

# The Unbalanced Reciprocity between Cultural Studies and Anthropology

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The simple fact is that cultural studies has meant a lot more to anthropology than anthropology has meant to cultural studies. The same could not perhaps be said for the relationships between cultural studies and the disciplines of history, literature, and sociology, in which many key participants in the former arose from training in the latter. Further this unbalanced reciprocity, which it is the aim of this chapter to explore, holds mainly for the relationship between an efflorescing cultural studies and an anthropology somewhat resentful and suspicious but open to it during the past two decades in the United States. American anthropology (often designated as *cultural* anthropology) has identified itself strongly since the time of Franz Boas with a version of the culture concept, whereas British anthropology, including its Australian and other imperial variants (often designated as *social* anthropology), did not make culture a key concept or identification for itself. While the ethnographic method central to anthropology generally remained attractive as one of the modalities of cultural studies, enhancing modes of textual interpretation, it is primarily the quite separate minor key tradition of ethnography in sociology (especially, British sociology) that provided the proximate model for cultural studies' use of the ethnographic method.

Much as some have tried to find explicit links and references to anthropology in the genealogy of cultural studies, in its British origins, or American expansion, these have been rather paltry. Cultural studies for a long time has been concerned with the affairs of the West (and with particular English-speaking nationalisms within the West), and anthropology with the Rest. In the past two decades, this partition of concerns has changed dramatically as changing demographics, and issues of diversity and multiculturalism, and of academically produced theories more specifically, have become very explicit concerns in the West, and as the Rest has been decolonized, globalized, and transcultured. Still the palimpsest of disciplinary and interdisciplinary origins continues to mark the practice of cultural studies and anthropology and to keep the engagement between them unbalanced and productive, but less productive than might be imagined.

In this chapter, my concern will be with the relationship between cultural studies and anthropology in the United States, and particularly with the present situation after a decade of clear mutual perception of cross influence.<sup>1</sup> Further, appropriate to my sense of both the affinity and the primary direction of unbalanced reciprocity between cultural studies and cultural anthropology, my emphasis will be on what cultural studies has done for anthropology.

In early discussions among anthropologists with awareness (from the end of the 1980s on) of the rising tide of cultural studies, I recall that their most vivid response was of being appropriated, of having their *de facto* (customary?) intellectual property hijacked, even of being violated! I think milder versions of this attitude toward cultural studies are now fairly widespread among anthropologists and have mostly to do with insecurities about how well they have done their task of cultural critique in relation to their own home society as they have studied others, a task practiced inconsistently since at least the time of Franz Boas. Anthropologists' *sotto voce* sense of resentment and anxiety in the face of cultural studies may go something like this then: "If we have not done it well enough, now maybe it is too late with more chic and certainly more energetic upstarts on the scene who seem to have discovered the verities that we have long claimed and developed in the culture concept . . . and without even an acknowledgment!"

We will have little more time in this chapter for such expressions of resentment about an appropriation that never really happened. In *Keywords* (1976), Raymond Williams gives us a sense of the complex branching genealogies of the culture concept in European thought of which the anthropological genealogy is just one. While it may have ended up with a similar overlapping version of the culture concept as in anthropology (culture as common, culture as accessible through the study of everyday life), cultural studies has had its own genealogy, moving in reaction to the idea of culture with a capital "C" (more the French-derived civilization notion that cultural anthropology never embraced) toward culture with a small "c" (more the German-derived notion of the concept), that as distinct forms of life experienced and created by the masses, by middle and working classes in modern industrial societies.<sup>2</sup>

Cultural studies conceives of culture much like anthropology, but this conception is rooted in a sense of the developing class nature of modern societies, with which cultural anthropology in its various repatriations as it shifted from a predominant study of small encapsulated societies elsewhere has only lately caught up. Thus, in figuring the actual and potential relationships of cultural studies and anthropology, it is best to consider each to have separate genealogies within the complex history of the culture concept. And while the divide of the West and the Rest deeply marks the history of the two intellectual projects, still continuing to differentiate their basic orientations, we should not let envy, insecurity, or overweening ambition as a part of the normal politics of disciplines or interdisciplines overcome the potential analytic strength and fascinating questions for research that are offered by the fortuitous circumstance that these two projects now occupy roughly the same overlapping space in scholarship

and critique. In the considerable positive influence that this overlap has had on anthropological research in what I have characterized as a relationship of unbalanced reciprocity, this potentiality is even now apparent.

### First, What Is Cultural Studies? . . . For My Purposes

There is by now a voluminous and still growing self-regarding literature about cultural studies, asking always “what is it?,” “who are we?,” monitoring the field’s origins, its recent proliferation, and its present prospects. Each further act of writing on cultural studies gets caught up in this dense discourse of self-concern with the always unsettled question of how the field is to be defined and bounded. While there is no doubt about the British origins of cultural studies, which have become iconic and even mythic for further developments, what it has become in the United States has been a grounds for describing it as a project of *unlimited* alternative possibility to standard academic disciplinary practices. Perhaps the easiest position in defining cultural studies is the one favoring bounding cultural studies and restricting further directions in relation to its British origins, leaving well-defined narrow channels for understanding its evolution. The other position is one that encourages open-endedness, inclusivity, and even a certain unruliness in the development of the field – one that refuses to define the clear boundaries of cultural studies, but encourages “a family of resemblances” among various intellectual movements that preceded it. This refusal of clear bounding can be seen even as a political statement, one that adopts a radical open view of interdisciplinarity as nondisciplinarity, refusing to conceive of an interdisciplinary field evolving toward the model of disciplines. This position is argued at the potential cost of institutional definition and support. Thriving in the long term in academia depends upon the creation of departments, programs, hierarchies, emblematic methods and objects of study, professionalization, and gatekeeping of various kinds, and these all depend on statements of purpose, boundary, and specification, sensitive to an ecology of other such reigning statements.

For my purpose, then, which is to define the environment in which cultural studies and anthropology have been mutual but unbalanced sources of influence for each other during the last decade’s proliferation of cultural studies in the United States, it is best to view cultural studies with a specific origin but as a current unbounded space of eclectic discussion among those with diverse disciplinary trainings seeking common problems of cultural analysis. In this endeavor, there is on the one hand a strong ideological urge to leave the project open and unbounded, and on the other hand, a counter-urge to establish a strong institutional identity for the project with aspirations for resources and recognition within the academy.

Today, the styles and agendas of inquiry of cultural studies permeate interdisciplinary programs in the social study of science and technology, media

studies, women's studies, postcolonial studies, gay and lesbian studies, and various ethnic studies. It has been an influence and identity that some in each of these fields embrace, but that many others do not; it is a stimulus that both repels and sticks, and either way, generates an important, shaping influence on the rhetorics and practices of prominent contemporary interdisciplinary undertakings.

Indeed, the massive 1992 volume *Cultural Studies* (edited by Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler) is an excellent marker at the high point of the proliferation of cultural studies in the United States of these tendencies toward both the desire for boundedness and the unruly and ambitious desire to encompass all of the preceding ferment in the academy. Distinct disciplinary styles are legible in the many pieces of this collection, but it is bad form for their authors to speak in their name or to evoke disciplinary identities other than to indicate that they are transcending them. There are rather repeated efforts to evoke the senses of culture in the variously interpreted British tradition of cultural studies (itself not so easy to homogenize, as Stuart Hall's piece demonstrates) to find spaces of articulation free of older disciplinary authorities, just as the editors in the introduction attempt to define a central tendency in the burgeoning world of cultural studies of the early 1990s.

The implication of this unruly condition of the proliferation of cultural studies for developing the next two sections is that the channels by which cultural studies' influence flows into anthropology and vice versa are a messier matter than if cultural studies were a more bounded phenomenon tied closely to its originary British manifestation. For example, such channels of influence may be traceable in anthropology not to Stuart Hall, but rather through postcolonial studies of one variety or another, where cultural studies in its British lineage had been a more explicit influence. As classical anthropology itself has taught, in all processes of diffusion, the lines of influence are rarely direct or one-way, but go through numerous, fascinatingly complex mediations.

Finally, the recent proliferation of cultural studies can also be seen as the effort to consolidate and give an explicit political weight and relevance, in the Marxist and liberal tradition of leftist thought, to all of the preceding interdisciplinary discussions and intellectual movements of radical critique of disciplines of the 1970s and 1980s, primarily stimulated by the models of feminism and post-modernism. The critical movements of the 1970s and 1980s were often criticized for having ambiguous politics, a certain hermeticism, and a lack of social responsibility or engagement. Cultural studies accented and marked the political in these movements and gave it clarity in terms of its own origins in forms of British and so-called western Marxism (the work of Gramsci, the Frankfurt School, and Althusser being major theoretical inspirations). The apparent irresolutions about politics were replaced under cultural studies by a more defined, but generic left-liberal doctrine of critique (often referred to as "the cultural left").

Here there is an affinity of the political definition offered by cultural studies with the often unmarked political articulation in the embedded critical dimension

of American anthropology especially since the 1960s. This involves not only an anticolonialism (which is very characteristic of British anthropology of the same period), but also the influence of the same Marxist theory which provided the anthropology of the 1960s with a means of critiquing the American state and domestic culture in protest to the Vietnam War and the unraveling of liberal policies and programs of the post-Second World War period. The most important critique by American anthropology of colonialism was thus finally a critique of American culture and politics themselves, 1960s style (as reflected in the volume *Reinventing Anthropology*, Hymes 1969), rather than the more direct critique of explicit colonialism and empire (but not of the British domestic scene) in the parallel endeavor within British anthropology (see Asad 1973). In order for American anthropology to criticize US involvement abroad it had to repatriate its research and make explicit its critical side earlier and more directly than did British or even French anthropology. This was formative in giving cultural anthropology an explicit politics not unlike the development of Marxist thought and identifications in cultural studies. It also accounts for some of anthropology's sense of competitiveness with cultural studies in delivering critical messages about American culture from the standpoints of relativism and theories of difference, a terrain that anthropologists felt that they should occupy, but never did fully. Thus, it is the left-liberal critique of the pretensions of modern societies to Culture in the face of culture as difference and as common everyday life that both unites and divides cultural studies and cultural anthropology, forming the basis, especially from the period of the 1980s on, for the reciprocities, an account of which follows.

### Second, What Have Been the Connections of Anthropology to Cultural Studies?

What is it that cultural studies scholars could specifically recognize in anthropology as relevant to their work and as different from so much of the traditional practice of the discipline in which they largely had no interest? What came to be recognized as relevant in anthropology to cultural studies was determined by how anthropology had related to and participated in the preceding and broader movement of intellectual shift and the critique of disciplines in the United States – the more diverse and less organized so-called postmodern movement. This movement included all of the critical interpretative tendencies of the late 1970s and early 1980s led by feminism and by literary studies trying to broaden itself through the stimulus of French poststructuralist theories of the 1960s into a more socially, historically, and politically aware cultural studies.<sup>3</sup> I would argue that this channel into cultural studies was largely constituted in anthropology by first, the “Writing Culture” critique (see Clifford and Marcus 1986) of the early to mid 1980s, and then by the *Public Culture* project which followed it through

the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Appadurai 1996). Feminist scholarship within anthropology (see di Leonardo 1991, and Gordon and Behar 1995) has always provided vital overlaps with the self-identified tradition of cultural studies and its expansion in the United States, but feminism as an intellectual movement in universities, I believe, had an earlier and more strongly cultivated interdisciplinary identity of its own, and consequently scholarship done in its name (as in anthropology) has been much less likely to conceive of itself channeling or merging into a burgeoning interdisciplinary space under the name of cultural studies. Because it was “first,” so to speak, feminist scholarship has had greater stakes in holding itself apart from later movements, partially modeled on its styles.

### *The Writing Culture critique*

The volume *Writing Culture*, published in 1986, was the result of a week-long 1984 seminar at the School of Research in Santa Fe, and reflected discussions within anthropology and across its boundaries in the preceding years regarding the critique of the discipline’s core modes of representation and discourse. In the above-noted broad-based interdisciplinary trend of critique that swept the humanities and social sciences in the 1980s, *Writing Culture* represented the alliance between scholars of literature (often comparative literature) refining the theoretical means for undertaking the critique of discourses (particularly modes of realist representation) and cultural anthropologists who understood the critique of their own discursive forms of representing others to be the most powerful means to articulate a self-critique of the discipline that had been brewing in various expressions since at least the 1960s (see Marcus & Fischer 1999). From the perspective of scholars, trained in other disciplines such as literature, law, architecture, philosophy, history, art and art history, film/media studies, and sociology, and who were themselves participating in the interdisciplinary movement stimulated by literary studies trying to become cultural studies, *Writing Culture* had the following special attractions:

It became a model of *effective* rhetorical critique that demonstrably shook the established practices and conventions of a discipline and suggested new questions and genres of analysis in the direction of the interdisciplinary movement which inspired it. History, for example, had had much earlier a provocative and systematic critique of its rhetoric by Hayden White, but it failed to have a decisive impact on the research and writing practice of historians. The relative success of a similar critique in anthropology at a time when the interdisciplinary movement was gaining strength made *Writing Culture* more than just a book focused on anthropology, but a morale-building exemplar of the transformative possibility of rhetorical critique.

Relatedly, the collective, cooperative effort that produced *Writing Culture*, and the fact that this effort was the result of an interdisciplinary alliance central to the broader movement itself, made it particularly attractive as well. It was this cross-disciplinary character that gave it particular strength as a *disciplinary* critique.

That is, anthropologists would not have had to take the critique very seriously if it were merely produced by literary scholars seeking imperialistically to expand their interests. Indeed, and quite unfairly, some anthropologists have frequently diminished the cogency of the critique by telling themselves that after all Jim Clifford is not an anthropologist. But they also had to remind themselves that others were involved in the volume with quite strong past credentials as anthropologists. At the same time, the anthropologists involved in the critique could never have carried it off without the sophistication and knowledge of those in the volume, like Clifford, who brought to it previous training in theory, history, and literary studies. It was this collaboration across disciplinary boundaries in the critique of a particular discipline that gave *Writing Culture* a certain exemplary power.

In the general interdisciplinary movement, *Writing Culture* gave anthropology a progressive voice or position, which it might not otherwise have had, and thus gave it an influence in the general trend that it might not otherwise have had. There were indeed crucial inputs that were desired of anthropology in this trend of postmodernist, and then cultural studies, critique. First, while the critique of ethnographic rhetoric had undermined the notion of its emblematic object of study as “the primitive” or “the exotic,” it still authoritatively spoke or wrote for, however qualified by self-critique, the nature of radical difference outside Western contexts. And, I would argue, the figure of the primitive or the exotic remained crucially important in the broader interdisciplinary movement, albeit in nuanced and conflicted ways. Anthropology’s struggle with its own object of study, as expressed in *Writing Culture*, kept the “space” of the exotic alive in postmodernist discourses but under severe critique. Maybe not to Edward Said’s satisfaction, the self-critique of anthropology did represent in critical discourses the problem of other cultures until it merged, by the early 1990s, with the outpouring of writings in the US on postcolonialism.

The other aspect of traditional anthropology that was broadly attractive in interdisciplinary arenas was its emblematic method of ethnography, and this genre and practice of inquiry was of course the focus of *Writing Culture*. The fascination with ethnography exhibited by disciplines and an interdisciplinary movement that are fundamentally text-oriented and rely on reading as a research practice derives from an anxiety about lack of connection – empirical and experiential – with the social realities to which their analyses refer. Taking on ethnography as an allied method of inquiry in cultural studies – whether done naively or far too easily from the perspective of anthropological rectitude – is ideologically an important aspect of practice that was given considerable mystique by the elaborate focus and reflection on this genre and method in *Writing Culture*. Again, similar to the trope of the primitive, the simple inspired borrowing of ethnography from anthropology within the trend of interdisciplinary critique would not have worked, but the borrowing of an ethnographic ethos *under strong critique*, such as *Writing Culture* offered, was powerfully attractive.

The fate of *Writing Culture* outside the discipline of anthropology is probably tied to the fate of the interdisciplinary trend of critique in which it was in origin embedded. The 1980s in the US were a fascinating time for theoretical modes of thought and reflection, a variegated and deep shift in the purposes of scholarship and the nature of knowledge, performed through powerful undings of authoritative rhetorics. The 1990s were far less interesting in the sense of discovering new theoretical ideas, but the world itself has become far more interesting – the stories of globalization, the “new world order,” the much reported demise of the nation-state, *fin-de-siècle* ends and beginnings, the triumph of science and technology in the areas of biogenetics and information, the profound return of fundamentalist religiosity, etc. The challenge is to deploy in committed, original, and patient ways the ideas of the 1980s, but it is very unclear whether there is the will or even inclination to shift modes from the quick surface takes of the avant-garde thirst for the new and the shocking, which was definitely the style of the 1980s interdisciplinary movement in academia, to the much more painstaking and careful exploration of the salience of these same ideas in understanding unfolding events and processes. In this, *Writing Culture* and the ways that it has been received in interdisciplinary trends of critique struggling to maintain their edge, remain one bellwether of attitude and possibility among scholars reared in older left/liberal intellectual traditions, but living in politically very conservative, yet dynamically uncertain times.

#### *The Public Culture Initiative*

As cultural studies was emerging in the late 1980s as the central tendency or designation of the unruly interdisciplinary field that had preceded and overlapped with it, the world of post-*Writing Culture* cultural anthropology was given a further channel into what were becoming the emblematic topics, styles, and concerns of cultural studies research by the *Public Culture* initiative, undertaken by Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge. This project first took shape in the late 1980s as a newsletter and an international network of scholars with common interests, then as a prominent, award-winning journal (beginning in 1988) with an unusually active collective editorial group, two book series (at Duke University Press and the University of Minnesota Press), and a connection to the independent Center for Transcultural Studies in Chicago, which funded and sponsored a series of workshops and international conferences over several years. With thoroughly multidisciplinary participation but with anthropology (through predominant ties among graduates of the University of Chicago anthropology department) at its core, this project was a powerful presence during much of the expansion of cultural studies in the United States.

For United States academia, *Public Culture* in its publications and conferences was a unique forum for the exposure of discussions and debates among non Euro-American intellectuals and scholars, especially from China, India, and the Soviet Union. It was precocious in terms of focusing the study of culture within



the transformations that now are captured by the label globalization (see Appadurai 1996). As such, it provided a needed critique of the area studies establishments which had dominated the study of the non-Western world in Cold War academia. It sought to explore the ways in which the geographically situated understandings of cultures must adapt to the essentially transcultural processes in which both situated and mobile cultural imaginaries were being formed everywhere in the world of the 1990s. "Public Culture" was indeed the concept employed to label this sphere, and it was filled in analytically by a heady mixture of scholarly and theoretical trends of the 1980s and 1990s that, uniquely to this forum in the West, were articulated in versions and authorial voices from many different places.

The *Satanic Verses*/Salman Rushdie controversy in 1989 first provided the *Public Culture* project with a newsworthy event of major proportions and one that fortuitously materialized a token example of the sphere of transcultural processes to mass public view. It provided a crucible of widespread discussion in the West and other places in the world that brought attention to the *Public Culture* initiative. At the same time, this initiative participated in and provided an additional forum for the rapid rise of so-called postcolonial scholarship, produced most emblematically by South Asian writers in American universities. Political by nature, sharply analytical, and highly sophisticated in its reception and adaptation of Western cultural theories, postcolonial scholarship became its own field, but also a major influence in the "worlding" of US cultural studies.

The publications and conferences of *Public Culture*, however, were the venues for the broadest and most diverse critiques and applications of the ideas and movements that had been developing and reorganized under the aegis of cultural studies. Besides early takes on globalization, it introduced and furthered important discussions of diaspora and exile, the relation of identities to transcultural public spheres and "imagined communities" (after Anderson 1983), the issue of the viability of the state in various places, the role of history and memory in nationalist commitments, the conditions of civil societies and human rights, the comparative and cross-cultural meanings of the ideas of modernity and post-modernity themselves. It was not only eclectic in the range of topics, places, and contemporary issues it addressed, but it was also eclectic as to method. It borrowed much from media studies, film criticism, and the study of popular culture. Often ethnographic in sensibility, it did not limit itself to the traditional methods of any one discipline, but combined virtually the entire range of techniques of cultural analysis.

Thus, the *Public Culture* initiative provided the most important cross- (and of course, trans-) cultural arena for the examination of the intellectual capital that was otherwise being developed with only the West in mind. In terms of the emerging interest in gathering up the earlier trends of critique under the rubric of cultural studies, it became the most obvious channel in the early 1990s through which to listen to and absorb anthropology, among other scholarly concerns with non-Western worlds. After the *Writing Culture* critique, which opened spaces

for new work in anthropology rather than defined what that work would be, the *Public Culture* initiative actually facilitated the predominant directions of research that anthropology might take consistent with the range of questions, theories, and discussions associated with the emergence of the cultural studies arena in the US academy. From the point of view of cultural studies scholarship, then, it is little wonder that it could see its own reflections in the anthropology that the *Public Culture* initiative so powerfully encouraged through the 1990s, thus providing the second and successor channel of recognition for anthropology after the *Writing Culture* critique.

### Third, What Have Been the Connections of Cultural Studies to Anthropology?

Because of the complex organization (assemblage?) of knowledges which the recent proliferation of cultural studies in the United States has encompassed, it is much more difficult to define the specific channels of cultural studies' influence on contemporary research projects in cultural anthropology. These have been differential, dispersed, multiply mediated, but unquestionably substantial (through, for example, the *Writing Culture* critique and the *Public Culture* initiatives as channels in reverse direction, back toward disciplinary rather than interdisciplinary realms). For example, through the virtual clearing-house function of the *Public Culture* initiative just discussed, cultural studies came into anthropology through postcolonial scholarship, or popular culture studies, among other fields. It has come into anthropology through the evolution of feminist studies into gender studies, along with the rise of gay and lesbian studies. The effort to transform the previously narrow pursuit and study of ethnographic film into a more encompassing field of ethnographic and indigenous media has also brought a strong influence of cultural studies styles of inquiry and topics of interest into anthropology. Indeed, cultural studies in terms of its iconic, originary British formation has seemingly had very little direct influence on anthropology, but through mediations, characteristic of the reorganization of a previously developing interdisciplinary space as generically cultural studies in the 1990s, its impact on anthropology in the United States has been profound.

Perhaps the best way to focus in on the way that cultural studies has influenced cultural anthropology in overview during the past decade is to explore the irony that many students are attracted to graduate training in cultural anthropology these days, not because of their knowledge of or exposure to the specific past of the discipline, but because of the influence on them of interdisciplinary trends, crystallized in such fields as feminism, postcolonial studies, and cultural studies, that have swept across the organization of knowledge production over the past two decades. Within these trends, as we have described, anthropology – its ethos,

its methods, and its subject-matter – has been a key figure of influence at various moments through the *Writing Culture* critique and *Public Culture* initiatives. This has stimulated the influx of extraordinarily talented graduate students into anthropology, driven sometimes more by the prestige of how anthropology has been evoked in say, literary and cultural studies, as a discipline that proceeds by a thorough self-critique – a signal achievement indeed – than by the actual situation of pedagogy that they encounter nowadays, especially in elite departments of graduate training in anthropology. They are pulled (inspired?) into graduate school by certain exemplars of how anthropology either is used in the work of non-anthropologists (as in the case, for example, of Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, Jim Clifford, or Andrew Ross) or is developed by noted anthropologists deeply identified with interdisciplinary trends (for example, Renato Rosaldo, Emily Martin, Dorinne Kondo, among many, many others, and increasing all the time). More specifically the beacons that draw the students to particular departments, perhaps as ever, are the impressively original works of ethnography of senior professors made prominent by them, and who are in the transitional early forties to mid-fifties generation. Yet, these same students, inspired by cultural anthropology's external face, find themselves in a more complicated situation once inside the regime of training, defined by the unresolved binds and ambivalences of the trends that have been remaking anthropology since the 1980s.

So what defines this unresolved situation of pedagogy that faces students when they arrive in virtually every graduate department nowadays? Here, I invoke a perspective that I have developed from both my own observations in directing a graduate program over the years – admittedly, one more heavily identified with interdisciplinary trends than with the central traditions of anthropology – and from many conversations with faculty involved with training graduate students. At the heart of this perspective is an observation about an interesting break in the research careers of a number of the senior professoriat of anthropology, which in turn reflects a key bind that is being sorted out and negotiated in a variety of ways in all major graduate programs in cultural anthropology. A survey of this variety would tell much about changes in the ideology of research practice in anthropology today, and in turn about the fate of the discipline's commitments and traditions.

Among the most noted anthropologists within my own and adjacent cohorts, I have noted a distinct break between first and second projects of research. First projects of such anthropologists can be fully understood within the frame of stable disciplinary practices in place for the past fifty years and which still define at least formally the categories by which choices of dissertation projects are channeled, jobs are defined, and curricula – especially undergraduate curricula – are shaped. Fieldwork with the aim of making a contribution to the world ethnographic archive divided into distinct culture areas, each with a distinctive history of anthropological discourse and trajectory of inquiry, still orients graduate training. The initial training project of ethnographic research – two or more

years of fieldwork in another language, dissertation write-up, followed by the publication of a monograph – constitutes the capital on which academic appointments are attained and then secured through tenure. While projects within this traditional regime of doing anthropology are still dynamic in their own terms, the regime itself – certain attitudes about ethnography and what it should be, a professional ethos about the proper concerns and sensibilities of an anthropologist – remains institutionally powerful, tradition-bound, and a deep component of anthropological fellowship.

Then there are the second projects of such senior scholars, which reflect the equally powerful legacy within anthropology of the interdisciplinary trends of the past two decades. These second projects define a zone of experimentation, which are developed in the shadow of the traditional regime but depart in various distinctive ways from the longstanding models of training and career that do in fact remain powerfully in place as the foundation of contemporary senior professors' identities within the organization of anthropological knowledge and as the base of their professional ethos. The problem at the heart of these second projects is precisely that of resignifying the conventions of ethnography for unconventional purposes, sites, and subjects – particularly moving beyond the settled community as site of fieldwork toward dispersed phenomena that defy the way that the classic ethnography has been framed and persuaded. The importance of complex theories of culture in modernity and postmodernity, and the use of diverse methods, especially ones that focus on texts, and the analysis of cultural artifacts, are central to these second projects. How to preserve the core disciplinary ethos and commitment to ethnography within these second projects is a major and exciting challenge for senior scholars. To the extent that they wish, these scholars are beyond the specific constraints of training models and expectations in the production of ethnography, the apparatus of disciplinary legitimacy which remains shaped by these models, and the trial of establishing a successful career which still depend on them. Senior scholars have many options and are relatively free to make their bargains with the bimodal, or even schizoid, regimes that shape first and second projects.<sup>4</sup>

But graduate students often drawn, as noted, into anthropology today by the example of their professors' second projects, in turn powerfully stimulated by the references and works of interdisciplinary trends, are not so free as their professors to play with the binds that are remaking anthropology itself. They force their professors to come to terms with their own ambivalences and commitments to models that they themselves enacted in their first projects and now may be lost in their students if these models are not skillfully negotiated into what students present them with as research ideas. The traditional regime of training is thus directly at stake in students' desire to pursue work more like what their professors are currently doing, where this regime is not directly at stake in the personal research practices of senior scholars and graduate teachers themselves. In the case of the latter, the crisis of the discipline's traditions has been deferred or evaded, while it is confronted head on in negotiating research projects with

graduate students who want to pursue dissertations for which there is no training model, but only exemplars.

It is in this scene of negotiation and how it is played out in every department – and not particularly in the privileged bargains that senior scholars make with themselves in their own work – that the key shifts of the discipline are being enacted. New ideologies of research emerge fitfully in this primal scene of generational transition – in some places smoothly and with decorum, in others torturously.

What to teach graduate students, what to have them read of the tradition outside of the frame of a “history of anthropology” course are crucial issues in most doctoral programs. My impression is that the weighting has shifted in core courses from older work to more contemporary work by anthropologists, and the thorough mixing of interdisciplinary literatures. What seems to me central, however, in training students today is the negotiations over the meaning and value of what is to be counted as ethnography in new work, given both the immense symbolic and literal capital that ethnography has had for anthropologists themselves and the prestigious mystique that it has created for anthropology (as the master of this practice) in the interdisciplinary realms where its identity has circulated. It is precisely over the issue of acceptable ethnography where anthropologists have most often been cranky about the way their identity, or even their central practice without attribution, has been appropriated in fields such as cultural studies. I often hear among anthropologists, for instance, how a set of interviews or casual contacts with subjects is not “ethnography,” how so-called ethnography generated by cultural studies scholarship is overwhelmed by theory, that there is nothing of the native point of view in these works. Yet, within anthropologists’ own disciplinary domain, it is precisely these sorts of projects that many of their most talented graduate students are bringing to them, in which ethnography as it has been known and valued in anthropology threatens to be subordinated to the primacy of certain kinds of topical interests, theoretical arguments, and other methods. Indeed, within the primal scene of negotiation to which I referred, even those senior anthropologists who have defined their current work deeply within the realm of interdisciplinary influences and styles of research and have been the ones to attract new kinds of students to anthropology are sometimes pushed to conservative positions of disciplinary boundary-making (“But this is not anthropology!”), or are at least forced to define for themselves the limit of what they will accept as the effacement of the explicit and traditional training models of anthropological dissertation research by the orientations and research ideas of the very students that they have attracted.

The more positive side of the pedagogical task, of course, in contemporary graduate training is to make the necessary accommodations, in league with students, to the intellectual influences of the past two decades which have reshaped social and cultural anthropology. And the more optimistic view is that this is precisely what is happening everywhere. For me, though, the most important task in this ongoing process is to rethink explicitly, or translate, if you

will, the ethos and methods of ethnography so constitutive of the training model into the new forms of research such that anthropologists will be able to persuade themselves that in these arenas, they do good ethnography by their own standards, that in turn have direct and deep links with their past. Only then do I believe that anthropologists will be able to revive stimulating debates among themselves about their own new works, which I see as sorely lacking, instead of the aestheticist assessments and admiring dismissals of brilliant ethnographies that now reign in arenas of work relatively new for anthropology. Instead of exemplars – impressive work for which we have no basis for extended discussion and debate within the discipline – they will be the centers of deeper and more sustained discussions, admired of course, but recreating a gravity of argument within the current rather vacant public sphere inside the discipline. This will await the current remaking of projects at the crucial phase of professional initiation that is now being negotiated by professors and students in their misrecognitions and new understandings.

Despite all of the sophisticated discussions of recent years about representation in ethnographic research, it seems to me that what is at the core of the ambivalence among otherwise sympathetic professors in response to projects that are conceived in cultural studies terms, is the absence in them of the ideal of thickness, or even the presence of flat-footed literalness, in ethnographic reporting. Much of the ethos of “good” ethnography lay in the ability to be thick or literal on demand about one’s fieldwork. It seems to me that when professors call for more “anthropology” in their students’ projects, this has something to do with attaining a thorough enough observer’s knowledge of a site or field of study such that the ethnographer can offer thicker or at least more literal descriptions when queried by other anthropologists. Probably this arises from a deep suspicion that theory-discourse and certain prepackaged tropes and frames of analysis and writing are alibis for what any good ethnographer should know or be able to say, regardless of the written form that the ethnography takes.

How this demand for thickness or literalness amid projects in new terrains and of quite baroque theoretical complexity can be met is really not a matter of articulating new rules of anthropological method, as such, but rather of doing the ethnography itself of the actual negotiations of dissertation projects that are ongoing.

The key fact is that there is virtually no space or scene of fieldwork that contemporary ethnographers enter that has not been already thoroughly mediated by other projects of representation. There is no longer any question of fieldworkers entering these spaces as if these other layers and competing sectors of representation did not exist. The freshness of ethnographic perspective thus depends not on the recreation of an unmediated site of discovery of an “other” (good literary journalists are already likely to have been there). Rather, any direct, experiential sense of others as subjects – remaining a distinctive contribution of anthropology – must be accompanied by negotiating through dense webs of already existing representations. Ethnography thus becomes a kind

of “writing machine” among others, and ultimately the literal events, actions, and behaviors that are habitually the descriptive foci of study of ethnography must be negotiated as also already having been heavily represented, inscribed, and written about.

Ethnographers employ a rather primitive and even naive organization or economy of writing in their work, and for them, there is perhaps something intimidating in being overwhelmed by other structures of power and organization, understood as writing machines, with much more complex productions of representation (as in, for example, the production of legal opinions, corporate reports, news copy, or journalistic pieces with their elaborate divisions of labor for research, fact-checking, and editorial control). The image is of the lone anthropologist with his notebook, tape-recorder, and word-processor, working amidst the massive corporate structures of law, media, science, and contemporary political movements. “Writing Culture” today means overcoming the naive model of writing in anthropology as ethnographers find themselves involved in other kinds of writing machines, not as a separate function of intellectual work – separate from the fieldwork – but as an integral, inseparable part of it. This overlapping of highly structured projects of representation – writing machines – in which the ethnographic process becomes engulfed is finally what it means to include institutional and everyday lifeworlds as parallel, complexly connected objects of study in the same frame of ethnographic inquiry. The idea of a writing machine is not just one interesting way to think about this more complex object of ethnography, but is a defining feature of fieldwork reflexive enough *not* to sustain the primitive writing machine of traditional anthropology in splendid isolation.

The writing function of ethnography is thus what ultimately ties anthropologists reflexively to their contexts of study, in which they increasingly find themselves and their writing in uncertain environments of response, reaction, reception, and competition as they provide their classic forms of knowledge amid other modes of representation. “Writing Culture” thus becomes a much broader exercise that signifies not just the production of texts in a certain controlled genre, but a metaphor for the distinctive research process of fieldwork itself in this brave new world of changed locations of research.

So the cultural studies influence at the moment meets a certain post-*Writing Culture* crisis of anthropology, not so much focused any longer on what the published ethnography will look like but on what fieldwork itself is to be on topics largely situated in the realm of cultural studies theory and debate and that are hard to grasp with the old paradigm of ethnographic research (see Marcus 1999). As we have seen in the present double bindings of mentors and their students in graduate programs, the shape of research and its relation to the training model is highly contested. Indeed, certain established styles of cultural studies research which mix textual analysis and the practice of ethnography in the study of genres of popular culture and their reception, culture industries, media, social movements, and gender and identity politics hold the ground in the

meantime, but the future of the discipline of anthropology requires new practices of its own, crucially modified from the classic conception of ethnographic research still at least ideologically in place, for which models do not really exist in cultural studies itself. Cultural studies provides an expansion of topical interests in the study of culture for anthropologists after *Writing Culture* and in the frame of such influential initiatives as *Public Culture*, but anthropology is now in pursuit of new methodological practices, and this evolution is likely to take place within its own self-conceived disciplinary space rather than under the sign of interdisciplinary play and license. In the meantime, the styles of work in cultural studies are more an inspiration than a model and are absorbed by anthropologists with a mixture of suspicion and ambivalence.

### Notes

- 1 For some years, I have been meaning to complete a partially written account of my experience of the ferment in the United States humanities and social science disciplines with forms of cultural analysis, beginning in the early 1980s and evolving into the now maturing cultural studies movement. But I probably won't. As the years passed, the ground was always shifting too quickly; I have abhorred being possibly bogged down in answering for what I would have had to say for years after; and besides, the things I have wanted to say have already been said – numerous times. This work was not to have been a review of the ideas, virtues, or sins of cultural studies from a distanced perspective or commentary, but actually an ethnographic memoir of what it was like to be involved in this energetic, rather exotic world, with a focus on its habits, customs, and practices with all of the stylized reflexive moves of contemporary ethnographic participation. The sense of what I intended is given in a 1988 article (Marcus 1992) which stimulated the editor of a university press to ask me to write a short book in this style, when such commentaries on the “moment” were in high demand. In any case, at least the angle of my essentially ethnographic approach to writing about cultural studies, particularly at its boundary with anthropology, is very much in evidence in what I am writing here.
- 2 What the overlapping notion of culture in cultural studies lacked was the idea of holism so important to the anthropological concept. For anthropologists, culture was focused on the everyday, the common, and the average, but it also encompassed the totality of culture through the study of the functional interrelations of processes, beliefs, customs, and rituals. The holism of the anthropological concept, which does not fit the cultural studies usage at all, of course comes from the predominant focus of anthropology upon small-scale, so-called tribal societies that were viewed as isolated wholes in space and time, and as discrete objects of study. This habit of conceptualization has declined markedly in anthropology, making the holistic style of analysis less relevant, and bringing the anthropological notion of culture into an even greater overlap with that of cultural studies.
- 3 This ambition of literary studies to become cultural studies in the United States is to be distinguished in its initial phases from the British originary moment of cultural studies (beginning in the 1950s) as the now more specific icon and locus of inspiration



for the current proliferation of cultural studies in the United States. As noted, this proliferation is the attempt to give definition to all of the preceding ferment of critique during the 1980s. When the role of literature was regnant as the font of theory for cultural studies in the early 1980s, the precedent of British cultural studies was present, but only as a variant, not as a dominant influence. By the late 1980s, however, when the label cultural studies had become a generic identification for the ferment of the previous years, the tradition of British cultural studies gained iconic and more substantive significance, while the earlier interest of literary studies in conceiving of itself as cultural studies flowed into this more general reorganization of this evolving interdisciplinary space of critical ferment amid the traditional humanities and social science disciplines.

- 4 In the wake of the influence of interdisciplinary trends on anthropology since the 1980s, this bimodal state of the discipline is frequently registered in a variety of venues, albeit expressed with striking differences of opinion about how important this influence has or has not been. For example, recently I found the following sentiments in a brief *TLS* review by a British anthropologist of a collection of popular anthropology, appearing in a publication of the Smithsonian Institution (David Gellner, *TLS* Oct. 30, 1998, p. 32):

Anthropology in Britain is a low profile discipline . . . Things are very different in North America, where, unlike in Britain, there is considerable consensus about what counts as anthropology, and what fledgling anthropologists must pass before they can proceed to their Ph.D. research, namely, the “four fields” of cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, archaeology and linguistics . . . The book [*Anthropology Explored*] provides a sense of a massive anthropological profession, secure in the use of basic concepts, largely unruffled by the deconstructive, postmodern concerns that are some of its elite members’ most influential exports, both to neighboring disciplines and to anthropology elsewhere.

This comment is seemingly in line with at least the sense of the distinction that I drew between a discipline that is still deeply embedded institutionally and ideologically in its traditional identifications, but what excites or provokes discussion among its exemplars (its contemporary “elite”?) is moving in other, not yet well-defined directions that threaten the appearance of coherence and perhaps morale amidst the “massive anthropological profession.” This contradiction, I argue, is what graduate students must deal with most directly and keenly in the formulation of their research. Indeed, if the current trend of splits in departments continues resulting in entities identified as engaging in only social and cultural anthropology, apart from the other subfields and most often defining themselves in terms of the so-called elite trend of interdisciplinarity (as has just happened dramatically at Stanford, previously at Duke, and exists on a *de facto* basis in many leading departments), then one has to question the accuracy of the observation in the last statement of the above review.

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