

On the Way to Fieldwork

Paradigms of Fieldwork and the Problem of the Research Problem

Quetzil E. Castañeda

Affiliations:

Visiting Scholar, University of Washington 2001-2002
Fulbright Scholar, Ciencias Antropológicas, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán 2002-2003

Address January through August 20, 2002
6830 NE Bothell Way, Suite C-294
Kenmore, WA 98028
206-617-5035
quetzil@hawaii.edu

Fall 2002 Address:
Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas
Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán
Mérida, Yucatán, México
quetzil@hotmail.com

Abstract

The essay is a theoretical exploration of ethnographic fieldwork in cultural anthropology. The goal is not to rigorously define ethnographic paradigms, but to identify three major paradigmatic ways of creating and conceptualizing fieldwork in relation to different formulations of research problems. Experimental writing of ethnography, the issue of reflexivity, and new methodologies such as multi-sited ethnography, feminist ethnography, and ethnography in cultural studies are discussed as a way to point out that fieldwork itself needs to be re-thought and theorized in terms raised since the 1980s. The concept of transculturation is introduced and in conclusion seven principles by which to reformulate ethnographic research are drawn from this notion.

[Keywords: transculturation, ethnographic methods, reflexivity, writing culture, fieldwork, multi-sited ethnography, feminist ethnography, ethnographic paradigms, experimental ethnography]

word count: 9,500

Submitted to *American Anthropologist* April 8, 2002

Suggested Reviewers:

Victor C de Munck, Anthropology, *State University College at New Paltz, USA*
Ted Fischer, Anthropology, Vanderbilt, USA
Stephen Tyler, Anthropology, Rice University, USA
Diane Nelson, Anthropology, Duke University
Geoff White, Anthropology, University of Hawaii at Manoa
George Marcus, Anthropology, Rice University, USA

On the Way to Fieldwork

Paradigms of Fieldwork and the Problem of the Research Problem

Abstract

This essay is a conceptual exploration of ethnographic fieldwork in cultural anthropology. It is argued that the theorizing of fieldwork is a necessary task and means by which to not only issues of “disciplinary integrity” but problems raised in the 1980s by writing culture and related critiques. The essay initiates this task by identifying two major paradigms of fieldwork and offering a conceptualization of fieldwork via a discussion of the nature of research problems in ethnography. Issues of experimental writing of ethnography, the issue of reflexivity, and new methodologies such as multi-sited ethnography, feminist ethnography, and ethnography in cultural studies are discussed along the way of a conceptual rethinking of fieldwork. The concept of transculturation is introduced and in conclusion seven principles by which to reformulate ethnographic research are drawn from this notion.

[Keywords: transculturation, ethnographic methods, reflexivity, writing culture, fieldwork, multi-sited ethnography, feminist ethnography, ethnographic paradigms, experimental ethnography]

On the Way to Fieldwork

Perils and Paradigms of Fieldwork

The “new ethnography” that I try to imagine here would take a cue from the tactile, imaginary, nervous, and contested modes of critique of the subjects we study not in order to decide what these interpretive modes “mean” in the end but to begin to deploy them in a cultural politics... It would mean *an effort to dwell in the uncertain space of error or gap* not just to police the errors and crimes of representation but to imagine the ontology and epistemology of precise cultural practices including our own modes of exegesis and explanation. It would mean displacing the rigid discipline of “subject” and “object” that sets Us apart and leaves Them inert and without agency. It would mean displacing the premature urge to classify, code, contextualize, and name long enough to imagine something of the texture and density of spaces of desire that proliferate in Othered places. (Stewart 1996: 26; emphasis added).

[I]t is no longer possible for anthropologists to address subjects “cleanly” – that is, as subjects in relation to whom they, or their discipline of study, do not already have a history of relations. Indeed, such a history, no matter how submerged, must become an integral part of any contemporary research...[since] ...anthropology itself [is] already a part of such subjects of study. (Marcus and Myers 1995: 2).

Toward a Theory of Fieldwork

The tide of “experimental” ethnographies and concern for ethnographic writing that rose in the 1980s and crested in the 1990s has definitively receded in the new millennium. Although close scrutiny of the politics of the life cycle of this intellectual movement would certainly reveal interesting insights about the discipline, one can characterize two factors as important. There had always been a significant contingent of anthropologists who did not find the arguments, issues, critiques, associated theories, and experimental writings to be persuasive, important or, often, even worthy of consideration as anthropology/social science. Thus, there had been a strong counter move to return anthropology to a normalized disciplinary practice if not also to a “normal science” in the Kuhnian sense. For those who took the arguments seriously and who sought to develop constructive and productive responses to the epistemological and discursive critiques of representation. The experimentation soon enough led to the recognition that ethnographic writing is less a method to be perfected, discarded, or radically transformed, than a tool to be used with an understanding of its strengths and deficiencies in the pursuit of an expanded range of scientific, political, and sociological (or communitarian) objectives. Thus, a convergence of different interests has stimulated a setting aside of questions of ethnography for the “bigger” (or “sexier”) questions of the politics and nature of science, race/gender/class, disciplinary integrity/disunity, transnational politics/transcultural communities, the status of culture as concept and as practice, and so on. Without denying the importance of these and other issues, this essay seeks to put the issues and problems of ethnography back onto the table for further discussion. The general goal is to stimulate the theorization of ethnographic fieldwork by offering an assessment and revisioning of the nature of fieldwork. It is

suggested that a reconsideration of fieldwork can offer a fruitful change of perspective and approach to a number of these aforementioned issues in anthropological debates.

The discussion offered here is theoretical, not in the “hard” sense of developing a theoretical system, but in the “soft” sense of the word: This essay is a thinking through of issues in a *speculative* (“theoretical”) mode that leads to a particular conceptualization of the matter. While the value of this particular discussion can begin to be assessed in conclusion of the essay, a general comment can be made about the importance of initiating a theoretical — versus a methodological — discussion of ethnographic fieldwork.

It is the theorization of ethnographic fieldwork that allows for a specifically cultural anthropological conception of fieldwork to be construed. Such a conception then allows for it to be differentiated from other kinds of fieldwork that pertain to other disciplinary fields and modes of investigation. As well, the theorization of fieldwork in cultural anthropology opens a space in which to rethink the nature of field research across the four fields of anthropology and thus to re-envision the integrity and coherence of the discipline. In itself the specification of a particular mode of ethnography does not imply either a rejection or a defense of the discipline of anthropology as it currently exists. Instead, the goals of theorizing fieldwork is to offer a multiplicity of constructs of field research such that the methodological modes of research would be more readily distinct and, therefore, more accessible for both use and innovation in particular kinds of investigations and for different investigators, regardless of disciplinary and/or subfield affiliations. The assumption here is that theoretical pluralism both enhances the vitality of the discipline and greatly facilitates inter-disciplinary conceptions (and possibilities) of research. Likewise the theorization of

modes and paradigms of fieldwork enables both a revitalization of disciplinary integrity and a reconceptualization of disciplinary boundaries.

On the way toward these objectives, it is necessary to consider first the problem of the research problem, that is, how research problems are formulated in relation to meta-theoretical principles or assumptions that cross-cut particular theoretical frameworks, and second the work — which remains, however, truncated or “incomplete” — toward shifting the paradigmatic object of study within ethnography. In conclusion, the concept of transculturation is introduced briefly in order to extract methodological principles or meta-strategies by which an alternative mode of ethnography might be grounded.

The Problem of the Research Problem

Anthropological debates in the 1970s focused on questions of theory and philosophical positions in relation to the status of the discipline as a science. In other words, the debates were modernist in that the issue was whether anthropology is a science and what kind or kinds of science it is. The poststructuralist critiques of science, text, and representation created in the 1980s, as is well known, a general “crisis of representation.” In this context, specifically anthropological intellectual movements emerged such as the writing culture critique and a renewed dialogical anthropology that shifted attention from theory and philosophical principles per se to ethnography. This shift however included its own scotoma or blind spots in that ethnography was problematized primarily with regard to the textual-discursive aspects of ethnographic writing. The two functions of ethnography, which can be glossed as *reporting* and *fieldwork*, were collapsed into the former such that the critical inquiry into ethnography did not “fully” or systematically take on the study of fieldwork. When ethnographic fieldwork was scrutinized it was primarily analyzed for the

politics that enabled knowledge production or that were established between “observers” and “observed.”

The concept of culture became the key term of contention and rallying for a re-solidification of disciplinary integrity, especially in the emergent faces of, first, the interloping fields of study such as cultural studies and, second, the (multi-) culturalization of everyday life in the USA.

By this second term I refer to the way in which the anthropological concept of culture — that is idea of social reality being composed of cultural entities, i.e., cultures — became popularized and pervasive in quotidian life as culture became a new or revamped modality for subnational and transnational group identities, belongings, experiences, and politics to be actualized. If for a moment in the 1980s, the discipline seemed on the verge of both recognizing and accepting that *theoretically* speaking culture *as a concept* is irremediably incoherent, illogical, and inadequate (e.g., Cottom 1989; Hebert 1991; Ortner 1984; Gupta and Ferguson 1992)¹, it was certainly not moribund as a vehicle for the mobilization of sociopolitical collectivity and the experience lived realities. Indeed, the anthropological fiction of culture was becoming real — a redoubling cyborgian life-form as Terry Turner describes with his phrase, “both their culture and my theory became our joint product” (Turner 1991:312). The anthropologically imagined reality as something pervaded by cultural communities had been becoming globally real, but in two directions.

On the one hand, the culture concept was becoming more and more used as the media through which to constitute identities, politics, belongings, and material manifestations, whether in the “same” inherited spaces of community or in the transversal spaces of diaspora, migration, exile, and transnational commuting (see Appadurai 1996;

Rouse 1992; Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Clifford 1997a). In this frame the objects of concern have been cultural communities in “traditional,” new social movement, transcultural hybrid, and/or multicultural-racial forms. On the other hand, there has been a proliferation of emergent objects, realities, forms, genres, and modes of being that are associated with transformations in science, technology, politics, postmodernisms, and late capitalism (Marcus 1998; Haraway 1989, 1997; Traweek 1988). It is beside the point of this essay to review the debates about the essential nature and periodization of the global and local processes that situate these new modes of life or cultural “objects” of inquiry. However, it may be significant to note that although we may recognize these new entities as cultural phenomena, many are not in themselves identified as such, i.e., as cultural things, except when put under the microscope of certain kinds of analyses, whether that be by an anthropologist, a sociologist of culture, or a cultural studies analyst. Both of these processes constitute a proliferation and multi-faceted realization of culture, which concomitantly has allowed for various kinds of interdisciplinary interloping on the traditional terrain of anthropological inquiry.

Despite the dissemination of culture concepts into diverse objects, modes of analysis, and interdisciplinary fields of work, anthropology has maintained itself as a heteronomous series of approaches to culture and/or cultural phenomena. It has done so on the one hand by reclaiming culture and on the other by re-asserting the fundamental grounding of fieldwork (whether or not it is linked to a privileging of “culture” per se). Exemplary of this is the corridor gossip in which the recounting of the failures of cultural studies as an ethnographically vacant project are accompanied by postures of disciplinary boundary-marking. Another sign that should have caused no wonder is the publication, in the face of

both cultural studies' lack of groundedness and anthropology's twenty year turn to experimentation in fieldwork, of George Marcus' (1998) proposals for a new fieldwork methodology.

Among the most significant aspects of Marcus' text (for this discussion), is that in working through strategies of multi-sited fieldwork it clearly references and operates within the problem of the research problem. Throughout the essays (written over a period of time), Marcus seeks — not to formulate an object of study (new or old), but rather — to provide methodological coherence to series of questions and objectives about cultural processes in a spatially expansive manner.² In this way, he is advocating the framing of analytical objects or a terrain of questioning to displace inherited forms of a more bounded culture-concept as the object of anthropological study. Note that he is working neither at the level “of theory” or high theory per se to constitute a new object nor techniques and procedures, but at that level that has been called “middle range” theory to formulate a style and agenda of practices that accommodate a relatively wide range of analytical questionings, theories, and theoretical operations. In this way this book is, and his work has been, a theory of the research problem. He does not define a research problem, but strategies for defining problems (and their attendant “objects” of study) that can be addressed through ethnographic research. What is significant here is that it is not the or a theory that is strongly at play in the definition of problems; rather the methodological problematic is the guiding principle of the formulation of research or research problems. In this sense, Marcus, as has been the case since the writing culture collaborations, is aiming at a paradigmatic shifting of objects and analyses.³

Here I do not want to provide a detailed reading and assessment of the idea of multi-sited ethnography,⁴ but to characterize it and use it as an example of a way to approach the problem of the research problem. Specifically, I would locate it alongside (despite its important differences with) more traditional ethnography and sociocultural analyses in that these share a fundamental premise of subject and object relations, which manifests in two note-worthy ways.

First, Marcus states that “fieldwork as traditionally perceived and practiced is already potentially multi-sited” (Marcus 1998: 83). I would add, to radicalize the proposition, that multi-sited strategies are actually and have been an intrinsic — not just a potential — part of *all* fieldwork, but this has not been conceptualized as such, especially in the manner Marcus elaborates, i.e., as a methodology.⁵ Yet, the different spaces (and times) of participation, observation, interviewing, surveying, writing notes, relaxing, etc. are all analytically *and* practically distinct kinds of sites of fieldwork whose value as such is generally erased in the process of creating the traditional object of study. This erasure is not simply the result of what Gupta and Ferguson (1997b) discuss as the constitution of “the field” as the famously reified “there” in a binary opposition to “here” (c.f. Geertz 1988; Fabian 1983) with all the attendant pairs of oppositions (subject/object, researcher/informant, etc). I would argue that a second, separate factor is the way research methodologies are conceived to address research problems: The tactics and strategies (i.e., methods, procedures, techniques) are theorized as de-spatialized and disjunctive acts whose rhetorical and grammatical presentation in proposals transform verbal performatives into nominal things. Both Marcus’ notion of multi-sited ethnography and recent critical rethinking of the reification of “the field” into a monolithic spatiality of the Native/Other

(see Gupta and Ferguson 1997a and the essays therein) do not move to pluralize the sites of fieldwork within the pre-given fieldwork site (i.e., the “village” and “the field”), but indeed *presuppose* the homogeneity of “the field” despite every fieldworkers’ real-life experience to the contrary. Thus, in addition to the models of multi-sited ethnography that Marcus cites, I would hold up traditional ethnographies to exemplify the idea. Rosaldo’s *ILONGOT HEADHUNTING* (1980) is an excellent demonstration of how a multi-sited (and travelogical) fieldwork practice was used, but not theorized in those terms, to analytically piece together fragments of space, time, story, memory, and event into an imaginary object (“Ilongot culture,” which, as the subtitle tells us, was theorized as a unity of “history” and “society”).

An important factor in our blindness to understand traditional ethnography as multi-sited is the theoretical and methodological identification of “the field” and “the culture.” This is recognizable, for example, in Clifford’s discussion of the spatial and travel practices of fieldwork (or culture/theory [1992]) as a movement only *between* the “home” and the normatively homogenous site of fieldwork marked by “intensive dwelling.” As one reads this text from pages 196 to 200 (Clifford 1997b, or Clifford 1997a: 64-69) one anticipates the theoretical application of de Certeau’s idea of spatial practice such that “dwelling” and especially the “intensive dwelling” of fieldwork is revealed as quotidian travel within the habitus of the now multisited and heteronomous “fieldsite.” Pushing toward this idea but not quite ever arriving at it in an explicit statement — he refers to this travel as “commuting” versus a travel per se which is his unmarked sense of spatial practice properly speaking — he cites Tsing’s work (1993), which is also bordering on this point. But Tsing’s use of Anderson’s (1991) travelogics of the national imaginary in tandem with the rhetoric of story-telling as the media of her ethnographic reporting is only used methodologically as

an analytical trope. While demonstrating the heterotopia of both “the culture” and “the field(site)” it does not reach—in contrast to Stewart’s travelogics of analytic reporting that does attain—this as a theoretical point. These three examples of ethnography—two experimental (i.e., Tsing and Stewart) and one traditional but on the historical edge of the former (i.e., R. Rosaldo’s), illustrate Clifford’s comment that “the field” has been conventionally constructed by the discipline to be a map and not a tour—that is, a synchronic structure of spatial order versus an embodied-temporal practice of using/doing/making space (see de Certeau 1984:117-122).

To reiterate this point: the travelogics of the research problem of culture operates in “the field” to transform the embodied and temporal the practice of fieldwork in heteronomous sites into a de-temporalized and de-spatialized analytics of a space homogenized into a monolithic singularity. Feminist anthropologies have been fundamental in working against these operations through the focus on the gendering of spaces, times, and the identities of subjects located in these. The value of Stewart’s ethnography is that it rigorously reveals the heterotopia of the mundane spaces of quotidian life and how these relate to spatial practices simultaneously comprehended as story-telling and corporeal-sentient travel. In contradistinction to Clifford’s typification of “the field” as habitus in which ethnographic fieldwork practice is mapped (recall the image of Bourdieu’s charts of practices in his ethnographic argument for habitus and of the stultifyingly structuralist language of the theoretical argument he makes in the *OUTLINE OF A THEORY OF PRACTICE*), Stewart forcefully demonstrates that this place/habitus of “the field” exists⁶ as oikumene—that is, a space whose boundary-distinction as a place derives precisely from the moving (traveling-telling) around within as well as in and out according to a logic or law

that emerges relationally from the practice itself.⁷ The relevance of this understanding leads directly to the following: whereas Marcus is proposing a valuable theorization of a methodology for non-traditional and/or “new” objects of study, I suggest that his proposition is more profoundly important as a new conceptualization of fieldwork practices by which to approach the “traditional” objects of study. For example, a life history is always already a complex multi-sited ethnography and when the one-on-one of elicitation-recitation of Self becomes the object of an ethnography/er it becomes an exponentially redoubled project in multi-sitedness. This is the underlying problem and genius of Behar’s (1993) *TRANSLATED WOMAN*.

Second, however much a reformulation of the traditional research problem (i.e., the problem of analytically describing anOther cultural world/community) might be generated through the analytics of multi-sited ethnography, certain relations are retained. Like Geertzian thick and other analytics of description and cultural critique — dialogical anthropology, poststructuralism, feminism, postcolonial studies, etc. — the key operation that enables all of these projects is the particular way of differentiating and *maintaining* a paradigm of dualisms — subject/object, Self/Other, identity/difference, idea/matter, outside/inside, here/there, this time/other time, temporality/spatiality — such that the distinction between the subject-knower and the knowable-known objects are radically disjunctive and non-consubstantial. It is against this paradigmatic limit that the best of experimental ethnographies, culture critique, and feminist anthropology is consistently working and thinking. These objects of study are wholly speculative, conceptual, and even imagined/imaginary (as in Adam Smith’s sense (1980; c.f. Herbert 1991; Anderson 1991) in that they are literally envisioned and fabricated by the research problem — that is, the

specific formulations of presuppositions, questions, hypotheses, issues, foci, relevance, values, and framings that comprise any research agenda. Thus, even prior to the fieldwork transformation of performative meanings and sayings into textualized "sajds" of field documents that Geertz so succinctly captured, the meta-theoretical operation of the "research problem" has already constituted non-textual and non-object phenomena into a coherent object of study (and knowledge) that is predestined (pre-given, pre-constituted) for analysis and description. As is well understood (e.g., Fabian 1983; Abu-Lughod 1991), it is the Other (either as a holistic entity, i.e., a culture, or as a partial form/mode of difference, i.e., an identity or belonging) that emerges as the paradigmatic object of ethnography (and cultural studies, culture critique, feminism, etc.) from this prefiguration by the research problem.⁸

The phrase "problem of the research problem" is a way to isolate a set of questions about the anthropological paradigm that is figured by the notion of the Other. The (first term) problem refers us to the poststructuralist and postmodernist analyses of the undergirding dualisms (subject-object, self-other, presence-absence, etc.) that constitute research problems and to the issues of the "crisis of representation." For the most part the response over the last twenty years has been either to forget/ignore the frailty of representation while busily constructing discursive systems that pretend to adequately represent the world or to devote oneself to the task of showing how one or more discourses out there have a problematic and politicized relationship between the sign and signifier's referent. The main issue here is how are research problems to be formulated? Can there be a different paradigm of research problems (in ethnography) that entails a significantly different mode of organizing the relations between subjects and objects, self and other,

presence and absence, mind and matter, language and action, writing and images, saying and said, performance and process? Within a different disciplinary and theoretical setting, Geertz' assessment of the scriptural operations of ethnography by which an object is separated out from its contexts is in line with de Certeau's discussion of the "historiographical operation" that "produces" (constitutes) a past as object of inquiry through a theoretical and analytical dividing off of the flow of the present into a categorical distance (see De Certeau 1988, throughout but especially 20-21, 56-113, 209-243).

Three points can thus be made. First, it is this operation that informs these heterogeneous approaches and schools of analysis even as the scaffolding of dualisms is often eloquently and forcefully put into question as either irrefutably valid (scientific approaches) or necessarily mutable (constructivist & critique approaches). While there have been many brilliant ethnographies that disclose the limits of this construction of a *scientific* relationship and to re-fashion it in humanist terms, there has not been theorization of the research problem that initiates from a different kind of premise. Second, this compels us to understand and classify those hard and humanist sciences that are concerned with the "on the ground" materiality of ethnographic data together with those that are concerned with textual and discursive practices and productions that putatively float above the ethnographically real ground. Here we can recognize a family of ways of constructing objects of study as things fundamentally apart from the subject-knower.

Third, there are three different strategies by which to address this matter, which derives from the well-debated postmodern and poststructuralist "critiques." The one predominant strategy has been to more-or-less blend (and more or less "happily") the inherited research agendas with elements of these critiques. This has led to either

renovation of the traditional object of study, i.e., the “culture” of some Other (with a general ratio of more reflexivity and less scientism) or the proliferation of new analytical objects based in the emergence of new cultural objects (with a ratio of more scientism and less reflexivity).⁹ A second strategy, advocated in patchwork over the years, remains within the horizon of the textual-discursive constitution of research problems and the paradigm of the Other. This strategy would be to construct research problems in which anthropology is increasingly a substantive and conceptual part of the object of study. Such a shift would push the ethnographic paradigm of the Other to its limits in a transfiguration, but retention, of subject-object relations. The third strategy would entail a paradigmatic shift to a position beside or “outside” this horizon of subject-object and Self-Other. The rest of this paper considers the second two formulations of research problems.

To Shift the Object of Research Problem

Similarly, the people I studied are per se an illusion, for there is no essence of a tribal group. What exists, however, is a concrete situation in which “I,” the anthropologist, and “they,” the studied people, came together in a series of interactions which deeply affected our mutual perception. *By definition, the situation is dialectic, so that “I” and “they” transformed each other...* Nothing seems more fictitious to me now than the classic monograph in which a human group is drawn and quartered along the traditional categories...The changes one is subjected to, as well as the changes one introduces, are not impure epiphenomena. (Dumont 1978: 11-12)

Feminist critiques of theories of discrete “subjects” and “objects” have been extended into critiques of the nature of culture, and experiments in feminist

ethnography have become perhaps the most exciting and productive strand of the “new ethnography.” ... Yet, in the wake of myriad critiques, there is always the temptation to seek the perfect ethnographic text, to fix the problem of cultural politics in a presumed textual solution. (Stewart 1996: 25-26).

There is already a long history of thinking on how to reformulate or re-theorize the nature of the research problem while maintaining the subject-object relation that provides the enabling condition of possibility for any analysis. I refer to that rich trajectory of research that has argued in a variety of ways to make anthropology a part of the object of our study. Somewhat arbitrarily, I would synopsise this history beginning in 1978 with the first murmurs of *contemporary* reflexive ethnography:¹⁰ Dumont implores us to consider the concrete individual of the anthropologist as entangled in interactions that transform both the culture "observed" and the observing describer of culture. In 1980, Rosaldo initiates a historical approach to his anthropological precursors among the Ilongot that otherwise strongly removes reflexivity as part of the theoretical operations by which he analytically describes an object of study in the rhetoric of process versus that of structure.

In 1995, Limón articulates a history of anthropological interventions in his object of study, written in the mode of an intellectual genealogy or institutional autobiography, with a reflexive treatment of cultural practices as objects of study, written as analytical autobiography. I take Limón's goal and contribution to be, on the one hand, precisely this linking of an interrogation of the genealogy of one's position as ethnographer with a reflexive accounting of one's fieldwork practices within an ethical problematization of ethnography. On the other hand, I find high value, regardless of its successes or inadequacies, in it as among the clearest examples of an ethnography that advocates for the

necessity of re-theorizing the research problem by attempting to put into practice a different conception of research.¹¹

Beside this genealogy of men/manly reflexivity is a parallel trajectory of reflexivity within feminism and feminist anthropology that must be considered. As feminism moved into gender theory paradigms (and beyond), it became increasingly necessary to identify the location of one's political-intellectual position as at least mostly constructed through relations of domination and thus necessary to critically assess the theoretical/analytical tools at hand as one had no option but use them and thus to put them into play against itself and its sources. While this is not the place to map out the genealogy and varieties of the discursive practice of the feminist "politics of location" trope, it can be noted that this is significant genre of reflexivity. Thus, it may be argued that feminism has set the precedent for what I advocate above, but only in strategic terms. Consider for example, Haraway's *Primate Visions*, which despite it being a brilliant example of this mode of reflexivity, is not a study based in fieldwork nor is it cast as ethnography — or at least not in any traditional sense. This raises the interesting pair of questions: first, what would Haraway have had to have done (in the conduct of the research or in the reporting) to have made that study a fieldwork ethnography? Second, what would fieldwork have to be — i.e., how might it be theorized, conceptualized, defined — such that it, Haraway's *Primate Visions*, a tour de force of cultural studies, would be comprehended as fieldwork based project of cultural/feminist critique? (see Author n.d.b).

These questions, I believe, reveal certain inadequacies at the present moment in the project for a "feminist ethnography" (Stacy 1988; Abu-Lughod 1990; Visweswaran 1994; Stewart 1996; Wolf 1996).¹² For example in one of the most elaborated conceptual

statements of this project, Visweswaran seeks to interrogate the politics of the locations of, first, the ethnographer, second, the informant, and third, the scene/s of their engagement. However, what is missing is an interrogation of the anthropological apparatus, not as a monolithic structure of colonialisms, but as heteronomous modalities, agencies, and forces that have historically pervaded each of these three “objects” that are analyzed in terms of a feminist analysis of location. In short, what is “feminist” in this ethnography is the theoretical tools and the critique of the analysis of the “results/processes” of fieldwork — but the fieldwork itself is *not* inherently or intrinsically feminist nor do imagine that it could be one or another particular gender-identity or modality of sex/gender. Likewise in the ethnography of José Limón, it is not the fieldwork that is “Chicano/Subaltern” much less experimental, but rather the political critique/theoretical analysis that have this attribute or quality. Further, this dimension remains therefore at the level of the representation and “ethnographic text [where the desire] to fix the problem of cultural politics in a presumed textual solution” can be enacted (Stewart 1996: 26).

The concern for the ethnographic present of fieldwork in Visweswaran’s ethnography precludes the kind of analytical operation that Limón enacts in the first half of *Dancing With the Devil* and that Haraway enacts by revealing the genealogy of female/woman as a location constituted through the negotiated forces of class dominance, racism, and masculinist sexism. This genealogy reveals that woman/female is therefore a “corrupted” and contentious position of critique and leads Haraway to specify four very distinct axes of critique as the grounds of her project. But, Haraway’s study is not ethnography in the sense that Visweswaran and Limón’s study are ethnographic: While the former may have used ethnographic research (extended interviewing) for parts of the study, this was not (to my

understanding) ethnographic fieldwork in the mode deployed by the latter two anthropologists. Thus, while Haraway is able to create a powerful genealogy of her own location, the ethnographer Limón is only able to do this with an explicitly historical (non-fieldwork) based section to his study. The crucial issue then becomes, how can a fieldwork ethnography address both the object of its study and itself as an object that is already a constitutive part of the object itself?

Marcus and Myers argue similarly with regard to the traffic in culture: “[I]t is no longer possible for anthropologists to address subjects ‘cleanly’ – that is, as subjects in relation to whom they, or their discipline of study, do not already have a history of relations. Indeed, such a history, no matter how submerged, must become an integral part of any contemporary research...[since] ...anthropology itself [is] already a part of such subjects of study [as art]” (Marcus and Myers 1995: 2). This idea has been recognized and advocated in a number of different traditions — e.g., feminism, foucaultian poststructuralism, Marxism — as an important first assumption by which to frame questions, but as yet has not been rigorously pursued, as indicated by the phrase “must become” in the quote above. The issue is large, complicated, and demanding of multiple, not a singular, approaches. A “logico-rational” approach that holds discourse as constitutive of the object cannot fully account for the substantive implication of the subject of knowledge in the object of study, *unless one necessarily theorizes discourse as a practice and as a practice embedded within genealogies of institutional structures and power* — apparatus to use Foucault’s term, habitus and fields to use Bourdieu’s. My own concern has been to trace these operations with a primarily ethical questioning,¹³ whereas feminism, Latino “talking back” anthropology,¹⁴ and postcolonial studies, for example, pursues the issue along a

political questioning framed as critique. Here Marcus and Myers seek to further consolidate a genre of culture critique through a methodological concept and program of "critical ethnography" as they chart out the parameters of art as problem for research.

While not a fully developed theory of research problem, as is the notion of multi-sited ethnography, it is an important contribution that is organized by the notion of critique. In contrast, my own work — on this issue of the (intrinsic) complicity of anthropology with both the objects and life-worlds we study — is driven by questions of ethics versus that of critique.¹⁵ On the one hand this has to do with the necessity to get beyond critique and counter-critique in which "critique" is emptied of substantive issue to become a simple term of negation — versus a rigorously used style or mode of critical analysis as deployed by Stewart, Marcus and Myers, Limón, Behar, Taussig, to name a few examples from the "schools" of culture critique and experimental ethnography. On the other hand, while just as committed as these authors to its high value, I am nonetheless not as confident as them about the grounds (and subject-object relations) of critique and, thus, am interested in the ethical matter of ethnographic writing and fieldwork that precedes and conditions possible modes, positions, and theoretical projects of critique.

It is important to note, without implying an a priori judgment, that while subject-object relations and guises become complicated and inverted in these frameworks, there is still an overarching separation that provide the very condition of possibility of the analytical description of an object of study, however entangled it may be, as a thing apart and contained. In other words, the project of making anthropology a part of the object of study in as many registers as possible nonetheless is still guided by the teleology of the analysis of a now expanded, if not transfigured, object. While the object of study might be

transfigured, the paradigmatic mode of constituting research problems is not. Nonetheless, such a revisioning of this paradigm of research I believe is fundamentally necessary to creating a cultural anthropology that can address both future and past of the discipline and its institutional apparatus in work conducted in the present.

Experimental Principles of a Transcultural Ethnography

[A]ll theoretical travel is inherently transcultural, even canons, despite their hardness, are inhabited by subaltern echoes...[the] dynamic exchange between subaltern and dominant cultures ... may lead to the realization that much of what today is called cultural anthropology [is] more aptly addressed as transcultural anthropology. (Coronil 1995: xlii).

The “new ethnography” that I try to imagine ... would mean *an effort to dwell in the uncertain space of error or gap* not just to police the errors and crimes of representation but to imagine the ontology and epistemology of precise cultural practices including our own modes of exegesis and explanation. (Stewart 1996: 26; emphasis added).

The suggestion that anthropology find a way to study its own processes as part of the object of study is now quite old. It has been a principle for the formulation of research problems for at least a generation of ethnographers and has informed a variety of studies. Nonetheless, this work has not coalesced into a paradigmatic vision of the implications for ethnographic fieldwork. The notion of transculturation offers the possibility of the formulation the principles of a research problem that may reside outside of the inherited paradigms of fieldwork. While it is not possible to delve into the “thickening” intellectual heritage of the concept,¹⁶ seven precepts that derive from the notion of transculturation can

be expressed and linked to the project of developing an experimental fieldwork beside the various “new ethnographies” or experiments in the writing of ethnographic representation.

One, typical ethnography begins, after the definition of the research issues, with the design of methods for collecting data that leads to the description of a cultural form/community with the ultimate objective of the analysis of the data. Instead, transcultural research begins with an analysis and moves in an alternative direction, which is that of creating of interactions that incorporate the subjects of research not as objects but as coeval participants in a collective and collaborative endeavor. Analysis, and its resultant knowledge, is not the end point of research but the beginning. Thus, transcultural ethnography depends upon a thorough knowledge of the local situations in which it is to be realized. Included in this base knowledge is not simply the history of anthropology of the locality and cultural region/area (i.e., not only the ethnographies and the thematic/conceptual debates of the region), but as much as possible the history of the practices of the anthropologists that produced these knowledges and the ways in which these knowledges connect to other kinds of processes. An analysis of this broader historical entanglement of anthropology and locality is imperative as one’s own research is a distinctive if not disjunctive continuity with this history.

Two, typical ethnography is governed by the teleology of academic production, especially writing, such that the experiential dimensions of fieldwork are devalued or minimized in importance. Instead, transcultural research assumes that the experiential relations and lived interactions of fieldwork is of equal if not higher value than academic production. This however does not mean that academic production is

forsaken; without extensive ethnographic documentation and reporting of “cultures/fieldwork” there is no professional anthropology or ethnography in the disciplinary sense (it becomes something else). The fieldwork process has its own and specific value that becomes the zone of priority for thinking, research, and experimentation with fieldwork methodologies and processes.

Third, typical ethnography highlights the object of study (a culture, a community, a group, etc.) through a de-emphasis (that can actually be a kind of total erasure) of the process by which the object was defined and studied as such. Instead, transcultural research reverses this emphasis and accentuates the fieldwork process through strategic forms of “expanded” documentation. Expanded documentation refers not only to the multiplication of the media of documentation from “pen and paper” to audio-tapes, photography, and audio-visual recordings, but to the expansion of that which is documented, i.e., from the traditional subject of study to the ethnographers and fieldworkers and the interactive processes of conducting fieldwork. Thus the ideal of “data collecting” as the work of fieldwork is set aside for another conception of field-“work” as documentation in this expanded and multi-media mode.

Fourth, typical ethnography maintains a paradoxical and/or ambivalent ethical ideal of non-intervention in the culture while clearly “intervening” such that the culture or community remains unaltered or unaffected by the work of anthropology.¹⁷ Instead, transcultural research assumes that cultures are dynamic and that the conduct of ethnographic fieldwork is indeed going to alter, effect, affect, modify and otherwise change aspects of peoples lives, to a greater or lesser extent, and thus likewise it will

effect “the culture” in some way. Thus, ethics shifts from universal principle of non-intervention to a contextualized, historically particularist assessment of and thinking through the ways in which research can be positively, therefore ethically, articulated into the lives of the research subjects. Transcultural ethnography then works on or develops a different model of science than both models of applied and basic research.

Fifth, typical ethnography involves some kind of reflexivity, whether in the hyper-reflexive mode of “experimental ethnography” (understood as experimental writing) or in the scientific mode of objectivist verification of knowledge. Instead, transcultural research explores a third mode of reflexivity that is based on Ortiz’ model of counterpoint (or transcultural counterpoint). Although this idea requires more extensive discussion than available here, including a detour through Merleau-Ponty’ notion of “double sensation,” such a counterpoint entails a double reflexivity.

Fieldwork, like everyday life, creates situations where “one” is both an “object” and a “subject” and experiences oneself as both subject and object not only by oneself but by others. But, in fieldwork, this “one” is already double in that the pronoun of the above sentence refers to both the ethnographers or researchers and the persons through which research is conducted.

Sixth, typical ethnography is conducted on a hierarchical model of production that construes research as a process of a “single” researcher who is nonetheless assisted to varying degrees and in various areas of investigation by a team of assistants who are more or less local. Transcultural ethnography understands that fieldwork is always necessarily collective and collaborative and thus it involves teams of researchers or

fieldworkers in which the categories of researcher/researched become increasingly inappropriate. There is not however a utopian disregard of hierarchies of work, differences in skills or capacities, nor actual socio-cultural bases of belonging and identity. Fieldwork is a consciously and strategically designed project with a determinate agenda. But the agenda entails working with others who have distinctly other agendas but that view collaboration as a means to attain those other objectives. Transcultural research then involves a co-laboring but not in equal, egalitarian, or equivalent statuses, meanings, or values. These real and actual differences are the what must conceptually and practically grappled with in terms of the design and conduct of transcultural research.

Seventh, typical ethnography produces a more or less extensive archive of information which remains not really “in the hands” of the ethnographer but rather in their filing cabinets or storage boxes in a forgotten corner. Less poetically (or less stark) the ethnographer produces an archive that remains essentially closed and inert or inactive (once “the book” is written from it). Instead, transcultural research seeks to create innovative ways in which that archival material can be opened up and brought back into fieldwork in conceptually interesting and locally relevant ways such that fieldwork is not only conceptualized, but thereby operationalized, as an ongoing process of transcultural interaction that accrues historical and temporal density.

These principles of transcultural ethnography enable an alternative framing or paradigmatic formulation of fieldwork. Specifically, they point in the direction of an experimental ethnography that is no longer understood as or defined by a concern with

text, and writing – which nonetheless, as Stewart (1996) points out leads back to the problematic of representation. This alternative vision of fieldwork would also not correspond, at least not directly, to the category of “new ethnography” which Stewart indicates is defined by a relation to (cultural/political) critique. Instead, the term as used here refers to a process of fieldwork. Specifically, this experimental ethnography is experimental to the degree and in the sense that the ethnography experiments with its own fieldwork processes.

The experimental component or better the experimentality of this alternative, transcultural ethnography is not experimental in the sense of experimentation with ethnographic representation, writing, and text. It is also not experimental in according to the concept that corresponds to the “hard science” (or better, Kuhnian and Latouring) concept of a methodological procedure, event, and process. The experimentality or notion of the experimental of this proposed transcultural ethnography returns the concept to its etymological roots of “putting out into peril”: Thus, the experiment of fieldwork is a “putting into risk” of failure, error and misdirection ethnography itself, or more specifically of the methods, practices, dynamics, persons, and processes of fieldwork through an exploration of these as not only the means but the objects of study.

In other words, an objective of research within this emergent¹⁸ paradigm of experimental ethnography is an experimentation with the methods and practices of research and therefore not an experiment that aims at the production, testing, or application, or generalization of knowledge per se. Neither the scientific, basic

research, objective of the accumulation of knowledge nor the applied objective of creating public policy or local aid/assistance to communities are governing principles. The experimentality is defined as a particular kind of working between and with both elements of the basic and applied science paradigms, where “applied” science can be equally infused by the agenda of state governmentality and capitalism as by feminist, postcolonial, subaltern or other counter critique. In this way, the perils of transcultural ethnography transect at a space of critique with the diverse movements that explore possibilities of and for “new ethnography.

References Cited

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. Can there be a Feminist Ethnography? *Women and Performance*, vol. 5(1).
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. Writing Against Culture. In R. G. Fox, ed., *RECAPTURING ANTHROPOLOGY*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, pp. 137-162.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *IMAGINED COMMUNITIES*. London: Verso.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *MODERNITY AT LARGE : CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF GLOBALIZATION*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Author, Anonymous. 1996. Published book. Press.
- Author, Anonymous. n.d.a. Journal article under review at *American Ethnologist*, April 2002.
- Author, Anonymous. n.d.b. Thinking Through Ethnography: Ethics, Intervention, Transculturation. Manuscript under review, *Cultural Anthropology*. April 2002.
- Author, Anonymous and Co-Author A, editors. 1999. unpublished book manuscript.
- Author, Anonymous and Co-Authors A and B. 1999. Exhibition Catalog.
- Behar, Ruth and Deborah Gordon, editors. 1995. *WOMEN WRITING CULTURE*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Behar, Ruth. 1993. *TRANSLATED WOMAN*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Benitez-Rojo, Antonio. 1996. Fernando Ortiz: The Caribbean and Postmodernity. *REPEATING ISLANDS*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 150-176.
- Beverly, John. 1999. *SUBALTERNITY AND REPRESENTATION*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Breglia, Lisa C. 1999. Paper in Session, "Ethnography Beyond Critique and Counter Critique." Meetings of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago.

- Clifford, James and George Marcus, editors. 1986. WRITING CULTURE. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Clifford, James. 1992. Traveling Theory. In L. Grossberg, et al. CULTURAL STUDIES. New York: Routledge.
- Clifford, James. 1997a. ROUTES. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, James. 1997b. Spatial Practices. In A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, eds., ANTHROPOLOGICAL LOCATIONS. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 185-222.
- Cottom, Daniel. 1989. TEXT AND CULTURE. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1984. THE PRACTICE OF EVERYDAY LIFE. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1988. THE WRITING OF HISTORY. New York: Columbia.
- Dumont, Jean Paul. 1978. THE HEADMAN AND I. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1983. TIME AND THE OTHER. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1988. WORKS AND LIVES. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Glick-Schiller, Nina, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton. 1992. Transnationalism. TOWARDS A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION. New York: New York Academy of Sciences, pp. 25-52.
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1992. Beyond "Culture." Cultural Anthropology, vol.7: 6-23.
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson, editors. 1997a. ANTHROPOLOGICAL LOCATIONS. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1997b. Discipline and Practice. In A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, eds., ANTHROPO-LOGICAL LOCATIONS. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-46.
- Haraway, Donna J. 1989. PRIMATE VISIONS. London: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna J. 1997. MODEST-WITNESS@SECOND-MILLENNIUM. FEMALEMAN-MEETS-ONCOMOUSE: London: Routledge.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1977. Building, Dwelling, Thinking. In D.F. Krell, ed., HEIDEGGAR: BASIC WRITINGS. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc.
- Herbert, Christopher. 1991. CULTURE AND ANOMIE. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lavie, Smadar and Ted Swedenburg. 1996. Between and Among the Boundaries of Culture: Bridging Text and Lived Experience in the Third Timespace. Cultural Studies, vol. 10 (1): 154-179.
- Limón, José. 1994. DANCING WITH THE DEVIL. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Linton, Ralph. 1988. Culture and Normality. In P. Bohannon and M. Glazer, eds., HIGH POINTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY. 2nd edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 199-206.
- Mannheim, Bruce and Dennis Tedlock. 1995. Introduction. In D. Tedlock and B. Mannheim, eds., THE DIALOGICAL EMERGENCE OF CULTURE. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 253-288
- Marcus, George and Fred Myers, editors. 1995. TRAFFIC IN CULTURE. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marcus, George and Michael Fischer. ANTHROPOLOGY AS CULTURE CRITIQUE. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Marcus, George. 1998. *ETHNOGRAPHY THROUGH THICK AND THIN*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Martin, Emily. 1994. *FLEXIBLE BODIES*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mignolo, Walter. 2000. *LOCAL HISTORIES/GLOBAL DESIGNS*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Moreiras, Alberto. 1999. Hybridity and Double Consciousness. *Cultural Studies*, vol. 13: 373-407.
- Ortiz, Fernando. 1995. *CUBAN COUNTERPOINT*. H. de Onís, trans., Durham: Duke University Press.
- Paredes, Américo. 1958. *WITH A PISTOL IN HIS HAND*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Pratt, Mary L. 1992. *IMPERIAL EYES*. London: Routledge.
- Price, Richard and Sally Price. 1992. *EQUATORIA*. London: Routledge.
- Rama, Angel. 1997. Processes of Transculturation in Latin American Narrative. *Travesia: Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, vol. 6 (2): 155-171.
- Retamar, Roberto Fernández. 1989. *CALIBAN AND OTHER ESSAYS*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Retamar, Roberto Fernández. 1989. *CALIBAN AND OTHER ESSAYS*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1980. *ILONGOT HEADHUNTING*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1985. Chicano Studies, 1970-1984. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 14: 405-27.

- Rouse, Roger. 1992. Making Sense of Settlement. N. Glick-Schiller, L. Basch and C. Blanc-Szanton, editors. TOWARDS A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON MIGRATION. New York: New York Academy of Sciences, pp. 25-52.
- Saldívar, José D. 1991. DIALECTICS OF OUR AMERICA. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Saldívar, José D. 1998. BORDER MATTERS: REMAPPING AMERICAN CULTURAL STUDIES. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Seligmann, Linda, organizer. 1999. Session, Meetings of the American Anthropological Association. Chicago.
- Smith, Adam. 1980. The History of Astronomy. In W.P.D. Wightman and J.C. Bryce, eds., ESSAYS IN PHILOSOPHICAL SUBJECTS. Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 31-105.
- Stacy, Judith. 1988. Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography? Women's Studies International Forum, vol. 11(1).
- Stewart, Kathleen. 1996. SPACE ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stoller, Paul. 1989. TASTE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC THINGS. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.
- Taussig, Michel. 1987. SHAMANISM, COLONIALISM, AND THE WILD MAN. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Taussig, Michel. 1991. Tactility and Distraction. Cultural Anthropology, vol. 6: 147-153.
- Tedlock, Dennis and Bruce Mannheim, editors. 1995. THE DIALOGICAL EMERGENCE OF CULTURE. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

- Tedlock, Dennis. 1983. THE SPOKEN WORD AND THE WORK OF INTERPRETATION. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Tedlock, Dennis. 1995. Interpretation, Participation, and the Role of Narrative in Dialogical Anthropology. In D. Tedlock and B. Mannheim, eds., THE DIALOGICAL EMERGENCE OF CULTURE. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 253-288
- Traweek, Sharon. 1988. BEAMTIMES AND LIFETIMES : THE WORLD OF HIGH ENERGY PHYSICISTS. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Tsing, Anna. 1993. IN THE REALM OF THE DIAMOND QUEEN. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Turner, Terence. 1991. Representing, Resisting, Rethinking. In G. W. Stocking, Jr., ed., COLONIAL SITUATIONS. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Visweswaran, Kamala. 1994. FICTIONS OF FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Visweswaran, Kamala. 1997. Histories of Feminist Ethnography. Annual Review of Anthropology, vol. 26: 591-621.
- Wolf, Diane L., editor. 1996. FEMINIST DILEMMAS IN FIELDWORK. Boulder: Westview.

Endnotes

¹ The 1970s debates between the major camps of materialism and idealism seemed to often consist of arguing that the theory and concept of culture of one's interlocutors were impossible and incoherent. Here, before the crisis of representation, the belief in science (humanist or hard) or at least in the concept, allowed one to maintain focus on the task of rigorously theorizing culture as a coherent, rational, structured and/or systematic entity. This incoherence has been, of course, an important stimulus to refine the concept and to create new theories of it. Recognition of this does not necessarily entail a dismissal of the concept. Note too that Abu-Lughud's (1991) motives for "writing against" culture are other than these; her reasons are political, that is, she is interested in working against the power hierarchies and relations that are established through this concept that organizes difference. The irony of her argument is historical in that the concept and term has been used both to attack and fortify such power/political hierarchies. This points out the intrinsic contrariness of the concept and its use. But, again, for me, this does not mean that we should discard it, especially when non-anthropologists are using and embodying this trope in their forging of identities and belongings.

² For the sake of brevity I might have inserted a parenthetical note referencing something like "world systems," "global ethnoscaapes," "local-global" interfaces to clarify my awkward paraphrasing of the umbrella that Marcus uses for these cultural process. Yet, as Marcus is keen to note all these terms are theoretical and analytical competitors with each other and have, for Marcus, the same status as questions and hypotheses that require a conceptualization of research strategies in order to be explored. In other words, as Breglia (1999) illustrates these are not pre-given real things, but that these contingent, ephemeral relationships are constituted as discrete things through their being analytically and, more importantly for Marcus, methodologically mapped.

³ This essay clearly presupposes and references the debates in anthropology regarding Kuhn's notion of paradigm, its relation to Foucault's notion of episteme, and the applicability or utility of these to comprehend the discipline of anthropology and its tumultuous times during the famous "crisis of representation."

⁴ The concept began to receive the scrutiny it merits at 1999 Meetings of the AAA. See the panel organized by Linda Seligmann, “Multi-Sited Field Research and Teaching” and Breglia’s (1999) nuanced reading.

⁵ While this statement might be read as a “corrective” another way to read Marcus’ use of the word potential in the quote is in this sense that multi-sited method/s are inherent to traditional fieldwork but that its practice may or may not be consciously theorized as such.

⁶ The word choice of “exists” here invokes Heidegger’s language of existence — a bringing out or putting forth, an unconcealment and a seeking — versus essence as in-itself. Thus, briefly, with a distinctively de Certeauian reading of Heidegger, dwelling as ontological essence is comprised of building which involves a “bringing forth” but that entails a reciprocal returning into, or “preserving” and “staying,” with things (Heidegger 1977: 320-339). Being for Heidegger, then, is a particularly interesting and fundamental kind of oikumene that abides by the travelogics that De Certeau conceptualizes as map, tour, place, space, and (to reconvert the de Certeau into a Heideggerian) “storying.” The intelligibility of Heidegger’s notion of Being as an economy (i.e., oikonomia) of spatio-discursive practice is particularly evident in his discussion of building and dwelling.

⁷ The concern for breaking the here/there and home/field binary is widespread. These attempts — such as Lavie and Swedenburg (1996) on thirdspace or the now very diffused notion of “homework” — all remain, however, locked into or resolve back to dualisms. The key move here is to begin from not simply heterogeneity, but heterological entities. I am a strong advocate for the utility of de Certeau’s analytics in this regard and point again to Katie Stewart’s for her breaking of the teleology of narrative and spatiality within the confines of writing that she cogently works against.

⁸ From this position the “awkwardness” between anthropology and feminism, as conceptual-theoretical frames, is perspectival and one of focus. Thus, this difference is healthy and good, although the sociopolitical valorizations of these different contributions is not.

⁹ This proliferation of “new” objects of study in anthropology and interdisciplinary zones is something that Marcus has been particularly concerned to describe throughout the essays of his *ETHNOGRAPHY THROUGH THICK AND THIN* and in his other collaborative-collective work, such as the *Late Editions* series and in the *TRAFFIC IN CULTURE* volume. There are others that have made

important contribution to this discussion, for example, Clifford (especially in *ROUTES*[1997a]), Haraway (from *PRIMATE VISIONS* [1989] to *MODEST WITNESS*), Appadurai (1996), Abu-Lughod (1991), and others. The queering of feminisms, the hybridization of postcolonial studies and anthropology, the emergence of cultural studies, the anthropologization of “home” “here” in the “west,” transnationalizations and globalizations, the museumization of the world and the study of museums as totalizing representational apparatus, the ecologization of sciences and spaces, and the rendering into ethnographic object any and all the sciences *with the virtual exception of anthropology itself!* are just some examples of this proliferation of research problems that are all still based on a specific paradigmatic model of science. Ironically based (usually) in poststructuralist critiques of science, these nonetheless reproduce a humanist science oriented by the teleology of rendering an analytic description of the world (that is often referred to as one or another form of “critique”) that rarely places the enabling conditions, histories, collusions, and institutions of the analysis as part of the object of analysis. On the other hand, the renovation of traditional objects of study via creative refashioning of inherited tools and questions has been an ongoing preoccupation of many other anthropologists. Among this group have been those most concerned with exploring new forms, genres, and agendas of writing. It seems possible to, at least, ask, if not simply assert, whether or not it is from this trajectory of work that the most varied, sustained, and successful attempts to create an experimental ethnographic writing has occurred. If this is indeed an accurate generalization, then this may have to do with a generational issue in that many if not most of these ethnographers that are consciously experimenting with their writing are doing so in a second or later book. Further, it seems clear to me that it is among this work that there is the most successful attempt to deal with the genealogy of anthropology as a series of complex questions that impinge upon (a) the very nature of the life-worlds that are studied and (b) the analytical construction of these life-worlds as objects of knowledge derived from the meta-research problem that pre-gives to us a paradigmatic Other. Later in this essay I use Limón as my example to further develop this issue. In contrast, with some significant exceptions, i.e., Haraway, it seems accurate to say that most of the postcolonial, cultural studies, neo/post marxist, and related culture critique research is not or hardly concerned with reflexivity (except a rhetorical note of one’s “multiply inflected location”) and mostly concerned to provide a distanced, scientifically objectified accounting of some pre-textualized

object of study. Here one could cite the recent work of Rabinow who has moved from confessional modes to objectivist descriptions.

¹⁰ It is necessary to underscore that the versions of reflexivity discussed here are from the last 20-30 years and reflexivity has a longer and more varied history in the discipline. For example the reflexivity connected to and explored within feminist anthropology thus forms an important, if often neglected or effaced, contribution (Visweswaran 1997; Behar and Gordon 1995). Similarly the reflexivity developed within positivist and empirical traditions is also not discussed here.

¹¹ No doubt I could have chosen other ethnographies to illustrate my argument. However, I feel that this is one of the few attempts that seek a relative balance between a questioning of the genealogy of anthropological institution in a specific site of intervention as historical past and of the political-ethics of one's own fieldwork practice as enacted in that "same" site of intervention. The quality of "experimental writing" is not essentially interesting with regard to the constitution of research problems in this frame.

¹² The literature here is voluminous and difficult to differentiate especially if one considers the multiplicity of (theoretical/political) modes of feminisms that may not focus expressly on traditionally (or stereotypically) defined objects of study (e.g., "women," "gender") but nonetheless enact a critique that (simply) "is" or is (genealogically) articulated to the feminist project/s (e.g., queer theory critiques/ethnographies). See Stewart (1996: 20-26, 213 fn. 7) for a partial yet inclusive citation of experiments in feminist ethnographies.

¹³ See Author (1996, n.d.b).

¹⁴ The phrase is no doubt awkward, but I use it to refer to that tradition of Chicano/Latino anthropology, as exemplified in this essay by Limón (c.f., 1998), that is based in the kind of culture critique initiated by Amerigo Paredes (e.g., 1958). It owes to Rosaldo's review of Chicano studies which uses the phrase, "Talking Back" (1985), to identify the subtleties and power of Paredes' work; it is a more accessible label that references the figure of Caliban and his cursing of Prospero in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. This complex figuration of power, language, and identity has a rich history of canonical and counter-canonical use as a powerful trope and explicit symbol by Caribbean, Latin American, and now Chicano/Latino scholars and critics (see Retamar 1989; Benitez-Rojo 1996; Mignolo 2000; Beverly 1999). Thus, J. Saldívar (1991, 1997), a literary critic, uses the phrase "calibanesque" and the "calibanic school."

¹⁵ This is too broad a topic to enter into here, but my use of ethics is to be contrasted with moral issues and is informed by the Levinasian and Derridean debates about the possibility of a "postmodern" ethics grounded in a notion of the Other (see Author n.d.b).

¹⁶ Latin American cultural studies is increasingly discussing and applying the concept (cf. Benitez-Rojo 1996; Rama 1997; Moreiras 1999; Beverly 1999; Mignolo 2000). However, despite this literature, Pratt's influential work (1992), and Coronil's (1995) introduction to the recent English translation of the classic study (Ortiz 1995), Anglophone North American anthropology has not really begun to explore the notion.

¹⁷ See Author (1996: 1-28) for a discussion of this ambivalence and paradox.

¹⁸ The present essay has remained at a conceptual and analytical level in order to develop its arguments, which are not dependent upon an ethnographic exemplification from actual fieldwork. This being said, it can be noted that three years of ethnographic research were designed and conducted according to a vision of experimental ethnography that is partially presented in this essay. Other essays and book projects are currently in progress that deal with the many other facets of the theory, practices, and results of this experimental research. See (Author and Co-Author A 1999; Author and Co-Author A & B 1999; Author n.d.a)