

Chapter 1

THE TEMPORALITY OF RESISTANCE

David L. Crawford

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Fairfield University

INTRODUCTION

Since launching the notion of “resistance” (or at least revitalizing and recasting it) James Scott and his sympathizers have fought an uphill battle to clarify what the opening page of *Weapons of the Weak* bluntly states: there is no easy, binary division between resistance and non-resistance.¹ This seems to have muddled our Manichean minds, and has led to much ink spilled over what resistance could possibly mean if not the opposite of something like non-resistance, acquiescence, submission, acceptance. Over nearly twenty years the discussion has traced some curious routes, inwards to issues of whether self-consciousness is required for an act to be legitimately labeled resistance, and outwards to questions of whether ethnographic particularity undermines the very possibility of a universal category of resistance, or, contradictorily, whether global capitalism is so universally hegemonic as to fold all resistance of any sort back into the logic of profit and the commoditization of absolutely everything—from Che Guevara tee shirts to Osama Bin Laden lunch boxes.

Here I want to take two steps back. I admire Scott’s original attempt to specify the subtleties, gradations and forms of resistance—so that wasting Capital’s time counts for something despite falling short of mature revolution—and I want to suggest that this issue of time holds a clue to a deeper deployment of our term. It may be that some of this is implicit in

¹ This is from a quote on the frontispiece by Colin Gordon, “. . .the binary division between resistance and non-resistance is an unreal one. The existence of those who seem not to rebel is a warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies which counter and deflect the visible facts of overall domination, and whose purposes and calculations, desires and choices, resist any simple division into the political and apolitical” in (Scott 1985:vii). While Scott sometimes suggests that social action can be a “subtle mixture of outward compliance and tentative resistance” (ibid. 289), it is unclear whether the issue is that resistance cannot be epistemologically or ontologically separated from compliance. In other words, is the problem that it is hard to tell (because people hide their resistance) or that acts can simultaneously resist and comply? My argument here lies with the latter reading.

other work, even Scott's original piece, but I want to outline in the starkest terms how I think the idea of resistance can be made more analytically useful by specifying the temporal frameworks of inequality and the role of resistance in them. This project was prompted by Fletcher's visitation of the term "resistance" in a Chilean case, which I employ in the final part of the essay as an ethnographic example.

Fletcher (2001) makes the argument that a transformed, Foucauldian notion of power, its practical ubiquity and inflection/production of "reality" and "truth," are keys to resuscitating the notion of resistance. He explores specifically why different factions of indigenous Pewenche are resisting or, in the majority of cases, accepting relocation due to the construction of a dam in their traditional homeland in the Alto Biobio region. While clearly sympathetic to the minority contingent opposing the dam, Fletcher does not simply dismiss the pro-dam group as victims of false consciousness. Instead he uses the division within the community to explore the point that power is not simply oppressive, and that "oppression" and its "resistance" cannot be easily determined from without by well-intentioned Parnassians—of the Left or otherwise. As Ortner (1995), Scott himself (1985)² and others have noted, categories of understanding matter, or to put it more plainly, power cannot be dissociated from culture, or from specific subject positions within a culture. The argument is that what we are calling "resistance" must be understood in the context of other cultural logics, frameworks of meaning that must be appraised ethnographically.

Fletcher is concerned, however, that we not succumb to interpretive relativism, that we chart a course somewhere between hubristic political activism and a hermeneutic anthropology that takes detached descriptiveness as a form of morally unsullied inquiry. This is not easy and it is not obvious how to go about it. Many aspire to pursue progressivism without positivism, to argue for more "democracy" and "equality" with attention to the cultural inflections such terms may bear. We are asked to "live ironically," in Terry Eagleton's words, without abandoning appreciation for corporal truths like suffering and death. This is in some sense the progressive project of our age: how to realize a more just world in the era "after theory" (Eagleton 2003). In other words, how do we deconstruct power while deconstructing the power to deconstruct—without spinning ourselves into a dizzy apoplexy?

I am not so ambitious as to attempt all this. My aim here is to build on what we now understand as the plurality of power by suggesting how diverse sorts of inequalities are brought together and operated in time. I will argue that resistance is analytically useful, not least as a window into the way temporalities of inequality are synchronized, reproduced and transformed. This, I hope, contributes to the subtlety with which progressives can grasp the operations of power and offers some idea how productive relations and the distribution of their rewards might be conceptualized in more equitable terms.

² Scott writes of a "meaning centered account of class relations" (1985:xvii), "public symbols and goals" (ibid. 33), "socially recognized form[s] of domination" (ibid. 307), and even "cultural resistance" (ibid. 34). In the final chapter Scott writes that "The main point... is that the peasants of Sedaka do not simply react to objective conditions per se but rather to the interpretation they place on those conditions as mediated by values embedded in concrete practices" (ibid. 305). All of this would seem to undermine charges that Scott is insufficiently concerned with the "meanings" locals ascribe to their actions.

INEQUALITY

My students are always dismayed to learn that penguins are twice as genetically diverse as humans, and fruit flies ten times more diverse. This defies all logic, or all my students' logic, and is the kind of "fact" they recognize will be seditiously employed by cranky subversives like myself, usually for what they mislabel my "liberal" purposes. And indeed, the penguins are only diverse *genetically*, for while humans are a young and biologically homogenous species our cultural and social character has facilitated a global presence and a bedazzling florescence of different ways of being, seeing, feeling, building, eating, dressing, and thinking. For a species with very limited genetic diversity, we are nonetheless astonishingly different, and, more importantly for our present purposes, unequal. Put another way, with a counter-intuitively overwhelming biological parity, we have nevertheless produced the planet's richest catalogue of inequality. We have developed, expanded, and aesthetically inflected social inequality, even in societies conventionally labeled "egalitarian." When Bushmen, for instance, used to "insult the meat" or allot portions based on shared arrows rather than hunting skill, they were as centrally concerned with the social operation of inequality as Princess Diana's heirs suing for rights to her name. Whether societies explicitly embrace an ideology of equality or its opposite, difference is key to who we are, difference begets inequality, and managing difference is what we do most cleverly as a species. The appellation "Homo Hierarchicus" might be much more broadly applied than Dumont (1980) supposed.

Simply, inequality is foundational to human social life. This is true in the sense usually given, and well explored by Marx, Durkheim and other metatheoretical Brahmins: a specialization of labor allows for our unique diversity of social life, and thus all societies are faced with tough questions about how to allot the rewards of our necessarily interdependent production. Such inequality runs very, very deep. For example, the human infant is amongst the most dependent of mammals, and thus, ironically, the exploitation of parents (and especially the mother) by the baby is extremely intense. My partner and I are presently raising two children under two years-old. It is quite apparent to us (now, too late) that we have been enslaved, and the one of us with functional mammary glands is enslaved particularly cruelly. Apparently it will remain something like this for the next twenty years, though beyond milk production and after toilet training it is supposed to get somewhat less physically exhausting while growing still more fiscally devastating. This form of inequality, the intense exploitation of parents by children, and later, at least in societies that celebrate it, the equally intense exploitation of children by parents, is revealing of the way inequality works in society, that is, the way inequality is expressed in time. Social inequality is rightfully our main concern here, but it bears a family resemblance to a prototypical form of what we might consider "natural inequality" that is quite striking in our species: not between generic, mature individuals, but instead among continuously maturing people, people at different points in the terminal trajectory of life. Human young make extraordinary claims on their elders, a fact that undergirds the interdependence key to human social life. We will return to this portentous fact below.

In social theory, however, when we talk about inequality we normally mean between adults, and, if examined carefully, politically enfranchised, usually male adults. This is why Phillips can assert that seemingly noble ideals of universal citizenship are essentially unfair,

that the “equality” of the universal citizen is “peculiarly advantageous to men” (1999:23). She writes, “These [liberal] standards are of course presented as neutral—the same criticisms would apply equally to a woman or a man—but since social characteristics *are* gendered, what passes for neutrality turns out to be preferential treatment for men” (ibid. 24). Phillips is thus refuting the political beneficence of an imaginary genderless, race-less, age-less universal citizen precisely because such a being is necessarily and intransigently imaginary. No such person exists in the material world, or could exist. So, amongst the Pewenche, when Fletcher and others express a desire for “equality” we have to ask how much, for whom, and, especially, what kind? Phillips notes that “Treating people as equals does not have to mean treating them the same” (ibid. 26), but if equality is not sameness of something we are hard pressed to define the term. In the US this point emerges in laws requiring wheelchair access or affirmative action—clearly “inequalities” of some sort meant to make other sorts of inequalities equal. The Right roils at such “preferences” with some reason: equality can be a Trojan horse for *any* political program, a way particular injustices are packaged as natural rights or moral responsibilities. The question is necessarily who gets to decide which inequalities are abhorrent, which are palatable, which to ameliorate and which to ignore? Such issues tend to stir the blood far more than the intellect.

In his Nobel prize-winning work Amartya Sen has explored this conundrum of inequality in considerable depth. He points out that political positions normally considered antithetical to one another very often share a concern with equality, arguing that “a common characteristic of virtually all the approaches to the ethics of social arrangements that have stood the test of time is to want equality of something—something that has an important place in the particular theory” (1992:ix). This is to say that libertarians and socialists seem to disagree very fundamentally, yet both are arguing for equality—just different kinds. Libertarians wish to facilitate some sort of equality of opportunity, something ideally free of “government” interference, and are unconcerned if, given “equal” opportunities, people suffer dramatic inequalities; socialists believe this approach to be disingenuous, that equality of opportunity should of course be pursued, but given its unlikely realization, especially without government assistance, we need to ensure some sort of parity of outcome, some minimum level of health, education and welfare. Socialists accept that this is unfair in some sense to a minority who are exceptionally talented or prodigiously propertied who do not receive equally exceptional rewards; Libertarians accept that their system will lead to gross inequality of outcomes. Sen’s point is that both are arguing for equality of *something* and both accept some sort of inequality as the price paid. While Sen’s claim that equality is key to “*virtually all* the approaches to the ethics of social arrangements” would seem to be overstating the case, it is clear that some agreement on acceptable inequalities is fundamental to the construction of a viable society, and, thus, the naturalization of key inequalities is a central and necessary part of our cultural understanding of the world.

This makes general calls for “equality” seem naïve, or, worse, a means of smuggling in pork-barrel appropriations, specific inequalities based on some clever somebody’s ability to sell it in the guise of another form of fairness. Nobody supposes that there is “equality” between mother and infant, as we’ve noted, or even between a woman when she is a mother and when she was a child. A world where mothers and infants were made to be equal *at all times* would be very short-lived indeed. We decide to accept certain inequalities in certain timeframes, or learn to accept them as part of our culturally constructed world, even as we promote a general and therefore meaningless “equality” as a benign social goal. We do not

like to be reminded that “productive inequalities” (Donham 1999:94) are key to our nature, that how we transfer labor between people, across space and time, is precisely what defines particular types of societies as feudal, capitalist or whatever, as well as being more broadly what defines us as a species. How we manage inequality is the core of who we are. And while generalized equality is a dangerous mirage, gaining some equality in spheres we conclude are important is utterly necessary. Conversely, changing acceptable patterns of inequality is a deeper and more complicated task than most people imagine, even most academics who specialize in such things. The horrific and relentlessly expanding inequalities of global capitalism have stupefied us, made us squeamish, stunted our ability to think about how exactly we might necessarily propagate certain inequalities to build a more just, less cruel world than the one we now inhabit. We cannot eliminate inequality any more than we can eliminate power; the question is *why, when and how* inequalities are actualized, and resistance is key to understanding these processes.

This calls, first of all, for a distinction between power and inequality. In one sense the former term is amongst the fields of application of the latter, which is to say that power is one area in which there is marked inequality. On the other hand, most inequalities do not much matter unless infused with some sort of power. As a global population, for instance, we have unequally beautiful earlobes, and while mine are gorgeous this fact carries no real significance and certainly no power; it is irrelevant. There are inequalities in power qua power as a kind of metaphysical oomph suffusing the social world, but it is more fruitful, I think, to examine how specific inequalities are vested with power. Key to this is understanding the social and material world as replete with inequalities, from the aforementioned earlobe comeliness and relations between mothers and babies, to intelligence, capital, health, linguistic dexterity, digestive capacity, red blood cell count, and quantity and quality of friends in high places. Sen suggests that the difficulty of coming to grips with inequality has two main parts: the heterogeneity of human beings and the multiplicity of variables by which equality can be judged. This “heterogeneity” is both biological and social, of course, while the variables considered for judging can be seen as largely culturally or ideologically determined. While it is now commonplace amongst anthropologists to assert that we live through all-important, cultural “webs of meaning,” much of this meaning inflects the cross-cutting and difficult to disentangle webs of inequality through which we constitute our selves and societies. After all, spiders have a material motivation for each night’s elegant spinning, and they eat their webs each dawn in the dim arachnid hope of reproducing new (though structurally similar) webs in new (conditioning) contexts. Moreover, to abuse the metaphor further, the webs are moving.

Charles Tilly has attempted to contend with this. In his “relational origins of inequality” he writes, “For the neat multi-dimensional space of conventional treatments, [relational theory] substitutes a dynamic tangle of incomplete, clumped, and changing connections. From a relational perspective, inequality appears everywhere, but it rarely crystallizes into neat, continuous hierarchies somehow arraying whole populations into strata. A relational analysis leads to the conclusion that any such hierarchies... rest on extensive social effort, only emerge under unusual historical conditions, and undergo incessant pressure for modification” (2001:362). Such a conception of inequality helps us to understand some of the utility of term “resistance.” The “extensive social effort” required to maintain a given pattern of inequality or set of inequalities is resisted by the relatively disempowered, who use what means they have at hand to exert “incessant pressure for modification,” even if this pressure comes from

inaction, dawdling, or poor performance. Resistance here is a useful term because it specifies a type of action in a specific relation of inequality: resistance comes as the disadvantaged press for "modification," purposefully or inadvertently, as the relatively empowered attempt to reproduce and consolidate conditions of social inequality. Thus, resistance is a "diagnostic of power" (Abu-Lughod 1990:41) because "each form of labor control or payment is ... likely, other things equal, to generate its own distinctive forms of quiet resistance and 'counterappropriation'" (Scott 1985:34). The danger, as has been pointed out, is overextending our term. Just as "hegemony" morphed from a general term for domination to a specific, ideological mode of domination and back again to mean almost any sort of domination, "resistance" can easily become any kind of nominally political action by anyone who is in any sense—or believes himself to be—comparatively disadvantaged. Such a dilution ought to be resisted or we end up with right wing pundits whining about their under representation in liberal arts education.

It should be clear, then, that in a world necessarily and productively fraught with inequality, the key is how advantage is amalgamated, amplified, defended, and, especially, reproduced. This is true for inequalities of class as it is of race, gender and age. And since, contra Tilly's "rare" crystallizations, we do in fact see striking and durable patterns of hierarchy along many axes, the question is how such patterns are built and maintained. This is where the use of resistance can be diagnostically useful, by pointing us towards the way power is reproduced. In this sense resistance is action on specific inequalities operated in time, and the term makes no sense without reference to the multiplicity of possible inequalities and their intersections and expressions in time(s).

TIME I

In his 1968 plenary address to the American Anthropological Association Max Gluckman made a last gasping attempt to defend a certain strain of British social anthropology before the ascendant American culturalists. As near as I can tell it did not work, but the beginning of the talk was nevertheless prophetic, with Gluckman stating that "The problem of time is critical for all studies of social and cultural systems" (1968:220). This, of course, finds precedence as far back as Heraclitus and has not gone unnoticed by anyone of any significant stature in social theory, from Ibn Khaldun to Emile Durkheim.³ The Americans of 1968 appeared to get the message, too, with anthropology turning towards "history" so dramatically that by the late 1990s anthropological PhD dissertations routinely had a long "history chapter," or in some cases were in sum more like histories than what had been anthropology.

This was not quite what Gluckman meant, however. His point was that in order to understand history, the specificities of events and the broad currents of social change, we

³ Somewhat contrary to how he is usually cast, Durkheim writes "Far from being immutable, humanity is in fact involved in an interminable process of evolution, disintegration and reconstruction; far from being a unity, it is in fact infinite in its variety, with regard to both time and place. Nor do I mean simply that external forms of life vary.... Rather I mean that the fundamental substance of [men's] way of conceiving the world and conducting themselves in it is in a constant state of flux, which itself varies from place to place" (in Eickelman 1977:485). Arguably Durkheim's notable insistence on social integration, the emotional bonds among a people, and specifically the significance of collective consciousness, involved precisely his fear of anomie, "infinite variety," and the "constant state of flux" in our "fundamental substance."

need first attend to what is relatively stable, or more accurately homeostatic:⁴ the pattern in the reproduction of social life, and particularly the interactions among the timeframes of social institutions. He cited the importance of the “intermesh” between institutional periodicities and argued that only by examining the “structural durations” of each part, and then the relations between the parts, can any sense be made of change. Gluckman notes, for instance, that the British House of Commons has a set of built-in temporal frames, from the period that one may speak on the floor, to the yearly calendar, to the election cycle, but that the institution itself endures beyond the structural durations of its components. The long term, overall perdurability of a complex institution may even be said to depend upon the intermesh of the structural durations of the parts. Gluckman complained, “[recent anthropologists] insist, against the analysis of structural durations, that all real societies in real time are always changing and have always been changing—without specifying what is changing, what the changes are, and how far the changes go, in affecting structural forms. It seems obvious that there are very different kinds of change, and we shall have to develop a vocabulary to differentiate between them” (1968:223).

Alas, we have not got this part of the message and “kinds of change” remain muddled together. As yet we have not developed a vocabulary to discuss them. We have recently obsessed over “globalization” and “modernity” which have, in Appadurai’s words, involved both homogenization and “heterogenization” (1996:32), but this dichotomy only gets us part way back to Gluckman’s sociologically and ethnographically richer “kinds of change.” In 1968 Gluckman gave credit to “the dialecticians” for distinguishing some “kinds of time,”⁵ but today only a few lonely theorists continue to deal with the relationship between “epochal structures” (Donham 1999:131) and historical transformation.⁶ Even so strident a defender of culture as Marshall Sahlins argues that we used to be much better at parsing periodicities and disjuncture, as when he writes that “Linton’s [1936] ‘Study of Man’... included a sustained analysis of the multiple dimensions of variation and contradiction within cultures. The main difference between this text and similar postmodern critiques of cultural unicity is that Linton had no fear of structure, so he tried to fathom the relationship between the variations rather than just pointing to them and assigning them plus or minus grades in Hegemony” (1999:405). It seems that through a century of insisting on the salience of culture, we have somehow reified our object and turned what had been a “noun of process” into a household term understood to be something like a thing, a model, a recipe. Thus Tim Mitchell can write of Ibn Khaldun’s pre-modern theory of social integration and transformation, “building [a civilization] is an active, undetermined process, marked in cycles of abundance and decay, rather than simply the material realization of a predetermined ‘plan’. ... Nowhere in the *Muqaddima* does building, or ‘*umran*, involve the notion of a plan. Consequently in Ibn Khaldun the word ‘*umran* never means culture in the modern senses of the term, which are inseparable from the idea of a plan” (1988:53).

Ironically, the contemporary impetus to challenge our regrettably too-static sense of “culture as a plan” has come largely from the Right, as when Ulf Hannerz reacts to Samuel Huntington:

⁴ I first encountered this term in contemporary ecosystem theory, but it seems to have found its way into social theory via Donham (1999:74), amongst others.

⁵ Meyer Fortes counted three: duration, continuity / discontinuity, and genetic or ‘growth processes’ (1970:1-2).

⁶ See also Friedman (1985).

In a way, the problem of Huntington's civilizational emphasis is its strong bias in the handling of the time dimension of culture: [writes Huntington] 'civilizations are mortal but also very long-lived; they evolve, adapt, and are the most enduring of human associations, realities of the extreme *longue duree*.' Despite the use of 'evolve' and 'adapt' [this notion] shares with other versions of cultural fundamentalism the tendency to naturalize cultural immutability and persistence. The point of emphasizing process is not to shift to the opposite bias, and discern only change, change, change. It is rather a matter of destabilizing the privileged assumptions of continuity and timelessness, to make reproduction and change in principle equally problematic (1999:401).⁷

Problematic indeed! It is clear enough why the "cultural fundamentalists" are better at public relations: they have a much simpler model, one that appeals to our essentialist tendencies and makes for soundbites as intuitively comprehensible as a "clash" of civilizations. Eric Wolf may have warned us against treating "cultures" as self-contained "billiard balls" (1982:6), but the processual program he advocated is far less easy to express, unless, of course, we turn the relevant processes too into "things" that operate on the world. This tends to lead to left-ish student papers asserting (rather than arguing) that "capitalism" causes this or that misery instead of "culture" doing the dirty work, as the more overtly right-wing might believe. Substituting capitalism for culture is playing on the enemy's field, substituting one *thing* for another.

To return to the difficulty of escaping this, David Graeber tells us that "...what we call 'structure' is not a set of static forms or principles but [the] way in which changes—or in the case of social structure, action—is patterned; it consists, as Piaget (or Turner) would put it, of the *invariable* principles that regulate a system of transformations. As such, it is a notoriously elusive thing" (2001:259 emphasis added). Sahlins conceives of culture too as something deep and "invariant" that gives rise to specific forms over time; he writes that culture is "fundamentally... atemporal, being for the people conditions of their form of life as constituted, and considered coeval with it" (1999:409). Surely all this begs us to examine the temporalities of culture, society, symbols and action. Graeber's warning of the "elusive" nature of this project is well taken, but it does not tell us even where to begin looking. To my mind what makes the mutability / immutability of cultures or social forms so elusive is precisely the question of how long specific principles remain "invariable," and how small variances in practice do in fact concatenate into transformative change in "principle" over some period of time. Surely the Japanese or the Iroquois have not *always* had the same culture or structure, and the strong statements of permanence (as in "atemporal," "invariant," "invariable") are as practically useless as the "change, change, change" mantra decried by Hannerz. It seems we lack a vocabulary to talk about time beyond simply continuity v. change.

Given all this, we can safely say that Gluckman's talk came at the wrong time. After 1968 most hip Marxian minds sped off in the direction of the Frankfurt school and eventually suffused into post-structuralism. This vein of materialist thought was strangely exhilarated by the relation between alienation and existentialism, and was comparatively uninterested in distinctions between evolution, revolution and the mature Marx on social transition. Somehow the cleverest materialists spent all their time discussing ideas, and, while anthropologists campaigned against the drift, a weird cocktail of reified culture and

⁷ See also Dwyer (1998) on the misappropriation of "culture."

idiosyncratic history took analytical center stage. Theorists of social process such as Gluckman were condemned (ironically) as “static” and “uninterested in history.”

TIME II: MAX GLUCKMAN’S CHAIR

Gluckman’s material example of structural duration was a chair, in which the molecules are always moving but the structure, insofar as sitting in the kitchen is concerned, remains the same. This is perhaps more telling than Gluckman realized. The significant distinction is not between “the” structure of the chair and the constant movement of the many particles within it, but the multiple structures involved in a chair and their correspondingly multiple timeframes. The chair was conceived at some historical point by some actual person, built by perhaps dozens of people as part of a broad chain of production (from growing the tree in the forest and cutting the wood, to supplying the paint, assembling the chair, and selling it in a store). Once purchased, or even before, the chair is slowly altering aspects of its structure with the paint drying, the nails coming loose, the glue ever more brittle; the atoms are moving (very quickly) in some patterned way, but, importantly, our chair is (very slowly) disintegrating, melting like an especially solid chunk of ice. There are multiple “structures” interacting, each with a set of temporal dynamics.⁸

All things are this way; entropy is the irrepressible enemy of vigilant labor, and human social labor can be conceived as our striving together against the terminal process of our wet and anxious corporal lives. The chair will endure as a chair so long as it can be conceptualized as such, and it will continue to be conceptualized as such so long as its processes are available for sitting—and so long as our ideas about sitting (also temporally bound) do not change significantly. We are not normally concerned with the chair’s other, non-sit-able structural aspects, at least not over breakfast, but that does not mean that these aspects never bear on what does concern us. When the gradual changes in the patterns of speedy molecules accumulate enough to make the legs fall off, then we have a revolutionary transformation. At this point the change cannot be explained from within the structure that concerns us—the chairness of the associated processes—we must look beyond, to the temporalities of other minutely but constantly and in some sense quietly relevant structures. The legs fall off. The chair becomes firewood or an archeological artifact—something besides a kitchen chair—unless of course more creative labor is applied to return it to a serviceable state.

Max Gluckman’s chair contains a radical plurality of temporalities. We are not concerned with all of them at the same time, but we must be specific about which concern us, which do not, and why. Often a moment of structural change requires attention to different, in some sense “deeper” temporalities than we normally observe, or to the convergence of temporalities. The chair-in-itself is a sort of membrane, or what some have termed a “moment,” where (when!?) a set of temporal processes of very different periodicities come together. The wood itself has a temporal structure, that of the paint is different, the nails, even the idea of the chair itself exists in a certain time, as does my pudgy butt sitting on the chair: all are stitched into a multidimensional temporal fabric that is hard to capture conceptually because it is evolving along multiple axes *and* oscillating through various cycles at the same

time. I have already made the case that the social world is built from a blizzard of interpenetrating inequalities; these inequalities too have their temporal frames, and it is time for the anthropology of inequality to be introduced to the anthropology of time.⁹

Returning to the example of a mother enslaved by children, it seems clear that mother-child inequalities have a timeframe or structural duration of not less than three generations. This was noted long ago by social anthropologists, and appears to be the reason why my own mother is so delighted by the agony and sleeplessness visited upon me by my children. It is a question of justice, the karmic scales balancing in time. Likewise, other inequalities are patterned in time. As Tilly points out, we need not imagine that all social structures mechanically or metaphysically manifest in-built temporalities of inequalities; duration in time may be *built in* by someone who exerts some effort or influence. Within all this building—Ibn Kahldun's *'umran*—the victims of particular inequalities (or people victimized at particular times) resist. A mother ignores her crying baby for just a minute while finishing a phone conversation. A worker returning late from lunch has a friend punch the time clock. Both accept that they cannot “win,” cannot abandon the baby or blow up the factory, cannot overturn the dominant productive inequality which oppresses them at the moment in question. But they resist, they serve themselves as they understand it, if slightly and momentarily. It is a deeper or at least different question why they do this, whether resistance springs from psychological, sociological or existential motivations, and I would agree that ethnographic engagement would seem the preeminent means of finding out.

Our point here, however, is that the mother may also be the factory owner (she was on the phone firing the worker), and the worker may also be a mother, now an unemployed mother. As such, inequalities resonate in chords,¹⁰ are integrated in a kind of symphonic appropriation, exploitation or resource hoarding; inequalities amplify for the less fortunate and can be dampened by the white noise that serves as the pulsing chorus of hierarchical societies, or at least our hierarchical society. The factory-owner-mother hires a nanny with the money saved by firing the worker-mother. Nobody is *simply* an oppressor and while some seem hopelessly mired at the bottom of global economy, few are numbly and unintelligibly oppressed all day and all night in all contexts, week after week, along the whole plodding path of a lifetime. This has been part of the revelation of the term “resistance.” The weak always have some weapons, and these they deploy within the limits of the plurality of inequalities through which we all live.

Given the practical ubiquity of inequality, and its necessarily temporal nature, it has to be said that part of the special power of capitalist logic is the destruction of longer-term timeframes and long term social responsibility. This begins with “the proposition that each mode of production generates its own unique and specific temporality” (Jameson 2003:707), and follows Althusser's lead in suggesting that “a mode of production has no single temporality but rather a system of distinct and interlocking times” (ibid.). This represents the dark side of the Durkheimian observation that collective understandings of categories like “time” are fundamental to the integration of the social order; such understandings are key to the ways people exploit one another.

⁸ See Graeber (2001:49-51).

⁹ Here we may start with Nancy Munn's review article of the anthropology of time (1992) along with Gell's near simultaneous contribution on the topic (1992), and attempt to link them to new work on the anthropology of inequality, such as Tilly (2001) and Verdery (2001).

¹⁰ While I wish that I thought this up, Donham writes that “inequalities reverberate in a chord” (1992:102).

Capitalist temporalities have thus drawn the attention of people interested in resistance. Workers are paid by the hour or even minute (in the case of phone sex workers, for instance). People are hired and fired as needed by necessarily tempestuous global markets. The richly interpenetrating temporalities of human life are flattened, pounded into a relentless immediacy. Any CEO who fails to grasp this is fired, replaced as fast as he can don his golden parachute by someone who understands that the short term is the only term that matters in our era. This is the logic of capital *and* the morality of the participants. Everyone wants to see their stocks rise (today!), even nominally Marxian university professors nervously watching their TIAA-CREF funds grow as they approach retirement; no reasonable person wants to wait for his or her personal capital epiphany. Our late-modern form of salvation must be grasped before death because it is no good after, but we never know when "after" begins, and thus we are not any less febrile than Jonathon Edwards' Puritans, dangling helplessly as spiders over the roaring inferno awaiting us. We scurry about frenetically trying to save ourselves while we can, without much time to ponder what we are saving, but with a relatively clear idea of what we fear. This mostly involves people we knew as our children tending to our incontinent bodies and failing minds.

As this fear suggests, we still have corporal lives with a heartbeat slower than a stock ticker. Fiber optic cable has not released us from the human task of slogging through frustratingly glutinous partnerships, families, villages, tribes, communities and communes, clinging (indeed for our very lives) to more durable exchanges of labor and love. These types of exchange are embattled by the contemporary economic order, which brilliantly facilitates short-term exchanges among individuals arranged in highly contingent groups, but which has not proven capable of replacing less "efficient" modalities of community. Atomized and homogenized "Western time" (Laguerre 2003, Anderson 1983) may be a relief for those who aspire to escape longer-term human relations, and indeed this may be the secret sweetness that lures those on the edge of the hyper-industrialized world to drink from the cup of "progress." Love, and emotional labor in general, is hard work and tends not turn much of a profit.¹¹ Precise, rapid, anonymous, short-term temporalities are the keys to contemporary production and exchange, to the awesome power of capitalism as we know it. This is why work on resistance has dwelt obsessively on wasting time. It is also why a more subtle understanding of the complexity of time is necessary to overcome our multifaceted "chronomyopia" (Fox 2001:129) and revitalize the notion of resistance.

BACK TO BIOBIO

Returning to the Chilean case, Fletcher makes a number of provocative points, and while we cannot take them all up here, we begin with the notion of conflict "within" groups (2001:31) and the distinction between "resistance" and "opposition." This is prompted by the theoretically embarrassing question of why some subalterns resist and some do not, the unresolved issue of what Fletcher calls the "origins of subordinate struggle" (ibid.:16). A number of possible reasons are given as to why only a few Pewenche have chosen to fight the new dam while most are happy to be compensated and relocated, reasons that pose a puzzle for classic notions of resistance. If peasants are entirely non-mystified as Scott and others

seem to suggest, and if they occupy structurally isomorphic positions vis-à-vis the central inequality in their world, what possible reason could there be for different families to choose such radically different alternatives as siding with international activists to fight a dam vs. accepting distant relocation and an utter transformation of a way of life?

Motivations for resistance in Biobio seem to include contact with activist outsiders, access to information, cultural notions of gender, and traditional understandings of attachment to ancestors and the land. None of these is wholly convincing in itself, and it is clear much more would need to be ethnographically ascertained, but Fletcher makes the interesting argument that the anti-dam faction is better described as “opposing” the dam than “resisting,” and that in fact the group accepting relocation may be “resisting tradition.” This seems to me refreshingly counter-intuitive, and I hope to bend this argument to my own purposes. In Fletcher’s scheme power has to be understood at some point as being “legitimate” for the term “resistance” to be appropriate. This addresses the anthropological concern with local understandings, but leads to a confusion of “soft” and “hard” hegemony (or degrees of self awareness of self interest) that splits the difference between materialists and idealists, but does little to advance our understanding of why some Pewenche do not want to move, or indeed why people in general vary in terms of what we might call their “critical load” of hegemony. What I want to suggest is that rather than distinguishing resistance based on local understandings (such that among three identically positioned people acting identically two may be resisting and one not), we instead return to a practice-based definition of resistance that is grounded not on spatially conceived “subject positions,” much less on broad categories of social actors like “elites” and “subalterns,” but on the temporality of the particular social operation in question.

From this perspective those who oppose the dam are clearly resisting a longstanding global process: the privatization, not to say usurpation, of resources formerly held by various kinds of publics. This has been continuing for at least 400 years, and at this scale and in this timeframe Fletcher’s small group of Pewenche women are but the latest to resist, to stand up to the reproduction of an international social order that benefits capital at the expense of labor. To use Schumpeter’s phrase, the dam represents the “creative destruction” integral to capitalist growth, with growth the *sine qua non* of capitalist survival;¹² the logic of the dam is part of the central dynamic of the global system, and insofar as this is our object of analysis, the minority Pewenche are resisting. The dam represents the reproduction of the capitalist system via the transformation of the Pewenche system. If, as noted above, productive regimes and their associated productive inequalities give rise to characteristic forms of “resistance,” we can expect resistance to reproduction to be something different than opposition to transformation. Amongst other things, then, resistance is a diagnostic of the temporality of power.

Of course this is not an entirely novel observation. Marx alerted us even in his early writings to the radical temporality of capitalism,¹³ and other scholars have refined these

¹¹ See María Ibarra (2002) for an explanation and evocation of emotional labor.

¹² See Robertson (2001) on the centrality of growth.

¹³ Consider the classic passage from the Communist Manifesto (Marx and Engels 1967:83), where “Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. The need of a constantly expanding

observations. Wright and Shin (1988) argue that a central debate over the notion of class itself is essentially an argument over temporality. In their analysis a “processual” notion of class, like that of E.P. Thompson (1966), and its “structural” alternative understanding, such as that of Erik Olin Wright (1985), can be distinguished by temporal orientation. This is to say that the definition of class depends upon whether the analyst is looking backwards in time at the lived dynamic of class-based experience and identity formation or is looking forwards to a necessarily future-oriented understanding of class interest. Both views have merit. Clearly, as Thompson notes, a class for itself has to emerge in the world through struggle, through the generative social friction of unequal power relations. Still, my relatively wealthy, usually white students who do manual labor in the summer do not become part of the working class through this work. You could argue that they simply do not work enough, but it is also the case that my students know that their future is different from that of their soon to be erstwhile blue-collar colleagues, and many of their class-based values are based on this future-orientation, not their present state of student-poverty. Thus in our analysis we have to contend with dynamics of reproduction v. dynamics of transformation, and experiential (i.e. past) frameworks for consciousness v. forward-thinking, expectative orientations.

The Malay peasants of *Weapons of the Weak* are like E. P. Thompson’s workers: reacting to a common experience. Scott’s Malays remember the time before the Green Revolution, they retain the values of the pre-Revolutionary order and indeed these values are key to the logic of their resistance. Here resistance does not just diagnose power, but also cultural understandings of that power. The Pewenche, by contrast, are looking forward. The future is obviously less certain than the past, more open to ideological mystification and honest-to-god transubstantiation, and thus it should not surprise us that solidarities born of a future vision are unstable. Inequalities may resonate in a chord but resistance is by definition discordant—more so in opposition to transformation than in resistance to reproduction.

The anti-dam Pewenche are thus resisting because they oppose the *reproduction* of a specific dynamic of inequality, but it can only be considered reproduction in a particular timeframe. Whatever the broader dynamics of capitalism, for the Pewenche in Biobio it represents a new temporal order, a shift in “epochal structure” or epochal dynamic.¹⁴ If the issue in Biobio was simply a dam—without precedence in the larger political economy or consequence for future generations—it could not be called “resistance” in our terms. Resistance indicates the “pressure for modification” applied by the relatively disempowered to the reproduction of a specific structure of inequality. The obstinate Pewenche are opposing the dam in the short term at the local scale, but are resisting the larger process of which the dam is but an example.

In this sense the Pewenche opting for relocation may indeed, as Fletcher says, be “resisting tradition,” but to my mind the case rests on the specificity of the structures of inequality in the “tradition” that are being resisted, and if possible their structural durations, and we do not have enough information to assess this. My guess is that further investigation will reveal a complex of inequalities set in time, and the decision to move, while informed by a nexus of cultural logics, ideologies and probably propaganda, will also contain kernels of material motivation. The pro-dam people are willing to trade a future of subsistence

market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.”

¹⁴ These are the “central tendencies” in ways of doing and producing, useful to explain how things work but not where they come from (Donham 1999: 131, 134, 138).

agriculture for a set of promises and potentialities; they are trading one regime of inequality and its associated timeframes for another. We can interpret why this makes sense to them, but we can also seek to analyze the social operations involved, the “kinds of change” we are witnessing. To the degree that the pro-dam (or dam-acquiescing) Pewenche are interrupting the reproduction of their older rhythms of inequality, we may say they are resisting. Whether the term is revealing depends critically upon the nature of the inequalities and the temporal frame of the analysis.

Analogously, in my own fieldwork in the mountains of Morocco it is clear that older, propertied men are not at all interested in moving to the city and laboring on construction sites or in bakeries. Many younger men are. While we may characterize as “cultural” the style with which the young slander the old as dull and backward, and the old label the young frivolous and impetuous, there are also experiential grounds for such generational differences: older, propertied men are now reaping benefits accrued over a lifetime. These men have spent years laboring for their own elders without immediate reward, and now that everyone older than them is dead, the oldsters can and do lord over their descendents. This is facilitated by a cultural logic of gerontocracy that while powerful still falls short of being totalizing or entirely mystifying. The descendents, unsurprisingly, resist the system in the present, and contemplate exchanging the whole “traditional” regime of inequality for another, more modern, form. They ask me less than subtle questions about how to get across the straits to Spain, they make fun of their fathers when the old men are off praying, and they sit and drink tea and watch videos when the dads have no way of knowing if the kids are working or not. The young men resist the reproduction of a dynamic now that only benefits them in the future, but they contemplate a transformation of the order itself.

Whatever the young men do about their position in a dynamic of patriarchal gerontocracy, other dynamics are transforming the village in other ways. Some older village men have opposed the transformation of their village by, amongst other entities, the Moroccan government and the World Bank, while others have sought to capitalize on such changes, but in terms of the “traditional” situation, the more enduring structures of domination, it is those who are not yet invested in the system—the young—who resist the reproduction of the system. The most radical form of this is opting out, migration, which we might characterize as choosing the temporalities of another, somewhat different sort of domination. A full ethnographic explication of this process is forthcoming, but I think the main dynamic is very common: the short term transactions of capitalism are particularly alluring for the young, who are not yet fully invested in more “traditional,” longer term inequalities. The young are apt to opt for a rhythm of domination that renders a paycheck this Friday rather than suffer years of investment that might (but might not) render them leisured patriarchs in far-off old age.

It is important to note that such intimate, familial temporalities of inequality should not be assumed to operate only in “traditional” situations. Dalton Conley has shown how the intersection of particular life trajectories, intra-family dynamics and broader historical changes dramatically affects the prospects of siblings within North American families (2004a). He writes that amongst Americans the family “grows and contracts; it goes through economic ups and downs (along with society at large); and it experiences personal triumphs and traumas. Each of these changes is stamped upon the offspring differently depending on their age, sex, birth position, and other individual propensities” (2004b:B6). Conley gives examples of the very different life trajectories of siblings, arguing that it is not that different

“personalities” give rise to such differences, but that the intersection of micro-familial histories and broader social changes produce convergences for individuals. The institution of the family is reproduced, but specific families are idiosyncratically transformed by the intersection of individual and familial trajectories encountering broader historical events and processes. The analytical necessity is to grasp the rich complexity of “reproductive time” (Weismantel 2004:497) and link it to the other temporalities of our cultural and economic order. The idea of resistance can help us reveal these intersections, recover the temporalities of power, and address social inequality practically, if, as Fletcher suggests, we can agree on what we are fighting for.

CONCLUSIONS

This essay began with the claim that inequalities are at the root of human social life, though as Sen (1992) and others have illustrated this is complicated both by the heterogeneity of human capacities and the multiplicity of focal variables by which inequality can be judged. The term “inequality” feels bold and singular and “bad” to those of us who consider ourselves decent and good, but is in fact plural, even omnipresent, and its moral vector involves application rather than its existence. I have argued elsewhere (Crawford 2003) that the duality equality / inequality is more accurately (if more irritatingly) expressed as “in/equality” since forms of equality logically and practically necessitate other forms of inequality; the two terms are not simply definitional opposites, they are in practice mutually constitutive, and if at first morally perplexing this realization need not plunge us into a mire of relativism and stupefaction before the status quo. What is required of progressive political agendas is an argument *for* particular types of inequality, which is to say struggle for certain equalities at the expense of other particular types. This is rather less rhetorically satisfying than straightforward good-versus-evil, equality versus inequality, argumentation, but is necessary to substantively engage the apostles of the New World Order. To say that we accept certain inequalities and reject others on moral *and* logical grounds is only making explicit what is implicit in much political debate, including resistance studies. Resistance ought not be applied to every case where somebody is doing something someone else does not like, with the labels “elite” and “subaltern” identifying winners and losers. We can best utilize resistance analytically (rather than interpretively) as an act that bears on the reproduction of particular structures of inequality.

The second point I have hoped to emphasize is that such integrated in/equalities only make sense in time, they have what Gluckman called “structural durations” (1968:221). Tracking the active, politicized integration of the temporalities of in/equality is a useful way to collapse the false dichotomy between structure and action in social life, and returns us to the point that there is no simple opposition between power and resistance. If we accept that there are types of struggle associated with types of power (Foucault 1983), we can talk about temporality being crucial to the dynamics of every element within such a typology. For example, we can borrow the celebrated terminology of Bourdieu and imagine that *habitus* has something in common with Max Gluckman’s chair: its apparent durability contains a plurality of temporalities, a “colossal reservoir of forces” moving in their own rhythm. Our *habitus* represents a temporal membrane, a constellation or moment where structures (each with a

different but relatively long duration) shape actions (with much shorter temporal frames) even while the actor's strategically enacted actions-in-time inflect the reproduction of the structures at their extended time-scale.¹⁵ This is a dialectic in time, but also of times.

Classical social anthropology, from Evans-Pritchard (1940) and Max Gluckman (1968), to Maurice Bloch (1973) and Alfred Gell (1999), has demonstrated the centrality of time to the operation of social life, while others have emphasized culture as temporally constituted (Hannerz 1999). Some have demonstrated the importance of the temporality of human growth to the mediation between biology and history (Robertson 1996) and the centrality of temporal regimes to the late capitalist order (Laguerre 2003, Friedman 1985). My interest in this paper has been to suggest broad connections between our understanding of the relationship between time and inequality, and the analytical utility of "resistance" to understanding the reproduction of power. I have tried to show that resistance is most usefully conceived as a category of social action, a reflexive "diagnostic of power" (Abu-Lughod 1990) that affects the reproduction of some particular social inequality within its specific timeframe. To approach the necessary task of determining what equalities we wish to fight over, we need to attend to their temporal dimensions. My broader argument is that this allows us to examine the production and reproduction of our social, cultural and material worlds in a unified framework. "Resistance" from this perspective is a matter of toying with time, a far more serious issue than we might at first believe.

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¹⁵ See Robertson (2001:62).

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