Zanetti 1998a, 1998b, 2000), but the estrangement-effect the postmodernists induce is one in which the individual becomes separated from intentionality and agency. This occurs because many of the postmodernist positions, particularly the formulations emanating from those who have been dubbed "skeptical postmodernists" such as Baudrillard, Booth, Derrida, Foucault and Wellmer (see Rosenau 1992), leave us with an image of the individual whose existence and constitution is a solely textual creation, and whose intentionality is dissolved in the liquor that is the text. The self, then, has no referential status other than the text, and the familiar hallmarks of Enlightenment "knowing, naming, and emancipation" become problematic (see Lather 1992: 101-103). The self becomes figured and refigured as a textual creation. The textual formulation of 'self' is a fundamental theme that, along with the 'death of the author', also announces the 'death of the subject' (Derrida 1976).

It was Derrida who originally argued that *il n'y a pas de hors-texte* (1976: 158) i.e. there is nothing outside of the text, and asked us not to consider language as a text in relation to any fixed referents, whether those referents be historical or metaphysical. In his positing of the 'death of the subject', Derrida suggests an antisubjectivism, which, as one commentator notes, "permeates all poststructural and postmodern thought poststructuralists and postmodernists ontologize the death of the subject, thus fatefully depoliticizing their own critique of dominant culture and society... (and) chill this disempowering into a veritable social metaphysic" (Agger 1992: 296-297).

The postmodernist formulations that regard the subject as a textual creation, not as the controller and sneaker of the text present a number of difficulties in understanding the place of agency

When coupled with the rejection of grand narratives, the subject is peculiarly placed. Calhoun (1995: 116) notes this peculiarity when he says, "perhaps the most distinctive feature of postmodernist theory is the denial of any basis for critical judgement and moral responsibility that is not the arbitrary reflection of a tradition ... it precludes genuine learning from the Other". Indeed, as in the death of the author, the whole issue of intentionality seems to be dissolved in this same process[2]. Let us examine this recurring theme of the death of the subject in a little more detail for its implications.

The death of the subject - the issues of representation and identity

In the vanguard of postmodernist theorising are Baudrillard, Booth, Derrida and Foucault, collectively labelled by Rosenau (1992) as "skeptical postmodernists". Rosenau argues that these leading postmodernists are anti-subject[3] for the reasons we outlined in the introduction to this paper. In eliminating the subject, these postmodernists can simultaneously do away with those aspects of modernity that they find objectionable, namely: the subject as a symbol of modernity; the subject as humanist; and, the necessity for a subject to exist in relation to an object.

Taking these aspects in turn, first, the subject is a symbol of modernity in as much as it is conceived within the context of the Enlightenment. "Eliminate the subject, and, as with the author, the tools central to modern inquiry such as causality and agency vanish" (Rosenau 1992: 47, emphasis added). Second, the subject and its vision of human potential are central to humanism, but the skeptical postmodernists charge that privileging the subject is a value position which amounts to a form of imperialism with disruptive effects over cultures holding other value positions. The elimination of subjects suspends the "moral good/bad hierarchy they imply" (Rosenau 1992: 48). Third, skeptical postmodernists view the creation of the subject as necessarily implying the simultaneous generation of an object. This dichotomous hierarchical world, where subject studies object, merely imports an illusion of objectivity and produces truth claims that are contestable. "Without a subject to announce logocentric meta-narratives, and without other humans with subject or object status to register recognition or approval, such devices are deprived of any voice, and theory cannot endure" (Rosenau 1992: 50, emphasis added).

This orientation produces an interesting paradox, if not contradiction: in order to declare the death of the subject, postmodernist discourse itself must presume a subject. Lovlie (1992: 121122) puts the case well when he says that:

"...postmodernism writers seem all intent on making an end to the talk about the subject as a locus of reasons and autonomy. Instead they invoke writing (Derrida) or power (Foucault) or narrative (Lyotard) as the encompassing and anonymous forces swallowing up individuality, dismissing the idea of self-reflection... Yet, the postmodernist writer seems unable to make his or her points without implying a subject. Any writer denying the existence of the subject does it, of necessity, in the name of the author subject. So the subject paradoxically rears its head by the declaration of its death."

As a partial answer to this paradox, Rosenau (1992:53) has carefully noted that some skeptical postmodernists, while wishing to eliminate a modernist subject, can, at the same time, envision a postmodern individual provided "it is not humanist and if it does not imply that people are free, conscious, self-determining human beings". As Rosenau (1992: 53, italics in the original) argues:

"These postmodernists seek not to resurrect the modernist subject but rather to replace it with another character or personage in a different form. Inverting the post-modern individual will not be easy. It is a delicate task because it must be accomplished within an anti-humanist philosophy and without resurrecting the object, the alienating shadow that so burdens the modern subject. The skeptic's post-modern individual will have an almost anonymous existence. S/he will be a

person but will not be held accountable for events, actions, outcomes, nor will s/he be the author of "caring" relationships (humanist) or creative individualism. S/he will be so independent of all identifiable truth-seeking perspectives that s/he is, in short, no subject at all!"

The result, then, is that the postmodern 'individual' that emerges from the skeptics' position is one in which being is understood as merely "scattered traces and fragments", or a "fading signal from the past" (Vattimo 1988). The integrated self, so much a feature of modernity, is cast aside. "S/he is rather the disintegrating patchwork of a persona, with a disparate personality and a potentially confused identity. S/he submits to a multitude of incompatible juxtaposed logics, all in perpetual movement without possibility of permanent resolution or reconciliation. In a post-modern context no new integrated personal styles are conceivable" (Rosenau 1992: 55).

In one of the few books explicitly to address the clinical consequences of this postmodernist position, James Glass (1993), in *Shattered Selves: Multiple personality in postmodern world*, charges that this postmodernist position advocates nihilism^[4] and a multiplicity of perceptions that create psychological fragmentation. The unified self is under threat, and with its collapse come confusion, disorientation, and schizoid character. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) actually celebrated such a condition. Ferry and Renault (1985/1990: 64-67) carefully explain that this celebration arose as an outcome of the philosophical movement of the 1960s, where the social culture focused upon the promotion of the individual while analytically keeping the meaning of the subject separate. Ferry and Renault (1985/1990 : 66; see also Renault 1989/1997: 113) argue, "the subject dies with the birth of the individual", and go on to add:

"When Deleuze and Guattari in 1976 drew up, so to speak, the balance sheet of the critiques of the subject of the previous two decades, it was the birth of this kind of consciousness ("cool and laid-back consciousness") that they saluted: To get "not just to the place where one no longer says I but the place where it no longer matters whether one says I or not. We are no longer ourselves." And, among other monuments of '68 philosophy, their *Anti-Oedipus* in fact contributed greatly to the methodical divestment of the "I"; "desiring machines", pure points of departure for "detachments on every hand that are valuable in and of themselves and above all must not be filled in", "continuous fluxes" where "everything functions at the same time, but amid hiatuses and ruptures, breakdowns and failures, stalling and short-circuits, distances and fragmentations, within a sum that never succeeds in bringing its various parts together so as to form a whole," describing in every case the figure of the pulverized or disintegrated Ego that appeared on the horizon of the rise of individualism."

This fragmentation of identity implied by the skeptical postmodernists, and explicitly celebrated by Deleuze and Guattari, presents us with an interesting and paradoxical point: "If we are encouraged to embrace fractured identities, we are inevitably drawn to the forbidden question: Fractured with respect to what? ... Can fractured identities be embraced without the parallel construction of new fictions of counter-identity?" (Di Stefano 1990: 76; see also Glass 1993: 7).

The argument becomes a circular one, as any theory of subjectivity has to be grounded and in its grounding a unified self would emerge - as Glass (1993: 7) notes, in the form of an "organized fragmentation"!

Glass presents his critique by drawing upon clinical studies he has undertaken, not on multiple personalities, but on those who have created multiple realities. Glass (1993: xix) summarises the clinical consequences of the skeptical postmodernist vision when he says:

"When multiplicity appears in reality, as identities frozen in time and trait, when consciousness lives in a psychological nexus distinguished by separable identities each of which possesses idiosyncratic imperatives and languages, the self encounters multiplicity not as an expansive dynamic but as a dreadful commentary on the ends of power: the realization that to live - as Molly

puts it, means 'enduring a clamour in my head that won't stop, not even in sleep.'

It is in this context that Glass later concludes: "it makes no sense to idealise a form of human experience whose most dramatic etiology lies in some of the most perverse representations of human desire" (1993: 99). To render the self and individual as a position in language or an effect of discourse that in turn promotes a fragmented identity, Glass views as a "dangerous advocacy" (1993: xii) in terms of the issue of psychological health.

To the skeptical postmodernist, we suspect, the critique by Glass and his conclusions about psychological fracturing will be 'read' as impenetrable as its basis is merely an artefact of a "tautological, self-validating structure of the psychodynamic belief system [that] cannot be falsified" (Fox & Miller 1996: 50). While we do agree with the critique mounted by Glass and others, what has been obscured, and/or neglected, in this discourse related to the death of the author and the death of the subject are the political processes through which the subject was 'constructed' in the first place. Moreover, the agentic possibilities of alternative 'constructions' seem also to be overlooked or deprived of recognition. The postmodernists, in their 'disposal' of the subject and promotion of a fragmented identity, ultimately surrender the individual and agency to technological determinism. Perhaps this 'surrender' is understandable in the context that postmodernists embraced much of the theorising of structuralists where the subject and agency were de-emphasised or given over as insignificant next to the primacy of the social structures - structures seen as beyond individual human intervention. Thus, as Rosenau (1992: 46) argues, "post-modernist social scientists, therefore, were predisposed to examine society without subjects or individuals. Subjects get lost in the flood of structures that overpower the individual". This said, the skeptical postmodernists' orientation towards the subject and creation of identity leads us to the conclusion nicely captured by Radhakrishnan (1994: 321, emphasis added) when he asserts:

"... it would seem that there is something disingenuous about the polarized choice offered by postmodern theory: essentialism or a pure subject-less process. This binary choice seems like the only option possible because postmodern theory considers the identity question from a purley philosophic perspective and, in doing so, repress the programmatic and intentional connections between interests and identity. What is left out of the discussion, of course, is the politics of representation. Epistemology, theory and philosophy are reified as absolute sites of revolution, cleansed of political and representational partisanship."

Actually, as an extension of this thinking, it can be noted that postmodernists appear to give up on the broader issue of representation, as they seem to question the possibility of authentically representing anything^[5]. But how do we come to accept a text? Derrida acknowledges that some interpretations are more acceptable than others. On what basis? If self and identity are instead creations of the consciousness that comes from language, what are the dynamics involved in this creation? It is to these dynamics we now turn our attention.

The 'Text' as a product and site of political struggle

In their disposal of the subject and authorial motivation, the skeptical postmodernists, in our view, lay a dangerous precedent for absolving human subjects of responsibility for 'texts' and simultaneously direct attention away from the power dynamics and struggles that were and are involved in the creation and promotion of certain texts. Our argument is that text is both a product and site of political struggle, and only by understanding text in such a way does the multi-authorship of identity itself become understandable along with the limitations and possibilities for self-authorship of identity.

The demise of the author, inherent in postmodernist theorising, announces an end to responsibility and, in so doing, creates a moral vacuum. In setting aside the author and authorial motivation, skeptical postmodernists are promoting analysis of a text in a manner that directs

attention away from the power dynamics that influenced an author in the act of creation and promotion of that text.

Earlier, we noted, along with Agger (1992: 297), Calhoun (1995: 116) and Rosenau (1992: 48), that disposing of the author and causality paves the way for a denial of any basis for critical judgement and moral responsibility. The issue of moral agency is dissipated as no one is seen to author (claim responsibility for) a text. Rosenau (1992: 33) makes a similar point when she observes:

"Because no single human being can be held accountable for a situation in the sense of having causal input, no one "authors" a text-event as such. For the social sciences the death of the author results in removing responsibility from human subjects (Pinter 1987:147). I am not responsible for how my children turn out; I did not author their lives, authro(ize) their efforts, have author(ity) over their choices. Policy makers do not author decisions, so they cannot be held accountable in any specific sense for policy outcomes (texts). Similarly, if U.S. policy in Central America (a text) is independent of its author's intentions, then the Carter (Bush or Regan) administration would not be viewed as the author (the responsible agent), answerable for the outcome."

In this sense, postmodernists encourage a form of "social amnesia" (Jacoby 1975), a mode of consciousness that forgets its own ontology. As Marcuse (1964: 97) remarks, this suppression of history "is not an academic but a political affair". In discussing the work of Marcuse, Giroux (1983: 31-32) argues:

"It must be stressed that the ideological justification of the given social order is not to be found simply in modes of interpretation that view history as a 'natural' evoking process, nor in the ideologies distributed through the culture industry, but it is also found in the material reality of those needs, desires and wants that bear the inscription of history. That is, history is to be found as 'second nature' in those concepts and views of the world that make the most dominating aspects of the social order appear to be immune from historical socio-political development. Those aspects of reality that rest on an appeal to the universal and invariant often slip from historical consciousness and become embedded within those historically specific needs and desires that like individuals to the logic of conformity and domination."

It was an understanding of the 'authoring' of history that was a crucial issue for Marcuse (1955, 1964) in his critique of psychology as being too cognitive and ahistorical in its recognition of where needs, wants and desires become fashioned. Marcuse's analysis highlighted the forms of repression and domination that are taken as 'second nature' and are manifested in structures, norms and behaviours. Repression becomes reproduced within the psyche of the individual and the collective as a psychological ideal to be realised, thus the individual becomes unwittingly a willing participant in the continuation of his/her own servitude.

Careful analysis by Marcuse, employing psychoanalytical and critical theory, illustrated how repression is reproduced both in (through the super-ego as both an ego-ideal and as a censor) and over (through the reality principle of the ego that takes note of the institutionalised repressive agencies in society) the individual - thus, repression is located as both a psychological and political phenomenon (see Marcuse 1955; Carr 1989, 1994, 1995). This 'unmasking' of individual and collective "social amnesia", in the case of Marcuse, was only possible through an intention to discover how ideology functions "as lived experience" which in turn caused him to reflexively examine the author and authorial motivation of a 'text'. Only through such a pursuit did an understanding of how instinctual drives and developmental issues can and are manipulated socially and institutionally (see Carr 1994 1995; Carr & Zanetti 1997).

In many of the skeptical postmodernist formulations power seems to be everywhere and nowhere

- a matter that has been noted by others, with some Marxists arguing that the lack of analysis of the power dynamics in the construction of text simply aids and abets those responsible for the exploitation of the working class (see Wood 1986). Thompson (1993), for example, suggests that the postmodernist conception of power is one that above all stresses "that power is not possessed by individuals, groups or functions but is always a relationship, implying positive-sum rather than zero-sum outcomes [as implied by many conflict theorists]. In this sense [consistent with the earlier discussion in this paper] such analysis is limited to decentering of the subject. That is, power is understood without reference to agency, its mechanisms impersonal and independent of conscious subjects" (Thompson 1993:199, brackets indicate our comment). Thompson also goes on to challenge the postmodernist notion that power is of necessity brought into being by and wedded to language, but his major argument is that ultimately we are left with a view that power is everywhere and nowhere (Thompson 1993: 200). Such thinking leaves us with a concept of power which "loses its explanatory context and becomes a ubiquitous metaphysical principle" (Dews 1986 cited in Thompson 1993: 201). This notion of power is devoid of a cogent explanation of its internal dynamic. Such a rendering reifies power - power is seen as having a life of its own; the subject is placed on the periphery and the role of agency is ignored. This "works all by itself" mentality provides us with a human being who appears to be somewhat of a disarmed prisoner of `socie and, as one writer aptly describes, engenders an "ideology of resignation" (Madsen 1992: 221).

RESCUING THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION THROUGH CRITICAL THEORY

So far, we have argued that postmodernist conceptions of text have constructed an image of the individual that is a textual creation. The death of the subject raises troublesome issues regarding representation and identity, leading to fractured selves and the failure (or inability) to recognise the historical antecedents for power relationships. If, as we noted earlier in our discussion of identity, we are just to appear in texts as a kind of fragmented and disembodied self, then this postmodernist vision of the 'system' having a life of its own not only fails to promote political engagement, but also compounds the feeling of powerlessness over, and in, the lifeworld. In so doing, postmodernism supports the status quo. We suggest that an understanding of text and agency that is informed by critical theory might be useful in rescuing agency from postmodernist neglect.

Central to the logic of critical theory is the use of dialectic[6]. The superiority of dialectical thinking is found in its ability to find true synthesis, rather than consensus, because synthesis suggests taking thought to a new level rather than simply reaching a common agreement point along a linear spectrum (as consensus implies)[7]. Contrary to the lock-step progression of thesis-antithesis-synthesis that is so often (poorly) taught and illustrated in textbooks, the Hegelian dialectic that we draw on here is far more dynamic and organic. One "moment" of the dialectic process gives rise to its own negation. The process is comparable to tragedy in which the protagonist is brought down as a result of the dynamics inherent in his/her own character. What emerges from the dialectic of affirmation and negation is a transcendent moment that at once negates, affirms, and incorporates all the previous moments (Bernstein 1971). The critical theorist's use of dialectic incorporates the historical analysis of context, allowing us to recognize the social construction of reality and draw upon agency to change it. Critical theory allows us to view the negative as a positive act of creation, an opportunity that postmodernism surrenders.

Postmodernism's call to abandon the philosophy of consciousness as an outdated artefact of the Enlightenment yields a paradoxical outcome. As Bologh and Mell (1994) put it, the metatheory of postmodernism takes us from beto thinghood. "For postmodernism the subject and object are produced by the 'play' of power or desire. The relationship is not grounded in any purpose that might entail growth or development. Hence, both subject and object are flat, two-dimensional things" (Bologh & Mell 1994: 88). Of course, both postmodernism and dialectic reject the rigid distinctions between subject and object. Neither subject nor object is intelligible without the other

and each presupposes the other. But postmodern analysis ends where the dialectical analysis begins - with revealing the relationship of subject and object to be self-constituting (Bologh & Mell 1994: 87; see also Carr & Zanetti 1999). What (skeptical) postmodernism is missing is the animating force of creative growth and development. In its celebration of negative freedom ("freedom from"), this postmodernism can only tear down a world; it cannot build it back up ("freedom to") (Bologh & Mell 1994; Eagleton 1996). As Bologh and Mell (1994: 83) argue:

"...the political consequence of postmodern thought is a Hobbesian version of society as a war against all; the ethical consequence is a moral individualism unable to challenge the ordering principles of modern society."

Lurking like a repressed memory beneath much postmodern/poststructuralist theorising is an oblique acknowledgment of affirmation and agency. "Jacques Derrida once made a comment which, by its very incongruity, highlights the postmodern consensus. He confessed to an interviewer: 'Indeed, I cannot conceive of a radical critique which would not ultimately be motivated by some sort of affirmation, acknowledged or not' (Johnson 1997: 559). We suggest, in the following paragraphs, that it is necessary to recognize the dialectical interaction of force and consent in order to understand not only how powerlessness is internalised, but also how active recovery from "social amnesia" is effected.

Having recognised that agency cannot, in fact, vanish simply by announcing the end of the philosophy of consciousness, we turn to the question of representation. Just as agency is obliquely acknowledged in postmodernism, representation is, as well. Foucault called attention to the possibility that the antecedents for power relationships became reproduced in the individual (see Carr & Zanetti 1997; Mason & Carr 1997, 1999). In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault traces the shift from monarchical/sovereign power, evident in feudal times, to disciplinary power - a move from the spectacle of the scaffold to a new form of capillary power that reaches into all parts of the social relations. Foucault borrowed the imagery of Bentham's architecture of surveillance, the Panopticon, to explain how individuals became responsible for self-discipline. The Panopticon was a circular prison that had a central watchtower from which a guard could observe the prisoners without being visible to them. The prisoners, believing their every behaviour could be observed, would police their own behaviour. That is, the prisoners would internalise their own surveillance. In this arrangement it was not necessary to have any guard in the tower. It was enough to create a belief that someone was watching.

It was in the context of discussing the omnipresence of power in all social relations that Foucault concluded that the individual does not stand outside power in a detached manner, as is traditionally argued, but instead is constituted by power. Perhaps the most insidious effect of disciplinary power is to produce "docile bodies" by separating (partitioning) individuals across functional sites. Foucault notes this partitioning of individuals serves to disrupt, rearrange, and subvert reciprocal communication and instead institutes a hierarchical system of command. This dispersion of disciplinary power, Foucault suggests, is normatively objectionable precisely because it imposes inegalitarian, nonreciprocal political relationships (see Johnson 1997: 572).

Arguing, as we do, that text is both the product and site of political struggle, how do these texts come to be written? And how do subjects perceive and represent their interests in the political arena? Again, we note that postmodernism must acknowledge the centrality of representation, intentionality and agency. Foucault notes that along with the existence of power is the possibility for resistance: "like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies" (Foucault 1980: 142). To struggle against power, subjects must create a new constellation of rights, a "new politics of truth" (Foucault 1980: 133), and 11 new schemas of politicization" (Foucault 1980: 190). Again, we suggest that critical theory provides a framework for understanding these dynamics. Early critical theory professed to be an instance of enlightened praxis. Eventually, however, resignation set in, resulting in political abstinence. Therborn (1970)

notes that the theorists of the "first generation" were members of the academic intelligentsia with high bourgeois backgrounds. Their attraction to radical theory resulted from a philosophical revulsion against capitalism's oppression and hypocritical denial. Their greatest strength - their theoretical framework - also became the greatest liability, in that the theory developed was so radical it was irreconcilable with action. The role of philosophy became one of voicing protest, unmasking reason, and articulating human suffering, but not effecting change. It is for this reason that we infuse our critical theory with a philosophy of activism from Antonio Gramsci (1971, 1985).

Gramsci, an Italian philosopher and political activist whose work predated that of the Frankfurt School, also appreciated the relationship between agency and society with his positioning of the concept of ideology - an understanding of which is particularly relevant, in our view, if one is to pursue change. One of Gramsci's most significant theoretical contributions was his articulation of hegemony. Hegemony is pictured as the equilibrium between civil society and political society, where civil society represents institutions such as the church, the family, and the schools, and political society is represented by the state (the formal political institutions and officials). In Gramsci's conception, power is both centralised in the political system and diffused across civil institutions. Consent is organised, and power exercised, not just through official political policies and practices, but also in civil society, where many aspects of social and political identity are fundamentally grounded (Carroll & Ratner 1994). The dynamics of force and consent, power and persuasion, are intertwined. Power cannot be maintained for very long by force alone. In order to continue to exert influence, a dominant group must also gain the consent of the subordinate group by convincing subordinates that their best interests are served by accepting the prevailing order.

Given the interaction between force (power) and consent (persuasion), Gramsci argued that repressive institutions must be challenged within the context of transforming popular consciousness both as a precondition for transformation and as a central aspect of the liberation itself (Lawner 1973). As oppressed individuals and communities become aware of the (artificial) limitations placed on them by society, they may expand their perceptions of their needs and demands. With this understanding, they can take the initiative to move beyond the boundaries that previously contained them (keeping them "in their place", so to speak).

"The specific aspects of power and persuasion we wish to address were what Lukes (1974) and Gaventa (1980) have termed the "third dimension" of political power relationships. The first two dimensions refer to what political scientists often call pluralist and elitist theories. Very simply, pluralist theories of political group interaction assume a fairly open political system and equal access for all interested parties. In Dahl's well known definition, "A has power [or influence] over B to the extent that he (sic) can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl; 1957:202-203). In this conception of political activity, inaction is the result of apathy, inertia, or choice. Because all individuals have access to the political system, nonparticipation reflects little more than personal preference."

Elitist theories recognise that bias exists in the political system, or, in the unforgettable words of Schattschneider (1960), "the heavenly chorus sings with a distinct upper class accent". Because not all political players have equal access to resources, the result is that some groups, players, or issues become "organised out" of the system (Schattschneider 1960: 105; see also Zanetti & Carr 2000). Important to our discussion, however, is the assumption within this framework that an absence of grievance equals some form of political consensus or agreement. A power struggle can be seen to exist when both sides are aware of it, or even when the less powerful party is aware of it (because the powerful are so entrenched as to be oblivious to challenge) (Bachrach & Baratz 1970: 50).

In the "third dimension" of political power, however, Gramsci's dynamics of hegemony are acknowledged. Lukes (1974: 34) argues that in this conception "A exercises power over B when

A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests". More importantly, "A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping, or determining his very wants" (Lukes 1974: 23, emphasis added). In other words, A affects B by shaping B's very conceptions of the issues altogether. This consideration of political power takes into account the many ways in which potential issues are kept out of the political arena through the operation and influence of social forces and institutional practices (Gaventa 1980).

Understanding this third dimension of political power gives an explanation for understanding how power shapes the participation patterns of the marginalised or relatively powerless. The power processes are located in the social construction of meanings and patterns that encourage B to act in a manner that is to A's benefit and B's detriment. The relative power and powerlessness of A and B are reinforced over time and maintained not by the fear of A's power, but by B's conviction of her own powerlessness, often manifested as fatalism, self-deprecation, or apathy. This sense of powerlessness leads to internalisation of the values, beliefs, and rules of the powerful as a kind of adaptive response. The powerless become socialised into compliance (Gaventa 1980). This is the essence of Gramsci's conception of hegemony.

Gramsci's description of hegemony offers striking parallels to Foucault's conception of disciplinary power (also noted in Clegg 1998). Like Gramsci, Foucault sees social-political movements as the generators of new political forms. Feminism, for example, is referenced as a movement of affirmation, a point that Agger (1993) echoes. Discourse becomes the field in which power struggles are enacted.

To develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of power and representation, we suggest that the political aspect of critical theory and Gramscian theory is rendered even more forceful when recognising and reclaiming the psychological dimension of critical theory. Critical theory, as was noted earlier, considers insight the necessary prelude to praxis and emancipation. Consciousness was viewed by the Frankfurt School as the mediator of social totality, and as such, it needed to explain the subjective dimension of liberation and domination. Marcuse in particular provided a compelling analysis of Western societies that highlighted the forms of repression and domination that are taken as "second nature" and manifest in structures, norms and behaviours.

The psychological embeddedness of restraint and the particular nature of that restraint, Marcuse argues, must be understood in a specific historical context "and judged as to whether such systems of domination exceeded their bounds" (Giroux 1983:26). Unlike Freud, Marcuse rejected the notion that legitimate and illegitimate forms of domination were a natural and permanent feature of civilisation. Marcuse was of the view that each society has material conditions that operate as a reality principle. The reality principle can take a different form in different societies. In capitalist societies the specific reality principle that applies is one based on a performance principle - under whose rule "society is stratified according to the competitive economic performance of its members" (Marcuse 1955: 44). This performance principle, Marcuse believed, had outstripped its historical function. Scarcity was no longer a universal feature of society and therefore it was no longer "necessary" to submit individuals to the demands of alienating labor that were engendered through the application of this principle. It was historically outdated and was in need of replacement. In this context Marcuse noted that a degree of repression was "necessary", in that it was socially useful but in this case it was excessive - "surplus repression". Marcuse (1955: 37-38) captured the relationship of these notions when he argued:

"..while any form of the principle demands a considerable degree and scope of repressive control over the instincts, the specific historical institutions of the reality principle and the specific interests of dominations intriduce additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association. Those additional control arising from the specific institutions of

domination are what we denote as surplus-repression...the modifications and deflections of instinctual energy necessitated by the perpetuation of the monogamic-patriarchal family, or by a hierarchical division of labor, or by public control over individual's private existence are instances of surplus-repression pertaining to the institutions of a particular reality principle."

The psychodynamic underpinning of the third dimension of power is thus cogently explained, as are Foucault's antecedents of how identity can, indeed, be considered as a power effect. Repression is reproduced both in (through the superego as both an ego-ideal and as a censor) and over (through the reality principle of the ego that takes note of the institutionalised repressive agencies in society) the individual - thus, repression is in this sense both a psychological and political phenomenon. Marcuse ultimately suggested that there would be a transformation of the current performance principle as contradictions continued to emerge from the operation of the specific reality principle in the various institutions, and citizens would no longer tolerate what was in fact surplus repression.

Relating Gramsci's perspective back to that of Marcuse, human beings are not seen as "givens," whose nature is fixed and immutable. Human essence is culturally fashioned - human beings are a "becoming", rooted in the historical process. We are history - as actors, our practical activities make history, and, as thinkers, we contemplate ourselves within history. We are political animals, but we are also "political agents" who create ourselves in and through historical action (Fontana 1993). Agency and representation are inherent in the text.

CONCLUSIONS

We have argued in this paper that skeptical postmodernists theorising about 'text' artificially abandons the subject and, at best, posits what we regard as a contestable view: that identity is to be understood as fragmented and seen in "scattered traces". We say "artificially", because lurking beneath the discourse on "anti-subjectivism" is the unacknowledged existence of affirmation and representation, making text both the product and site of political struggle. What goes unexamined is the process by which discourses become culturally embedded and reproduced in the individual psyche.

Critical theory and dialectic provide a framework for both understanding and overcoming this cultural and individual embeddedness. Examining the political and psychological interaction between the moments of force and consent (power and persuasion) through the dialectic optic gives a fuller understanding of how discourses are formed and, perhaps most importantly, how they might be changed - a goal that cannot be accomplished without a recognition of agency.

[Footnote]

NOTES

not all subjects are authors".

[Footnote]

(3) It needs to be acknowledged from the outset, that when trying to capture what appear to be fundamental themes in postmodernist theorising that there is a significant amount of illusory unity put forward in the discourses that purport to discuss 'a' postmodernist position. Even, for example, when examining the literature to arrive at a definition of postmodernism is difficult - particularly in the context that even the so-called leaders of the postmodern movement in the social sciences, such as Derrida and Foucault, have not declared themselves as postmodernist. Indeed some commentators claim the label of poststructuralist is more appropriate to their work (see Calhoun 1995: 99; also Huyssen 1986) and even Lyotard, another of the so-called postmodernists, does not help in the precision of the terminology. In the Appendix to his book *The Postmodern Condition* Lyotard blurs the distinction between modern and postmodern when he comments that the postmodern "is undoubtedly apart of the modern" (Lyotard 1984: 79). This

[Footnote]

has in turn led to some suggesting that postmodernism is simply a radical form of modernism (see Giddens 1990)! The illusory unity and the retrospective labelling that abounds in this arena does make for some degree of difficulty and argument over whether one has accurately reflected the discourse that purports to be postmodernist.

In relation to the issue of the demise/death/ decentered subject there is some significant differences amongst postmodernists. In addressing this issue, Rosenau (1992) distinguishes between two groups of postmodernists. One group that she labels "skeptical postmodernists" are, she argues, anti-subject. Included in this group, as we noted earlier, are theorists such as Baudrillard, Booth, Derrida, Foucault and Wellmer. Another broad group are, what Rosenau calls, "affirmative postmodernists" who propose to return a subject to the text, not as a modernist subject but as a postmodern alternative. This latter group includes theorists such as Bourdieu, Touraine, Kristeva and Giddens and are not discussed in this paper. The broader postmodernist architecture itself has made this latter group somewhat less mainstream and their formulations require extensive discussion in their own right which we have done elsewhere (see Mason & Carr 1997). A unified and coherent position amongst the affirmatives is still to emerge. Collectively the affirmative postmodernists embrace a soft relativism but, thus far, the various formulations have had difficulty in reconciling tenets of postmodernist theorising that appear to be contradictory to the positioning of a subject (see Calhoun 1995: 218). Rosenau (1992) also raises some of these issues in her discussion of some skeptical postmodernists seeking to replace the modern subject with a "personage" which is addressed in this current paper.

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[4] In raising this larger issue of nihilism in postmodernist formulations we do not mean to suggest we agree that, philosophically, such a position can be held as some kind of 'ideal-type'. We have specifically challenged that postmodernist theorising fits such a black and white labelling system, for postmodernists do hold a value position that focuses and privileges the neglected, the silent, and the hidden, and gives primacy to the 'reader' over the 'author' (see Carr 1996a, 1996b).

[Footnote]

[5] Rosenau (1992: 123 & 143) notes:

[Footnote]

"the skeptical post-modernist view the political as a "construction" in the sense that any political

the dialectic is the

[Footnote]

ability to see wholes and the conflict of parts simultaneously (McDonald 1968). As Adorno expressed it, "Dialectics is the quest to see the new in the old instead of just the old in the new. As it mediates the new, so it also preserves the old as the mediated" (Adorno 1956/1984: 38).

[Footnote]

[7] The widespread use of the term dialectic has yielded many misconceptions and we raise several of these by way of further explaining the dialectic optic. First, not every framework presenting two sides of a question or situation is dialectical. Adorno wrote, "Dialectical thought is the attempt to break through the coercive character of logic with the means of logic itself" (Adorno cited in Arato and Gephardt 1982/1993: 396). In other words, dialectical thought sits within the framework of a given argument to offer its critique. Juxtaposition, static opposition, and simple divisions certainly exist, but these are, by definition, undialectical, since dialectic thinking requires that the conditions and circumstances of the whole be taken into consideration as well. Dialectic incorporates a "substantive" contradiction, rather than simply a formal-quantitative one. Second, simplistic reduction of the familiar thesis-- antithesis-synthesis relationship has given rise to the perception that the synthesis is analogous to compromise, a kind of middle ground halfway between the two original starting points. This misinterpretation quite possibly stems from the words Hegel used to describe this new thought process - Vermittlung (mediation) and Versöhnung (reconciliation) - as well as, we suspect, from the insistence of textbook editors on offering two-dimensional graphic representations of such a totalistic process. Horkheimer speaks contemptuously of the tendency to represent dialectic as a "lifeless diagram" (Horkheimer 1935/1993: 414). What is often overlooked in these simplistic formulations is that mediation takes place in and through the extremes (the thesis and antithesis); it is not a simple give-and-take along a continuum. Dialectic is a more supple form of thought than mathematical inference. It always makes higher-order comments on the relationship under scrutiny, stating connections that carry beyond the obvious content (Findlay 1977). The synthesis becomes a new "working reality" and may, in turn, become a thesis (which then engenders its own antithesis). The contradiction is not "resolved" but instead absorbed: the frame of reference which made the poles opposites in the first case is transcended, while the identity of the poles is maintained (Arato and Gephardt 1982/1993). Thus, what might appear to be opposites in one context (force and consent, for example) might no longer be opposites in the synthesis.

A third common misunderstanding refers to the nature of contradiction represented by the dialectic. Traditional (or formal) logic dictates that two contradictory elements can never be true together (see, for example, Popper 1963), but traditional logic (specifically deductive inference), because it focuses on empirical (mostly quantitative) representations of reality, necessarily builds on arbitrarily-constructed foundations. At some point, the logic is abstracted

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from reality (formalised). In critical theory, however, form cannot be separated from content. It must continually reflect the whole of reality, not just a simplification of it. The term dialectic sometimes is mistakenly used to denote a simple binary of opposites where the dialectical contradiction (the thesis-antithesis) is in some fashion conceived as an absolute. But dialectical relationships do not express simply existence and non-existence; they also recognise the other possibilities available in the whole. For example, "the dialectical contradiction of 'a' is not simply 'non-a' but 'b', 'c', 'd', and so on - which, in their attempt at selfassertion and self-realization, are all fighting for the same historical space" (Arato & Gebhardt 1982/1993: 398). Horkheimer gives other examples of such dialectic logic and suggests we need to think in terms of substantive

opposites rather than formal/logical positivist/logical empiricist ones to help in understanding are assumptions. He gives an example of the contradiction to 'straight' which formal logic might seem to suggest is 'non-straight', but Horkheimer suggests other negations: 'curved'; 'interrupted'; and 'zigzag' (see Horkheimer 1935/1993). Another example, pertinent to the discussion in this paper, might be to recognise that there are multiple negations to power: resistance, powerlessness, and quiescence, all of which have different relationships to power and consequently different dialectical resolutions.

Our own approach to dialectics echoes, in many ways, Adorno's "negative dialectics" (Adorno 1966/1973; see Carr 1996a, 1996b, 2000a, 2000b; Carr & Zanetti 1998a, 1998b; Zanetti 1997a, 1997b; Zanetti & Carr 1997, 1998a, 1998b). Adorno rehabilitated Hegel's dialectical method while shunning his absolute idealism. Adorno's goal was to formulate a post-Hegelian dialectic which does not culminate in a final synthesis or conceptual unity, but which provides a reflective openness that infinitely postpones the moment of closure. What is problematic, for Adorno, is the tendency of modern reason to culminate in self-enclosure or self-sufficiency, elevating human subjects to a position of mastery or domination in and over the world. Adorno's dialectic is negative in the sense of nonaffirmation: with the claims of linear teleology and systematic unity cast aside, human reason is no longer an instrument of domination but instead assists in the emancipation of social phenomena from conceptual restraints (Dallmayr 1997).

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