Review: The Limits of Reflexivity: Politics in Anthropology's Post- "Writing Culture" Era

THE LIMITS OF REFLEXIVITY: POLITICS IN ANTHROPOLOGY'S POST-*WRITING CULTURE* ERA

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Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present. *Richard Fox,* ed. Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1991, viii + 248 pp. $15.95, paper.

ANTHROPOLOGY, ONCE AGAIN, seems to be in a moment of crisis. Although some would argue that crises have occurred at various points all along the history of the discipline, it is important to historicize the present moment. Seen in retrospect, the crisis of the late 1960s and early 1970s—most visibly represented in the books by Hymes (1969) and Asad (1973)—appears clearly demarcated by well-identified historical phenomena. This easy identification was perhaps what led Marcus and Fischer (1986:34) to characterize those books, fairly or unfairly, as "documents of the moment." Twenty years later, the new sense of crisis is more diffuse, perhaps because we are still in the midst of it, perhaps because it has unsettled long-standing notions of the world, politics, knowledge, and identity, notions that cannot be easily reconstructed. If the question of "the politics of anthropology" is being raised again loudly, it is probably because we are living momentous changes. As some argue, we live in a different world (postmodernity), in a different global political economy (postfordism), in a different set of systems and practices for constructing identities (new social movements), perhaps even in a significantly new cultural order (cyberculture). Even the distinction between field and home sites has become blurred, a blurring that is accentuated by the debates on multiculturalism and the contest over what it means to be "American" today.

Most importantly, perhaps, we are confronted today by a generalized and novel questioning of knowledge and its politics, which affects anthropology in a very direct manner. This questioning of knowledge was behind the much-touted "reimagining" of anthropology set under way in the mid 1980s, centered around the nature and politics of representation and textuality and giving rise to what is variously called—usually without much rigor—experimental ethnography, postmodern, textualist, or reflexive anthropology (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988; Rosaldo 1989). True to good academic fashion, the critics who advanced this project (particularly Clifford, Marcus, and Fischer) have become the target of a variety of critiques, some of them more pointed and insightful than others. Rather than reviewing these

critiques of the critics, this paper examines the most important political ques-
tions left unanswered by the discourse of experimental ethnography and the
various proposals that have arisen accordingly.[1] My point of departure is the
thoughtful collection *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited
by Richard Fox (1991c), since this book represents a conscious effort at tran-
scending some of the predicaments and flaws of experimental ethnography
without necessarily disavowing its more valid claims.

Most of the authors represented in the collection take issue with the fact
that experimental ethnography took for granted and helped maintain in place
what the collection's editor calls "the artisan image of anthropology," partic-
ularly anthropology's reliance on fieldwork and ethnography as its paradigmatic
practices. Anthropology, the authors suggest, is much more than fieldwork
and ethnography. Rather than artisanship, the proper metaphor for anthro-
pology is the factory, as Fox (1991b) proposes in his introduction to the col-
lection. By seeing anthropology as produced under an industrial (capitalist?)
mode, we are led to inquire directly into the conditions under which our labor
is produced; these conditions range from long-standing historical factors to the
epistemo-politics of the discipline and the micropractices of the academy. Fox's
analysis is intended to show that we neither own nor control the means of
production of our intellectual labor; that is, that anthropology's authority is
shaped more by the larger world than by anthropologists' own practices.

It is in the context of this rehistoricization of anthropological practice that
the contributors to *Recapturing Anthropology* find the "postmodernist" pro-
posals faulty. Generally speaking, they question the viability of "reimagining"
the discipline by focusing only on the politics inside the text while disregarding
the politics surrounding the text: anthropologists work within a political context,
and both their practice and objects of study are shaped by political conditions
largely beyond the control of the ethnographer. To be sure, and to be fair, one
has to acknowledge—in ways that *Recapturing Anthropology* doesn't always
do—that the discourse of experimental ethnography was based on an overall
recognition of these larger political facts, even if its proponents assumed,
perhaps too hastily, that all these larger factors were in a sense present within
the text itself; they seemed to assume, in other words, that the decolonization
of representation at the level of the text allowed them to rework the larger
political realities. For the contributors to *Recapturing Anthropology*, the focus
on textual politics is not enough; moreover, they view this focus as a diver-
sionary tactic to salvage the nineteenth-century idea of the anthropologist as
artisan. This is, in sum and despite its relative importance, an antiquated way
of recasting the discipline and reformulating its politics.

What this group of authors has in mind is a different recasting of the discipline.
Their overall metaphor moves away from the Geertzian image of cultures as
texts, away from textual strategies such as dialogic and polyphonic ethnog-
raphies, away from an excessive concern with how to "represent" the "other,"
and towards the identification of concrete processes through which anthro-
pology can "reenter the real world" through the "recapturing" of the progres-
sive character of some of its concepts. *Recapturing Anthropology* questions the

thought that we can rework texts at will, as the new ethnography at times seemed to assume, and calls for "an active confrontation with what we have become or what we have been made into at present" (Fox 1991b:13). It calls, in short, for a reformulation that recalls the spirit of the 1960s critiques, but after having passed through the epistemological questioning of the 1980s.

What the authors mean by "reentry" and "recapture" is instructive. Let me summarize some of the findings, by moving from the contextualization of the discipline at the microlevel in some of the articles to the most general historicization of the discipline in terms of anthropology's dependence on Western epistemes in another set of contributions. Paul Rabinow, José Limón, Sherry Ortner, and Graham Watson urge anthropologists to consider more closely "the question of what produces *us,*" as Ortner puts it (1991:164). In Rabinow's argument, anthropologists must scrutinize the domain of taken-for-granted academic practices, learned not only in graduate school but also by participating in social systems shaped by middle-class values. These practices include the processes of hiring, publishing, and promotions; the unspoken rules used to judge the "character" of applicants; and the ways in which the daily comings and goings of anthropologists in their university settings depend on, and have incorporated, the normalized features of (middle-class) American life, including the skills and customs of the old boys' networks. These practices, Rabinow (1991) argues, shape anthropological practice to a significant degree.

The analysis of these micropractices of the academy can be seen as part of what Strathern (1988) has called "ethnography of Western knowledge practices"; Gordon (1991) has recently shown that this uncharted domain has also contributed to engendering the ethnographic imagination. Drawing on the teachings of ethnomethodology, Watson (1991) maintains that anthropology must be understood as an activity shaped by indexicality and reflexivity, that is, as a context-dependent enterprise which is, in many ways, self-referential and self-constituting. As a discourse, one might add, anthropology is a rule-governed system of utterances (a discursive formation, in Foucault's sense of the term) that systematically constructs "facts" in ways that have at least as much to do with the goals of the discipline and the organizations it sustains as with the world "out there." This, Watson states, is a simple and yet profound lesson that anthropology still has to learn.

Limón's (1991) analysis is centered on the effect that previous ethnographies have on how one writes about one's subjects. He discovers that his approach to the subjects he studies—the Mexican-American working class of southern Texas—is marked indelibly by two sets of previous works: the largely ethnocentric ethnographies written by Anglo-American anthropologists, who form part of the ongoing war on Mexican-Americans by the dominant culture, and the ethnography of his mentor, Américo Paredes, which, while belonging to a tradition of progressive scholarship Limón wants to emulate, is not without its problems. In fact, Paredes' work, focused on the heroic characters described in the *corridos* of the first half of the century, pushes Limón to concentrate instead on the "unheroic" world of the daily lives of Mexican-American popular groups. As he tries to recapture this world, however, he is confronted with

the dilemma of how to write about his subjects' culture in ways that do not reinforce stereotypes about them. How can he show what needs to be shown about his subjects—for instance, a certain sexism—and yet resist complicity with ethnocentric narratives? Focusing on dance as a form of resistance allows Limón to discover a critical politics in his subjects' actions, while at the same time acknowledging and moving away from his respected predecessor. As a body politics, working-class dance represents, for Limón, not an emerging postmodern phenomenon but the incarnation of a modernist, resisting posture against capitalist life and culture.

Ortner's (1991) reflections point in a different direction, one shared by other contributors to the volume. It is not enough, she says, to reflect on how we produce what we produce; we must also carefully examine the conditions of this production. This examination entails, among other things, the recognition of the fact that anthropologists and the subjects we study are implicated in one another's lives and that various social groups within society constitute each other mutually through mechanisms that are oftentimes difficult to discern. While this process is clearer within a given society—Ortner analyzes the mutual constitution of the middle and working classes in the United States, effected through the mutual displacement onto each other of gender and sexual characteristics—the principle also, and increasingly, applies to our relationship with Third-World groups.

Arjun Appadurai's (1991) notion of "global ethnoscapes," which closes the collection, brings this point home with force. The fact that cultural production has become de-territorialized and globalized as never before—a point political economists made long ago in more restricted ways—calls for a new type of cosmopolitan or macroethnography that gives prominence to the role that imaginative resources play in the constitution of identities and communities. The fact that most people today see life as "an ironic compromise between what they could imagine and what social life would permit" (Appadurai 1991:198) speaks of the unprecedented role that global cultural resources such as mass media play in the character of local lives, a point well demonstrated by Ong's study (1987) of Malaysian women factory workers and by certain local-level ethnographies of development.[2] For Appadurai, the key to cosmopolitan ethnographies is the creative study of the shifting embedding of large-scale imaginative and material elements into local life trajectories. This entails, Appadurai believes, bringing together the insights of the 1980s textualist critiques and those critiques of the 1960s that saw anthropology as operating in larger fields of power. Distinguishing between the *genealogy* of local forms and the *history* of global forms, as they come together in a given ethnoscape, might be a way to investigate the articulation of the local and the global, a question which is being constructively investigated by geographers (Pred and Watts 1992).

The critique of the conventional spatialized understanding of communities and cultural difference that has been at the basis of anthropology and the concomitant search for new metaphors are becoming rich topics for anthropological theory. Anthropology, in the eyes of some (Gupta and Ferguson 1992),

has relied too much on the construction of a homogeneous "us" and a discrete "other" that has to be problematized. Cultural and spatial divisions have amounted to a veritable "incarceration of the native," in Appadurai's telling phrase—and, one might add, to the incarceration of the ethnographer as someone who necessarily "stands outside" the native culture. Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) makes the most general case in this regard in her contribution to *Recapturing An-thropology*. Anthropology, she starts by saying, has been predicated on main-taining clear boundaries between self and other, which, in turn, is a reflection of what is perhaps the most politically significant fact shaping anthropology—that of Western knowers and representers unequally paired with non-Western knowns and represented. At work in the dichotomy of self and other, Abu-Lughod sees the invisible hand of the notion of cultures as identifiable, discrete, coherent, and separate from our own. To the extent that the culture concept has been the primary tool for making the other and for maintaining a hierarchical system of differences, we must direct our creative efforts against this concept. We must try to abandon this concept, she prescribes, by "writing against culture." We need to look at similarities, not only at differences; by emphasizing connections, we also undermine the idea of "total" cultures and peoples. Can the notion of culture be replaced by that of the historical constitution of subjects through discourses and practices? Can we emphasize not boundedness and separateness but connections? Can we do "ethnographies of the particular" that subvert homogeneity and coherence and that bring the language of every-day life closer to that of the text, that merge the "how and why" of what we write with the "for whom" of our endeavors?

Fieldwork and ethnography, as the models of anthropological practice par excellence, suppose and require an integrated, even organic, notion of culture. While the notion of the bounded village or community as *the* anthropological domain has been challenged (again, by political economists and experimental ethnography), the centrality and privilege of ethnography have remained intact. Not only do we need to question the productivity of the culture concept for today's practice, as Abu-Lughod instructs us, we must also displace the cen-trality of ethnography. This is one of Fox's strongest claims in his contribution to the volume. In fact, as Fox (1991a) believes, it was the integrationist approach to culture—which settled in with Malinowski, Mead, and Benedict—that rationalized ethnography.[3] But it was not always so, he reminds us. Rather than *assuming* the unity of culture, Boasian anthropology treated it as an open question. Boas's emphasis on history and inductive knowledge resulted in a much more fluid notion of culture as open and even accidental, quite the opposite of Malinowskian totalities or Benedictan "patterns" (see also Stocking 1974).

Fox's "recapturing" of this Boasian principle takes the form of a proposal to cultivate "culture history" as a genre of social description. We need to pluralize anthropological practice again, he insists, and culture history is a way to do it. In Fox's vision, culture histories would be grounded on a carefully balanced dialectic of culture and individual agency, of system and practice, a point in-troduced earlier by Ortner in a well-known piece (1984). Fox proposes that

we focus on the "experiments with truth" carried out by individuals, on how individual problematics arise within given structures, originating ideas (truths) out of already constituted meanings which nevertheless, through experimentation, contribute to shaping structures.[4] Culture history would then oscillate between the analysis of cultured lives (through, say, life histories) and of lived cultures—the ways in which cultures are shaped by institutions.

A similar recapturing is proposed by Joan Vincent (1991), who also objects to the reification of anthropology's history. She specifically addresses the way in which Malinowski—or, rather, the Edwardian moment of which Malinowski was only a part—has been treated by subsequent generations. Her chief point is that we need to understand "the classics" in the context in which they were produced and according to the engagement they maintained with their moment and their subjects. Were historians to adhere to this rule, she believes, they would find a discontinuous history. If we need to pluralize anthropological practice by displacing ethnography's privilege, we also need to pluralize anthropology's history by examining various historical moments before they achieved closure. The Edwardian moment, for instance, was characterized by anything but closure. The "ethnicization" effected by Malinowski after his triumph—the fact that anthropology became a science of "people" and "places"—was arduously contested by diffusionists and evolutionists. This contestation drops out of sight in conventional historical narratives that construct Malinowski as the "father" of fieldwork and realist ethnography. We need to "engage with historicism," Vincent warns, and to consider carefully the social production, reception, and reproduction of ethnographies in their contexts and histories.

An even more encompassing historicization of the discipline is proposed by Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1991). Contrary to common belief, anthropology did not "invent" the savage or the primitive—as some may have assumed in otherwise very illustrative books (Stocking 1987; Kuper 1988)—but emerged in a symbolic field that had been in place long before the nineteenth century. Since the Renaissance this symbolic field was organized to allow for the construction of the West in relation to a Janus-faced Other; one side was the savage, the other the West itself, but as possibility, as Utopia. Between the "state of nature" and the "ideal state," the Savage and Utopia emerged as complementary slots, mediated by the figure of Order. To really politicize and transform anthropology, Trouillot strongly states, we need to move out of anthropology's own discursive order—within which the postmodernists are still busy at work—in order to question the larger symbolic field upon which the discipline is premised. Only then will anthropology be able to liberate itself from its dependence on the "savage slot"; only then will it be able to recognize that there is no Other (with a capital O)—and, certainly, that the other is not found in the Text—but a multitude of others, the West being one among many.

It is clear that this set of articles is constructed as a response to the "postmodern" move. They not only challenge us to reconsider several pivotal notions of the discipline but go on to suggest specific moves and concepts. Even if they do not represent a fully coherent group of texts (strictly speaking, only

a few of the articles achieve both "reentry" and "recapturing") and even if some tensions between them remain (the degree to which various authors want to gain distance from or engage with experimental ethnography; the insistence on or rejection of anthropology abroad versus anthropology at home; the different urgency placed on political questions such as the relation between the academy and social issues), they nevertheless articulate a position in the contested terrain of post-*Writing Culture* options.

Most of the authors in *Recapturing Anthropology* want to distance themselves from "postmodernism" as a general trend, in the belief, perhaps most consciously articulated by Rabinow, that we have not really left the space of modernity but are rather in a stage of late modernity. In some ways, the dispute is a matter of emphasis. None of the contributors to *Recapturing Anthropology* would adhere to the emblematic notions of modernity, such as the belief in linear progress, absolute truth, theories of universal application, and rational forms of social organization and planning; nor would they deny the validity of some of the hallmarks of postmodernism, such as the growing salience of heterogeneity and difference versus homogeneity, of fragmentation versus totalization, of decenteredness versus centeredness, and of scientific indeterminacy versus certainty and universal laws. And they would probably admit that if anthropology must shake itself free from the straightjacket of the "savage slot," it must also struggle against Order and Truth, two of the pillars of modernity.

But the argument with experimental ethnography enacted in Fox's collection is more substantial than this. At its core is a different understanding of the link between anthropology and the world, between anthropology and the nature of social change. This understanding shuns the primacy of representation and the text without being dismissive of it, and it resonates with other attempts—particularly by feminists and minorities—at articulating a critical anthropology. What is emerging from these various trends is a different notion of the politics of the discipline that can be delineated, for analytical purposes, in terms of three interrelated domains:

1. The politics of the *fieldwork* situation. This involves particularly the recognition—most convincingly argued by Page (1988)—that anthropology's subjects have a constitutive voice and that fieldwork is always a dialogic, power-laden, and conflictive process, governed by dual agency, regardless of how the ethnographer represents the situation or how s/he arranges the text. Not only do the subjects assess the subject-ethnographer relationship in their own terms, but this assessment—and, generally, the interactive voices of subject and ethnographer—is a vital ingredient in the production of ethnographic knowledge. In other words, "the ethnographic task is not merely to record the indigenous view of a shared life-world, but to reveal the subject's and ethnographer's interactive assessment of, and response to, it" (Page 1988:165). This challenge is more openly accepted in those ethnographies that accomplish a shift from "participant observation" to "observation of participation." In such works, both the Self and the Other are presented together within a single

narrative ethnography (Tedlock 1991). As Tedlock suggests, this shift has been facilitated by a new breed of ethnographers interested in the coproduction of ethnographic knowledge.

2. The politics within the *text*. This domain has been most cogently problematized by Clifford and Marcus (Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986). It includes the incompleteness of ethnographic truths, the situatedness of the ethnographer in epistemo-cultural landscapes, the question of ethnographic authority, and the strategies of textual representation themselves. This second set of politics is indelibly linked with what happens in the fieldwork situation— to participant observation, the gathering of fieldnotes, the construction of interpretive frameworks, and the like. The assumed link between the poetics of ethnography and the politics of social change, however, remains problematic, even if the insights of experimental ethnography are accepted.

3. The contextual politics that circumscribe both fieldwork and writing. The contributors to *Recapturing Anthropology* give this domain significant attention, from the question of what "makes us" as anthropologists in our daily lives to the larger Western historical field that continues to provide the conditions of possibility for the discipline.

How these three sets of politics are actively and concretely interwoven by anthropologists and played out in various spaces (the "field," the discipline, the campus, the link to outside groups, causes or social policy domains, etc.) will shape whatever critical anthropology might emerge in the near future. If the project of *Writing Culture* and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* was to "reimagine" the discipline by redefining the epistemological and literary process of representation, and if that of *Recapturing Anthropology* was/is to "recapture" the discipline's progressive principles so as to "reenter" the real world in more explicitly politicized ways, then some believe that the task of the 1990s will be to continue with the process of "decolonizing" anthropology (Page 1988; Harrison 1991b). To decolonize anthropology, for this set of authors, entails paying closer attention to the struggles of Third-World peoples inside and outside "the West." This demands that we take seriously the increasingly articulate voices of Third-World anthropologists and intellectuals as the basis of a critical anthropological project. Next to the political economy and to postmodernist and feminist claims to this project (and perhaps at the basis of it), one must place the critical Third-World intellectual traditions (Harrison 1991a).

The metaphor of decolonizing supposes reimagining and reentry, to be sure, but this process would require that we pay closer attention to other political realities that, perhaps for understandable reasons, were not emphasized in *Recapturing Anthropology*. I mention three of these aspects to conclude. It requires, first, that as a way to weave together the various partial or "regional" insights of the past ten years or so, we pay closer attention to the relationship between our situatedness as anthropologists and the practices of fieldwork, writing, teaching, and political engagement. This is a topic of active elaboration in post–*Writing Culture* feminist anthropologies. The feminist critique of *Writing Culture* (Gordon 1988; Visweswaran 1988; Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Ballerino Cohen 1989) is already well known, but the reconstructive efforts that

followed the confrontation have received less attention; these attempts have focused on a different problematization of the relationships among feminism(s), fieldwork, and writing, including a willingness to theorize and politicize the power relations among women in the making of cross-cultural knowledge (Gordon 1991). This questioning has to be embraced by anthropology as a whole. Abu-Lughod argues that there *can* be a feminist ethnography; but this ethnography must be fully conscious of the fact that the unequal structures of the world continue to dictate the form of anthropology—that, in the case of feminist anthropology, the women at the center of feminist ethnography are mostly women from other cultures and the women it is written by and for are mostly Western women "who want to understand what gender means, how it works, and how it produces women's situations" (Abu-Lughod 1990:25).[5]

Secondly, the conceptualization of anthropology's reliance on Western historicity must be continually pushed and reformulated, in at least two directions. First, the changing local, regional, and global political economies through which certain systems of dominance are maintained must be recognized; one particularly important focus of this ongoing inquiry must be the *local* cultural articulations that develop with new forms of *global* capital, including the forms of cultural hybrization that are set under way as communities throughout the Third World reconfigure "tradition" and "modernity" in the pursuit of self-affirmation (Ong 1987; García Canclini 1990; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991). This involves the inevitable local mediations to which global processes of capital mobility are subjected; it is necessary to unravel how difference, connectedness, and structure are produced contradictorily by global forces (Pred and Watts 1992; Ulin 1991).

The second component of anthropology's reliance on Western historicity is perhaps the most crucial and defining trait of the discipline: its continued participation in a Western will to knowledge, its unreflective participation in systems of knowledge which, as Foucault has shown, are part and parcel of the genealogy of modern society and the governmentalization of social life, with the types of domination that traverse it.[6] The "savage slot" was not only constituted through race and geography; it was also crafted by technologies of discipline, and it continues to be so, for instance through programs of development. The micropractices of the academy reproduce not only subject positions but also forms of knowledge that, *because of what they are*, are linked to domination. Knowledge is an instituted process, in Polanyi's sense of the term and as ethnomethodologists insist. Scientific forms of knowledge are essential to modern forms of ruling, even if the link between knowledge and ruling is made invisible by textual and institutional practices (Smith 1987). Openness to other forms of knowledge and, particularly, displacements of the hegemony of standardized knowledge practices should also be part of anthropology's reinvigorated politics. Postmodernity relies on the same types of social science that are part of modernity's "endorsement of certain interests in the description of social life" (Strathern 1988:4).

Thirdly, and finally (the list is by no means exhaustive), we need to rethink the link between anthropology and ongoing situations outside of the academy,

particularly social policy and social change. One of the principal lessons of
Cultural Studies is that there has to be a substantial and mutual exchange
between the subjects that are written about and the critics who write about
them, precisely to counter the danger faced by those within the academy of
becoming "the space for the informers" (hooks 1990:9). Do we have to write
only, or even mostly, for academic audiences in the First World? Can we develop
different practices of publishing and communication of our research (Starn 1994;
Tedlock 1991)? Many have commented on how little that gets written in an-
thropology addresses the pressing social issues of the day.[7]

   This situation is all the more distressing if one considers that experts of all
kinds (e.g., development and social welfare experts, health personnel, plan-
ners, etc.) provide the currency with which the state and dominant classes
articulate people's "needs," turning them into objects of state administration.
If expert discourses mediate between popular needs and the state, critical
intellectuals potentially can mediate between the state and social movements'
demands so as to contribute to the politicization of needs (Fraser 1989; Sche-
per-Hughes 1992). This entails militating against the state's construction of
popular groups as "clients" and against the state's interpretation of needs as
"unproblematic" (since they are defined by expert knowledge). Fraser (1989)
has convincingly made the point that the political status of given "needs" is an
arena of struggle that is mediated by expert interpretations. Anthropologists
have been terribly reluctant to get closer to these processes from a politicized
perspective (the "applied" branch is rarely political), although some are begin-
ning to argue that this reluctance must fade, and quickly. Anthropological
studies of social movements are seen by some as a fruitful arena for pursuing
a novel mixing of theory and practice and for advancing further the episte-
mological and political questioning of the discipline discussed in this paper
(Escobar 1992; Starn 1992; Díaz-Barriga 1992).

   These are proper tasks for a project of Cultural Studies as political practice
(Hall 1992). These questions are pertinent not only for those working in the
Third World. At the other end of the spectrum, anthropology needs to pay
more attention to the significant transformation that is under way worldwide—
even if it is more clearly seen in the "First World"—in the wake of the spread
of "intelligent machines" and biotechnologies of various kinds. Nature, the body,
social relations, and life itself are being profoundly reworked by the new tech-
nologies as they spread throughout the social fabric and incorporate increasing
practices and domains, deepening, extending, and qualitatively transforming
the knowledge-based structuring of the lifeworld that began with modernity.

   In this regime of "biosociality," as Paul Rabinow (1992) has named it, nature
and culture are ceaselessly remade by the new technologies. Bodies and or-
ganisms are produced by increasingly complex processes that articulate the
organic, the technical, and the cultural (Haraway 1991). Situated in delocalized
information networks—as opposed to fixed geographical and physical coordi-
nates—individuals and communities now start to constitute themselves through
different technocultural processes. For instance, the organic unity of body and

self—taken for granted in modern anthropology, of course—is broken, as selves move in cyberspace and participate in virtual communities in ways that are relatively (and partially) independent of the "normal" modes of body-based interaction. The modern understanding of space, time, and the body is unsettled, and a transformed sense of agency comes into place (Stone 1991). Not everything that is old, however, fades away in silence. Order, Utopia, and the Savage are displaced onto unprecedented domains, as much contemporary science fiction helps us perceive. Even the human genome becomes a new frontier for knowledge-based technologies and valorization by capital.

Global ethnoscapes are increasingly technoscapes. The anthropology of cyberculture needs to be begun, including cyberculture's political economy (the relation between modes of information and modes of production, the redrawn entanglement between First and Third Worlds, the emerging patterns of capitalization of labor, nature, time, and space), its regime of truth and power, and the links it allows between bodies and selves (Escobar 1994b). More generally, what we need to understand is the production of subjects through articulations of the organic, the techno-economic, and the cultural that are specific to the new technologies. Anthropologists will need new concepts and tools for understanding these processes. How will we be connected to our subjects? What will happen to community, fieldwork, and ethnography? To race and gender? How will individuals conduct "experiments with truth" on-line or in the virtual/artificial realities with/in which they will increasingly fashion their selves? What sorts of "ethnographies of the particular" will be meaningful in a world where culture, almost everywhere one looks, seems to be in the process of being reinvented? What will "writing" and "interpretation" mean in societies in which digital information and operational—rather than logical—modes of knowledge become the rule (Lévy 1991)?

The questions are endless. *Recapturing Anthropology* has taken us through a set of inquiries that might equip us better to understand these processes, through which anthropology can provide contexts in which individuals and communities can develop imaginative practices of technoliteracy. And perhaps this time an anthropology will emerge that, unlike its modern predecessor, does not arrive too quickly at a moment of closure, perhaps because history will be more difficult to freeze in concepts such as the savage, order, and utopia. Anthropologists will need to visualize the sorts of politics that communities and individuals can generate in cyberculture and the life possibilities that engage with globalizing technologies, while changing the extremely skewed distribution of material and symbolic resources that exist at present. This, too, should be part of the "recapture" and "reentry" mood, part of working in the present in a world that is changing rapidly as we write.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the panel "The Politics of Anthropology" held at the ninety-first Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological

Association in San Francisco, December 2–6, 1992. I want to thank the panel organizers, Miguel Díaz-Barriga and Orin Starn, the panel discussants, José Limón, Mary Pratt, and Catherine Lutz, and other panel participants.

2. These ethnographies show the multiple and contradictory cultural resources to which people in the most remote parts of the Third World resort as they attempt to craft "modern" or "developed" identities (Pigg 1992; Dahl and Rabo 1992; García Canclini 1990). Ethnographies of the circulation of discourses and practices of development and modernity in Third-World communities are essential to the task of redefining development (Escobar 1994a).

3. As Clifford (1988) would add, the view of culture as "organic" also rationalized the principle of monologic authority as the anchoring point of realist ethnography.

4. A similar point has been made by the Italian sociologist Alberto Melucci (1989), who argues that individual cultural innovation in everyday life is at the heart of contemporary social movements.

5. In this regard Strathern (1985) emphasizes the role of feminism in "shifting discourse," that is, altering the power relations through which knowledge is produced, including the subject matter of conversation itself, so that the other is more fully listened to and allowed to speak.

6. "These sciences [of man], which have so delighted 'humanity' for over a century, have their technical matrix in the petty, malicious minutiae of the disciplines and their investigations" (Foucault 1979:226).

7. This was one of the most firmly stated points in the "Politics of Anthropology" panel at which this paper was first presented. The need to develop practices of research, teaching, and writing that make it possible to devote part of one's work to ongoing social issues—and having it recognized as legitimate work—is becoming an audible claim. Most of the papers and discussants in the panel referred to this question. See also Gordon 1991; Harrison 1991b.

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