Introduction to the Second Edition

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The Project of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*: Past and Future

Anthropology as Cultural Critique was part of a wave of critical revisions during the 1980s of existing modes of interpreting society and culture. There were several initiatives within anthropology that concerned an exchange of perspectives across the boundaries of anthropology and disciplines such as literary studies, philosophy, and history with which it always had strong, but undeveloped, affinities (perhaps best exemplified in the volume *Writing Culture,* also published in 1986, but also by the inauguration of such journals as *Cultural Anthropology, Public Culture,* and *Positions;* and by the annual *Late Editions* series). Particularly important in these exchanges was the environment of new transdisciplinary approaches—including feminism, deconstruction, film and media studies, critical cultural studies, and science studies—and the effort to revive area studies programs with fresher ideas about how to perform comparisons. Many problems that were theorized in a general way in the 1980s came to have very concrete contexts in the 1990s requiring new methods of inquiry and research strategies. We think there are four issues that could usefully be reassessed in rereading *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* as we pass from the 1990s into the 2000s.*

*The first draft of this introduction emerged from daily breakfast discussions we had during August of 1997 in Cape Town, South Africa, at the cafeteria of the University of Cape Town's Business School, housed in an interesting renovation of a prison that had once been occupied by "Bushmen" (San) convicts who had provided the labor to build Cape Town's picturesque harbor. We were in the new South Africa to jointly teach a short course on currents in critical anthropology since the 1980s and to participate in Professor Pamela Reynolds' graduate seminar on the postapartheid-era Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings that were then occurring. We had thought to use our sojourn in Cape Town to produce some statement for a second edition of our book that the Press had proposed to us. The ironies, anxieties, and sense of unfinished business palpable within the characteristically easygoing calm and charm of Cape Town turned out to be a very appropriate setting for the discussions leading to this statement. It was Fischer who produced a full draft that reflected our discussions, a text that we did not return to until the spring of 1998, as we looked forward to mutual participation in another set of seminars in Rio de Janeiro in August. Just as South Africa was the back-

1. THE NATURE OF CULTURAL CRITIQUE

The notion of "critique" (as opposed to mere criticism) derives from the eighteenth-century Enlightenment effort to clarify concepts, to evaluate the relation between their logical grounds and their degree of validity. We have learned over the past three centuries that universality is not a necessary, or even usual, characteristic of reliable and useful concepts. Indeed one of the fundamental contributions of anthropology as a comparative study of cultural processes has been to insist upon the relation between the production of knowledge and its diverse contexts or grounds. This is as true of geometry—which was often thought to be an example of universal deductive reason in the days before non-Euclidean geometries were elaborated and put to practical use—as of concepts of kinship or childrearing, of grammatical notions of time, space, or personhood.

Cultural critique, as used in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, referred not merely to conditions for the validity of knowledge, but to methods of inquiry directed at evaluating cultural and social practices. We cited three predecessor styles of cultural critique from the 1930s that informed those of the 1970s and 1980s: the early Frankfurt School in Germany, surrealism and its allies in anthropology in France, and documentary realism in America during the era of the Great Depression.

As we pass into the early twenty-first century, cultural critique faces new challenges due to massive demographic shifts that have challenged the idea of culturally homogeneous nation-states; transnational communication and visual media in new modalities, which arguably are effecting transitions as profound in modes of rationality and cognition as those earlier from orality to literacy; and the new technosciences, which provide both novel technologies affecting masses of people (if only through the production of toxicities and publicly shared risks) as well as new concepts and metaphors for the way we act in the world.

Most importantly for anthropology these conditions require new forms of inquiry and writing that attend to the various new actors and processes in the world. We cannot simply invoke traditional moralisms or political ideologies of evaluation. New forms of cultural cri-

drop to our conversations which pushed this reconsideration forward, it was the anticipation of discussions in Brazil that provided the backdrop for pushing it to a close. We can therefore appreciate this effort at a second take on our book produced in an interval between Cape Town and Rio as itself a token of the shifts into the late 1990s that we have tried to describe and advocate.

tique must emerge in the spaces of negotiation among increasing numbers of detailed spheres of expertise and interests. The traditional ethnography done by a single individual, writing with a distinctive voice of disciplinary and personal authority, increasingly may have to yield to explicit collaborative projects. Although collaborative projects—both with key informants (e.g. Franz Boas and George Hunt) or among different social scientists (e.g. the Indonesia project in which Clifford Geertz got his start)—have a long history in anthropology, the norms for ethnographic writing have remained individualistic; and norms for collaborative writing are less well articulated or recognized than in either laboratory sciences or some of the other field sciences such as ecological or biological field sciences or the medical clinical sciences. In the 1980s we spoke of collaborative and dialogic writing for multiple readerships. But what was insufficiently stressed was the degree to which the objects of these collaborative projects are not just rich ethnographic arenas to be described within the traditional practices of fieldwork, but are rather arenas that are puzzling to all collaborators—informants and experts as well as ethnographers and cultural translators.

The fact of overlapping and also variant intellectual interests among all parties to an ethnographic project requires an articulation among anthropologists of new conditions for such research for which neither the Malinowskian or Boasian professional ethos nor more recent and fashionable theorizations of "the Other" will do. Collaborators under these new conditions are not quite informants in the traditional mold, nor are they full partners in the anthropologists' projects. But at least they are roughly equivalent to the anthropologist in social and intellectual position, and the sorting out of the similarities and differences around this equivalence is one of the key operations of the collaborations that constitute contemporary ethnography.

No longer, then, is the project of anthropology the simple discovery of new worlds, and the translation of the exotic into the familiar, or the defamiliarization of the exotic. It is increasingly the discovery of worlds that are familiar or fully understood by no one, and that all are in search of puzzling out. For instance, such projects involve the local effects of globalizing processes, particularly if we give up the assumption that modernity and the historical forces that are now redefining it generate similar results everywhere, and if we pay attention to the ways that the end of the Cold War might also be the end of bipolar or three-worlds simplifications. That there might well be powerful alternative emergent modernities within so-called globalization, requiring the sort

of exploration that little-known "peoples" once were subject to in anthropology, is the new working assumption of ongoing critical research.

2. FROM "REPATRIATION" TO MULTIPLE METHODS AND POSITIONINGS OF ANTHROPOLOGY AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE

In the 1980s we argued that anthropology, to live up to its promise from the 1920s to be the comparative study of cultures and societies around the world, needed to "repatriate" itself, that is, to study home societies with as much detail and rigor as comparative "other" societies. Since then, it has become increasingly obvious that this notion of repatriation was a bit too simple and binary, that many of the most interesting processes of social and cultural formations are translocal, operating across any distinct cultural boundaries. In the 1980s we argued that various forms of multilocale or multisited ethnography would be necessary as a conceptual framework, if not always a practical possibility for individual ethnographers as a fieldwork strategy. What we meant by "multilocale" or "multisited" was more than studying systematic cultural variation—for example, tracing how the same religion is transformed from village to town to urban settings, or assessing cultural change across diasporic migrations, or following the "social biography" of commodities. We had in mind also the difficult process of studying, say, socially mobile new black technocrats in South Africa whose decisions affect working-class people in Soweto, but whose worlds of census, financial, and economic statistical indexes only indirectly map, or model in aggregate approximation, the experiential worlds of the latter. The multisited project here would follow out and make explicit the numerous layers of mediation and incommensurability, making them visible and explicit. Or perhaps better yet, we had in mind the inability to extricate moral action from negative results, as in one's relation (no matter where one is located in the system) to ecological issues where it is impossible for one to avoid contributing to the problem unless one could improbably sever all ties with the monetary economy. Complicities of all sorts are integral to the positioning of any ethnographic project, offering interesting possibilities for productively increasing the "cartographic" precision of ethnographic analysis, but at the cost of any easy "taking of sides." The view that we argued for, and that became more obvious through the 1990s, is that fieldwork should be recognized as a complex web of interactions in which anthropologists in collaboration with others, conventionally

conceived as informants and located in a variety of often contrasting settings, track connections amid networks, mutations, influences of cultural forces and changing social pressures. At issue in the 1980s was experimentation with new genres and styles of writing, including those called collaborative or dialogic. What is clear now is how this earlier emphasis presaged the direction of the current remaking of the very norms that have defined fieldwork and research strategies themselves.

3. STRUGGLES OVER THE "CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION": THE RISE OF CULTURAL STUDIES AND SCIENCE STUDIES WARS, AND THEIR EFFECTS ON "ANTHROPOLOGY AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE"

Anthropology as a discipline has both an experimental edge and a deep conservative hinterland. Some anthropologists have been resistant to the idea of a crisis of representation—of the adequacy of their store of past concepts or of their capacity to create new frames of objective description. They have been so in part from an insistence on in-depth ethnographic knowledges in contrast to what many anthropologists feel are the superficialities of much cultural studies writing about ethnographic topics, inspired precisely by radical critiques of past frames of narration and representation. Nonetheless, the destabilizing of foundational knowledges in many arenas of instrumental practice (the law, the sciences, political economy) continues to proceed apace—this indeed is a central and distinctive ethnographic fact of the contemporary era. Leading practitioners in these arenas are among the first to articulate the sensibility that traditional concepts and methods are increasingly outrun by real-world events. It is these same practitioners who might become colleagues of anthropologists in mapping the emergent new worlds of late modernity, colleagues working with different ultimate goals, but sharing a puzzlement and curiosity about the complex interactions of ongoing social and cultural shifts.

Of particular interest is the use of ethnographic methods by non-anthropologists, be they engineers and architects who need to know more about users, sociologists of science arguing that philosophers of science are empirically naive or wrong, critical legal scholars or public health professionals interested in how those institutions actually work and affect lives, or investigative journalists who explore horizons of knowledge beyond a topical time frame. Some anthropologists are uncomfortable with what they see as too easy appropriations of methods and concepts which they consider their own (for example, the recent appropriation by literary studies of the anthropologists' notion of "cul-

ture" and even of ethnographic practices). However, it is much more productive for anthropologists, given the current hyperfluidity of information and the consequent reconfiguration of settled disciplines, to absorb the best of these appropriations into new models of work for themselves—that is, to use these appropriations as clues to how they might systematically remake the tradition of ethnography in new circumstances.

More generally, we now find ourselves arguing that it is to the advantage of critical anthropology to recognize the fact that anthropology no longer operates under the ideal of discovering new worlds like explorers of the fifteenth century. Rather we step into a stream of already existing representations produced by journalists, prior anthropologists, historians, creative writers, and of course the subjects of study themselves. And, therefore, a primary framing task of any ethnography is to juxtapose these preexisting representations, attempting to understand their diverse conditions of production, and to incorporate the resulting analysis fully into the strategies which define any contemporary fieldwork project. In a sense, it is this need to incorporate the field of representations as existing social facts into the anthropologists' practice of ethnography that impels both a multisited terrain for the latter and new norms and recognitions for the relationships so central to the tradition of fieldwork.

Experimentation with genres and modes of writing, we argued in the 1980s, was not only a revival of what the first generation of modern anthropologists had done, but was of value in experimenting with new forms of ethnographic practices as well. New modes of writing raised further issues of epistemology, which touched directly upon ways of thinking about research and how knowledge emerges from it, and of the rhetorical persuasiveness of ethnography as a mode of communication in competing regimes of representation. For example, a cascading of casual knowledge about other cultures purveyed through television and popular media raises the standards of precision to which academic accounts may be held, and even shifts the discursive space and function of anthropology in its own home society somewhat, away from an easily established and identifiable authoritative role as interpreters of cultural differences among peoples. Anthropology sustains this traditional function, but explicitly operating now within the greatly complicated additional critical premise that many others practice variants of this same function, and furthermore, that those others will be found to do so in any contemporary arena that an anthropologist chooses to make an object of ethnographic study.

4. NEW POLITICS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

In the mid-1980s we began by writing about two highly visible challenges to the validity of past ethnographic methods and knowledge: Edward Said's classifying most anthropology as a form of "orientalism," and Derek Freeman's calling into question the accuracy of Margaret Mead's fieldwork and famous interpretations of Samoans. We used these challenges as foils for the internal critiques of anthropology, arguing that certain new trends then apparent in anthropology were creatively addressing these challenges. The 1980s in fact was a period of florescence for sophisticated interpretive methods as well as inquiries into the nature of interpretation itself across a variety of mutually informing currents ranging from feminism to postcolonial studies, media studies, cultural studies, and science studies. Anthropology's position among these has been as a partner, borrower, and teacher.

It is worth considering the degree to which anthropology and its ethnographic methods of critical inquiry have been borrowed and adapted by non-anthropologists. The field of science studies is a prime example, not only because anthropologists have been contributing to this field through their own work, but also because historians of science and technology have found anthropological concepts and methods to be illuminating and practical tools for their own work.

Postcolonial studies consists of several streams of thought, some of which continue or modify the kind of work Edward Said helped foster (for example, Gayatri Spivak moves in a more Derridean and feminist direction; Homi Bhabha in a more psychoanalytic direction), others of which are grounded directly in the reanalysis of historical materials from the Indian subcontinent (the Subaltern Studies historians, led by Ranajit Guha). Of interest is the degree to which postcolonial studies have been generalized to many other postcolonial societies (from James Joyce's Ireland to Africa and parts of Asia), but also the degree to which they are grounded specifically in the Indian subcontinent, and as a result have been found to be of limited relevance in other locations, for example, among Chinese scholars open to perspectives for producing new critiques of their own history and cultures. Like theories of dependency earlier which worked best for Latin America, Africa, and Ottoman Turkey, such theoretical initiatives, of global or world historical import, have both universalizing and local valences. With its ethnographic insistence on in-depth knowledge of localities and their interactions with global processes, anthropology proves to be an

important contributor to such discussions of alternative modernities, relevant to ongoing efforts to reconstruct area studies programs for the next century.

An index of this emergent function of anthropology amid discourses about culture and change is the fact that universities in Africa which once shunned anthropology as a discipline of colonization are now establishing anthropology departments to address not only practical issues of development but also conceptual issues about cultural form and social life. This is equally true for the first-world societies in the increasing potential for anthropologists to play a role in forging public discussions about science and technology, a role that has long been played by the specialty of medical anthropology but which is now expanding to other arenas due to the emergence of risk as a public concern from the examples of communities subject to risks from industrial pollution or nuclear power generation, or of bodies and life itself redefined by the counterpoint of new medical technologies and ongoing environmental effects.

So the fact that ongoing ethnographic research has lost a traditional, prominent function—if not a monopoly—within official knowledge domains of the West of discovering and speaking authoritatively for cultural difference among the world's peoples is not as alarming or as devastating an event for anthropology as long predicted or feared. We can see that even in the shifts from the 1980s to the 1990s, the politics of knowledge that were signaled by the appearance of books like *Anthropology as Cultural Critique, Writing Culture, Debating Muslims,* and the volumes of the *Late Editions* series have actually presented new opportunities for the long-needed renewal of anthropology itself. Some of these opportunities have certainly been exploited over the past decade; others await to be explored. Whether they will or not depends upon the courage, ingenuity, and openness of anthropologists in establishing fresh forms of authority for themselves that certainly seem to be in line with the way other related disciplines and fields of knowledge are being reconfigured. These forms will depend on the articulation of new norms and regulative ideals of ethnographic practice, in which collaboration and dialogue are no longer just theories and sentiments of ethnographic writing nor the revealed essence of what anthropologists have been doing all along, but become the starting points for novel research landscapes, agendas, and relationships stimulated by the equally new objects of study that anthropologists pose for themselves and for the general public.

New Topics

The core chapters of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (chapters 3–6) identified strong currents of new work appearing in the early 1980s that seemed to be doing something different—even experimental—within the form of the anthropological monograph. They also tried to extend ethnography into an arena of cultural critique that would be shaped by taking up topics and associated objects of study that were new to anthropology, or had only been addressed as a secondary, less systematic genre of work in the past (for example, studies of modern medicine, business, technology, kinship in the West, urban policy—all those interests that if an anthropologist took them up, she or he would forever be queried, But isn't this sociology? At the time, we used the idea of repatriation to signal this other arena, consistent with our claim that the critique of modernity, the West, and of the home societies of anthropology as a Euro-American discipline had always been a strong implication and tendency of anthropology primarily focused elsewhere but had only been indulged as the secondary or minor-key genre.

By the late 1990s, most of the characteristics of writing and research within the traditional frame of the monograph that we identified as experimental have now become quite mainstream, if not *the* mainstream. These comprise the discussions that we provided in chapters 3 and 4 of the new and intense interest in the person, self, and emotions as organizing foci for ethnography of the peoples among whom fieldwork had traditionally been done, along with the various modalities of reflexivity that came to characterize the rhetoric and strategies of ethnographic writing, and also of the new ways in which ethnographers were contextualizing and constructing subjects of study in terms of issues of history and political economy. The former themes of the early 1980s are now current in the many works organized by questions of identity, and the latter were precursors to the proliferating work on the exploration of the construct of globalization through ethnographic studies of its local and regional expressions.

It is in the area of new topics—involving new frames and new subjects of study that cut across the sorts of divides between the traditional and the modern that previously distinguished the subject matter of anthropology—for which systematic research programs are needed as well as altered models and norms for doing ethnography. By the late 1990s, this possibility, which we tried in the 1980s, perhaps naively, to

work out in terms of a statement of a "repatriated" model of cultural critique based on enhancing existing strategies of defamiliarization, long a distinctive style of argumentation in anthropology, is far from the mainstream. But it does remain, we believe, a key arena of the most important challenges for the discipline. These new topics deal centrally with the questions of modernity, but not in the form of parochial notions of modernity that could be limited to the West or to Euro-Americans. Rather at stake in questions of late or post modernity are the transnational processes that are reshaping the expressions of cultures themselves. Such new topic arenas require the recultivation in very different circumstances of the older frames and ways of producing ethnographic case studies. If we were writing *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* for the first time now, these would be the experimental arenas that we would start with—arenas that are difficult to represent by specific texts or monographs in experimental transition like the ones we focused upon in the early 1980s to express what turned out to be protomainstream tendencies. So here, we very briefly describe three arenas of new work that might realize the project of cultural critique that we tried to outline and exemplify in the latter chapters (5 and 6) of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*.

1. COMPUTER-MEDIATED-COMMUNICATION AND VISUAL TECHNOLOGIES

These moved from being a topic of anxious philosophical speculation about whether machines can think, and hence whether a new definition of the specificity of human beings was needed, to an exploration-in-use of a multifaceted medium of communication, the problems and possibilities of which unfold on a daily basis. Nor are these only issues for scientists, who developed networked computers and the Internet; bankers, who were among the first heavy users; or others in the high-tech sector where access to nearly instantaneous information anywhere on the globe is a requirement for remaining viable and competitive. They also became important for rapidly increasing numbers of users of e-mail, discussion lists, entertainment, commerce, organizational management, and databanks. Indeed, a growing parallel world in cyberspace creates multiple shadow personae of ourselves about which we have at best partial knowledge, as with our credit ratings (which can affect our access to insurance, jobs, housing, health care, and other goods). Cyberspace concretizes earlier abstract theoretical notions such as "deterritorialization," challenging the controls of the

nation-state, as well as traditional legal concepts of intellectual property, the viability of local moral standards, boundaries between private and public, and perhaps notions of identity and gender, or even notions of realism and simulation. In this new setting, one can empirically and ethnographically observe how different users interact with machines in multiple contexts. More importantly for the argument of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, software and hardware developers, users and clients, patent and copyright lawyers, financiers and others are among those who regularly say that the concepts by which they traditionally operated have been overtaken by the world in which they now operate, that new concepts and methods need to be formulated. Such people talking about their own worlds of expertise might be thought of as "organic intellectuals" who together with anthropologists are exploring the emergent new worlds about which they share a mutual curiosity. As we noted, the nature of the fieldwork relationship in such a world is no longer one of someone from one culture learning like a child or apprentice the basic elements of another relatively stable culture from elders or other key informants. Making paralleled cyberspace and ordinary contexts of everyday life the field of ethnographic study requires markedly different norms of fieldwork and writing than we could appreciate in the 1980s.

2. RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY AFTER TRAUMA

Events that were politically emergent in the 1980s have proceeded at a pace that is clearly transformative. The 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, and the end of apartheid in South Africa through the early 1990s signaled new relationships between the West and other regions of the world. The result has not been, as one well-known political scientist argued, the substitution for a previous struggle between socialist and capitalist visions of modernity of struggles between regional civilizational blocks (Christian–secular democratic, Islamic-religious, Confucian-entrepreneurial) that draw upon longstanding ethnic and religious identity structures to justify aggression vis-à-vis one another. Rather the political changes and the economic incentives of the global economy have generated unprecedented, massive demographic shifts and reorganizations of societies that suffered collective traumas through world war, decolonization struggles, civil wars, and efforts at total command economies. First World (post)industrial societies in Europe and North America are experiencing new waves of immigration that challenge the traditional

unifying nation-state mechanisms. The resultant politics of immigration and multiculturalism are not only policy issues but challenges to modernist anthropological and social science models of the relation between peoples and nations. Part of what the much-disputed term "postmodern" refers to is precisely this challenge of people with different value structures living in the same social space. Perhaps this is a return to the multiethnic, multireligious worlds of the great premodern empires, but the conditions of work, education, and general interaction are quite different from those worlds where ethnic and religious groups could live in mostly separate occupational and residential enclaves. Instead the issues of hybridization, of multiplicity of cultural identification, of flexible and shifting integration shape the vocabulary of discourses about society in contemporary worlds, and about new forms of stratification, inequalities, and power relationships.

3. THE CONTINUING TRANSFORMATION OF MODERNITY BY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Much of the above-noted vocabulary of contemporary social discourses in turn depends upon analogies with the new technosciences of the twentieth century—the increased salience of the life and information sciences—instead of the mechanical and physical sciences, which provided much of the "functionalist" and "structuralist" vocabulary of earlier social theory. Symbiosis and bacterial and viral abilities to shift genetic material among species seem to be enticing sources of new metaphors for conceiving social interaction. As with immunological systems (which expose the conceptual inaccuracy of identifying diseases as fixed entities), so too it seems often fruitful to think of cultural and social patterns as emergent out of mutations, assemblages, viral transitivity, rhizomic growth. Or perhaps, more accurately, social theorists have turned to look at the technologies and technosciences around which contemporary societies construct themselves for useful metaphors with which to describe, explore, compare, and contrast these societies with one another and with their predecessors. We are, some have suggested, passing through a "third industrial revolution" accompanied by cultural transformations as profound as those of the first and second industrial revolutions. The latter can now be understood from the perspective of the cumulation of superb historical scholarship. But the truly unique dimensions of the contemporary period in which we find ourselves embedded at a very early phase can only be at best partly understood by a historically informed critical social science with the sort of jeweler's-eye gaze with which we credit ethnographers

in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. Whether the intensity of this gaze can be sustained through the changes that ethnography is now undergoing is the major challenge facing anthropology.

These three arenas in their late-twentieth-century development—media, social reorganization, science and technology—are often discussed as modalities of late capitalism, of postmodernity, of renegotiations of local situations under the interventions of new regimes of globalizing processes of political economy, or of decolonization and alternative modernities. It is ethnographically interesting to ask about the relations between such widespread framings of social discourse and the experiential conditions from which they emerge. Postmodern theory—the study of postmodernity or the conditions of modernity in the late twentieth century that are systematically different from those of the early twentieth century—arguably owes much to the experiences of a generation of French intellectuals in the aftermath of the Algerian War of Independence, and the challenges of the computerized information society being pioneered in America and being disseminated by American film. Similarly, "postcolonial theory" has been pioneered and most fruitfully deployed by South Asian scholars reading against the grain or between the lines of the records of the British colonial empire. For the post–Tiananmen Square young Chinese intelligentsia in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Chinese diaspora elsewhere from Singapore to Vancouver, Los Angeles, and Sydney, postcolonial theory seems of less obvious relevance than it does to Indians or perhaps South Africans. For anthropology and ethnography—and cultural critique—all such theories are invitations to explore the differences between theoretical positions in the contemporary world as they are created or inflected by local conditions.

And Finally . . . "Some Detailed Statements about Errors of Omission and Commission"

In preparation for our discussions in South Africa during the summer of 1997, we each reread *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*—perhaps for the first time in years—and agreed that it has held up well. Otherwise we would not agree to a second edition. But aside from the foregoing reassessment, we also wanted to make some diverse, point-by-point, retrospective comments on the original text concerning its reception and certain of its particulars which we have left largely unchanged. We are inspired to do this by the frank examples of Bronislaw Malinowski's remarkable appendix to his two-volume study of

garden magic in the Trobriand Islands,* one of the subtitles of which we have borrowed for our own subtitle to this last section of our retrospective introduction, as well as Gregory Bateson's 1958 epilogue to his 1936 work *Naven*. Malinowski's example in particular provides us with the means to end with some marginal commentary on our original text. This is the best means, we believe, to express doubt, to make amendments, and to invite further response without interfering with the tone and arguments of the text which we still support.

1. THE IDENTIFICATION OF *ANTHROPOLOGY AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE* WITH *WRITING CULTURE*

While there were strong overlaps in participation and critical impetus in the production of these two volumes, in retrospect, we were perhaps insufficiently explicit in marking the differences between the former and the latter. The two works emerged from a critical focus on the characteristics of ethnographic writing, and given the sweep of the moment of so-called postmodern theory and its proliferation in literary studies trying to become cultural studies, it was probably inevitable that both works would be identified, sometimes interchangeably, in reception. But in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* there was a clear linkage between textual critiques of ethnographies and the implications of these for changes in research strategies, programs, and persona in anthropology that was lacking or unmarked in *Writing Culture*. For us, the decline of a certain construction of ethnographic authority never augured the end of anthropology but rather the opportunity to reorient its core practices and rethink its regulative ideals, which indeed is what has happened over the past decade and is still occurring.

2. THE FRAMING NOTION OF REPATRIATION (CHAPTERS 5 AND 6)

As we noted, the repatriation frame that we employed, although a salutary move in the direction of requiring the same standards of rigor for

*The main title of Malinowski's appendix 2 to volume 1 of *Coral Gardens and Their Magic* is "Confessions of Ignorance and Failure," followed by sections entitled "Nothing to Say," "Method of Collecting Information," "Gaps and Side-Steps," and "Some Detailed Statements about Errors of Omission and Commission." We believe that this latter title of Malinowski's unique self-critical review best suits what we intend in this last section of our reassessment of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. As Malinowski says of his own final section in his appendix (vol. 1, p. 462): "Having thus laid down the main sources of inadequacy and of positive mistakes or distortion of perspective, I will list the specific qualifications, doubts, or methodological references which I wanted to make on a number of points in the text, but which, if made there, would have destroyed the unity of the narrative . . ."

both societies when drawing comparative lessons, was too simple for the work of comparative analysis in the late twentieth century. Increasing critiques of conventional representations of difference during the 1980s, as well as changes in the world that focused attention on transcultural processes, challenged anthropologists to define new practices of comparative analysis not among self-contained cultures but across hybrids, borders, diasporas, and incommensurate sites spanning institutions, domiciles, towns, cities, and now even cyberspace. This task very much remains to be addressed in order to preserve the invaluable and distinctive comparative dimension in anthropology's traditional way of constructing knowledge from ethnographic cases. Indeed, while repatriation may carry connotations we would no longer support, the technique itself of dynamic, nonreductive juxtapositions that we intended to represent by the notion of repatriation is still viable and would be worth developing if the project of comparative analysis as the core of cultural critique had prospered more fully over the past decade. We suggested a thoroughly dialectical and mutually probing practice of comparison, and provided one exploration in this direction with *Debating Muslims*. The orchestrated engagement of "horizons" has always been a distinctive contribution of anthropology, and there will be a severe loss of perspective in the current intellectual atmosphere if it continues to remain dormant.

3. THE NOTE ON ETHNOGRAPHIC POETICS, FILM, AND FICTION (PP. 73–76)

Given the surge in significance of ethnographic media of various kinds, especially as modes of expression for producers among the peoples historically constituting the conventional subjects of anthropology, we would have made much more of what we referred to only in a note concluding our chapter on "conveying other cultural experience." This treatment would go far beyond a mere appreciation of experiments by anthropological filmmakers with old realist genres of ethnographic film—and indeed, such experiments have been more diverse and subtle than those with the written monograph—to consider the diverse grounds of media production in different places. This is one of the most intense and—perhaps along with the study of powerful communities of scientists who attempt to insist on control of representations of their work—sensitive arenas where anthropologists must work with and among peoples who are producing a variety of forms and styles of representations of themselves and others for equally diverse purposes. The politics, place, and nature of the relationship of anthropological

representation in and to these arenas is of the utmost significance in evolving the new modalities of research that we discussed in previous sections.

4. THE TREATMENT OF REFLEXIVITY

In the 1980s, reflexivity—what this term has stood for with reference to textual strategies of ethnographic representation as well as shaping the questions that ethnography has addressed—developed an overwhelming importance relative to other directions that critical anthropology has also pursued, or might yet pursue. This has a lot to do with the trends of postmodernity itself, with the demographic reconfigurations of societies of Europe and the United States, and with the pursuit of politics and classic stands on issues of justice and equality through cultural questions of identity and difference. While the treatment of reflexivity in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* was adequate to the more contained issues of shifts in styles of ethnographic writing and the implications of these for what kinds of critical knowledge anthropologists might produce, the proliferation of theoretical discussions about questions of "positioning" that were florescent in the 1980s and into the 1990s could sustain a far more elaborate survey than the one we produced. Still, we believe that the experiments keyed to the notion of reflexivity, which have been done in great abundance since the 1980s, and now with some redundancy, were useful both in deepening and critiquing the complexities of constructs of subjectivity and otherness within their conventional usages in Western intellectual discourses, and also in critically probing the ethnographers' positions in relation to initial objects of study so as to transform the objects in novel ways and reconfigure the compass of work. We continue to think, however, that there is a distinction to be drawn between uses of reflexivity that merely direct attention back upon the conditions of knowledge of the individual ethnographer, and more productive uses of reflexivity for cultural critique that arise out of the contestations and competitions of socially lodged and leveraged discourses. This is not an absolute distinction: the use of the ethnographers' own positioning as a vehicle for eliciting the contest of social discourses can serve both modes of reflexivity, and can work so as to address what we have termed "new topics" by breaking with the longstanding norms of the construction of the ethnographic case and helping readers to conceptualize emergent new objects of study.

5. THE REFERENCE TO EXPERIMENTATION IN "THE SPIRIT AND SCOPE OF EXPERIMENTAL ETHNOGRAPHIC WRITING" (PP. 40–44)

The notion of experiment has two main contexts of meaning: it refers to the transgressions of modernist avant-gardes against conventional forms of representation and expression, and it refers to one of the distinctive modi operandi that has organized modern science since the seventeenth century. Because we used Thomas Kuhn's widely influential notion of research paradigms to frame our discussions of schools of anthropological theory, the idea of ethnographic experiment in our book was somewhat ambiguous in terms of these two referents. Clearly we were depending mainly on the avant-garde notion of experiment. But there is a sense in which the experimental texts we described were elements of something like a "paradigm shift" in scientific research programs. Furthermore, anthropology is a hybrid "human science," unable to dispense with either its humanist or its scientific traditions. If we were writing *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* today, we would explore much more about experiment in the scientific sense, due to the prominence in intervening years of remarkable new perspectives on the origins and nature of experimentation in the diverse modern sciences. Interestingly this work, associated with scholars such as Mario Biagioli, Lorraine Daston, Peter Galison, Ian Hacking, Karin Knorr-Cetina, Bruno Latour, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Simon Schaffer, Steven Shapin, and Sharon Traweek, has been influenced theoretically by the same sources that have inspired transgressions and challenges to conventional modes of representation in the avant-garde sense of experiment that has been such an important aspect of the recent ethos of critical scholarship in the humanities. This is an arena of mutual curiosity, collaboration, and productive borrowing back and forth between historians and anthropologists, but even more through the notion that scientific experimentation requires the reconfiguration of both nature and social organization in forms that ought to be of interest to anthropologists than through the merely transgressive feints of the artistic avant-gardes. Though science is done for its own sake, it does transform the world. So too does social science, which arose in part out of the collection of social statistics, which, once collected, constituted an informational context that built the modern state, altering economic, social, and political relations among citizens—much as today cyberspace and its growing interconnected databases, information flows, and cross-indexed accessing tools are again changing our

social environments. So too can well-written qualitative humanistic texts change how we think about the world. Experimental ethnographies draw on all these modalities and senses of experimentation. The ambiguity cuts both ways: experimentation as critique and "pushing the envelope" of conventional understandings; experimentation as a mode of intervening in the world, and changing it.

6. THE TREATMENT OF ETHICS AND THE MORAL ECONOMY OF ETHNOGRAPHY (PP. 165–68, "A CONCLUDING NOTE")

For us, questions of ethics in ethnographic research are inseparably tied to forms and goals of inquiry. Indeed, the moral economy of a site or field of investigation, including the ethnographer's relations to and identifications with particular subjects, is an eminently empirical matter. In the pursuit of cultural critique, the longstanding desire of anthropologists to understand "the native point of view," especially through the modes of collaboration and dialogue valorized in our book, is itself primarily an inquiry into the evaluative dimension of variant modes of situated cognitions. In other words, the distinctive sources of data, perspective, and argument in critical ethnography are the critiques discovered in the reflexive idioms and commitments of its subjects.

The problem is that the moral economy of the self/other frame of traditional ethnography in the context of world historical narratives of capitalism and colonialism becomes highly stylized in representation, and ultimately overly abstract and predictable, losing the critical edge of genuine ethical dilemmas and moral struggle. In much recent work of cultural studies and ethnography as well—even in the most subtle and complex discussions of subjectivity and its politics of construction—the function of research and interpretation has become primarily redemptive, resituating social actions which have become separated from any higher calling back into either their moral traditions or into concerns for the effects of action upon worlds of others. All too often the narratives of critique which perform this function merely draw upon nineteenth-century schematic formulations, such as the much overused and overly abstract Hegelian politics of recognition and its descendants in contemporary political philosophy. This would be fine as long as these narratives reflect and are engaged with the full range of ethical debate and possibility probed through ethnography. But when ethnography plays out in multisited space and the situated anthropologist-informant relationship becomes destabilized by the anthropologist's movement through different moral fields and valences with a steady commitment to openness and charity in dealing with all subjects, something more is then required of past discussions of ethics and moral economies of research in anthropology and related disciplines. The account that we gave of the ethical milieu of projects of cultural critique in the 1980s is largely consistent with the narratives derived from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scripts critical of recent forms of domination. New challenges of ethical formulation are emerging with the new topics of the 1990s and the emerging modalities of ethnographic research such as the above-mentioned complicities of positioning in environmental dilemmas with the accompanying medical, legal, economic, political, and psychological implications and concomitants.

7. THE APPENDIX ABOUT "WORKS IN PROGRESS"

The dropping of this appendix is really the only substantive change we have made to the 1986 text of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. Both of us have moved on considerably from the work outlined there, one of us now directing a graduate program in science studies, and the other a graduate program in anthropology for which the collective impetus of the 1980s in anthropology and related disciplines has been a steady and continually developing guide. We each now spend a considerable amount of our time working with ethnographers-in-the-making. A new appendix for the second edition of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*—an error of omission perhaps—would concern the works in progress of our students, rather than our own, for these would illustrate in vivid relief the changing research modalities of anthropology and the transformation of its longstanding tropes in the arena of "new topics" that we discussed. Neither of us is quite ready to write this account as an appendix in this venue and thus we leave it for the future—singly, or through a fresh collaboration.

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Introduction

Twentieth-century social and cultural anthropology has promised its still largely Western readership enlightenment on two fronts. The one has been the salvaging of distinct cultural forms of life from a process of apparent global Westernization. With both its romantic appeal and its scientific intentions, anthropology has stood for the refusal to accept this conventional perception of homogenization toward a dominant Western model. The other promise of anthropology, one less fully distinguished and attended to than the first, has been to serve as a form of cultural critique for ourselves. In using portraits of other cultural patterns to reflect self-critically on our own ways, anthropology disrupts common sense and makes us reexamine our taken-for-granted assumptions.

The current predicaments in sustaining these purposes of modern anthropology are well illustrated by a pair of recent controversies, each sparked by the appearance of an avowedly polemical work. Both make their strongest points about distortions in the ways non-Western peoples have been portrayed in scholarship, which has depended on descriptive, semiliterary forms for its expression.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) is an attack on the genres of writing developed in the West to represent non-Western societies. His brush is broad and indiscriminate. At one point, he seems to exempt contemporary cultural anthropology by brief favorable mention of one of its masters, Clifford Geertz, but this is ambiguous, and it is clear that he intends his condemnations to apply to all Westerners writing about others, including anthropologists. He attacks particularly the rhetorical devices which make Western authors active, while leaving their subjects passive. These subjects, who must be spoken for, are generally located in the world dominated by Western colonialism or neocolonialism; thus, the rhetoric both exemplifies and reinforces Western domination. Moreover, the rhetoric is itself an exercise in power, in effect denying subjects the right to express contrary views, by obscuring from the reader recognition that they might view things *with equal validity*, quite differently from the writer. Among these rhetorical devices are devaluations of contemporary Arabs, Greeks,