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## **Traffic in Art and Anthropology: How Fieldwork in Theater Arts Might Inform the Reinvention of Fieldwork in Anthropology**

The practitioners of anthropology and of arts have encountered each other on a number of occasions over the history of the various modernisms of the twentieth century, and even before. But it is clear that the most recent encounter in which the scenes and doings of ethnographic fieldwork itself are in question, have a strong point of origin in the so-called Writing Culture critiques of the 1980s (Clifford and Marcus 1986). As part of a then much more widespread moment of interdisciplinary ferment, this very effective collaboration of scholars positioned by training at very different edges of the arts, humanities, and social sciences offered a revealing critical examination of the textual clock-work of the production of authoritative knowledge about others and cultures. In so doing it has encouraged up to the present, on the one side, a hope and an imaginary for continued sorts of highly focussed cross-over collaborations as a *modus operandi* of intellectual work, and on the other side, that such work might make the practice then in question, ethnography and the fieldwork that produces it, something quite different from its forms within the empiricist tradition out of which it is emerged, - a tradition committed to a documentary function and naturalist representation propelled by distanced and disciplined participation and observation in the life worlds of others as formal subjects. In this paper, I want to examine some of the present ironies, tensions, and possibilities to which this moment has given rise in the relation between anthropologists and artists in their mutual attraction to a certain disciplined experience of investigation that places intellectual pursuits directly into contact with ways of the world.

Anthropologists, to their credit, were open to this critique, and were relieved that apparently it was hermetically textual and did not touch the near religious fellowship of their practice of fieldwork itself - a folkloric formation of professional culture about which I will want to say more. But it did have profound effects on fieldwork - not so much on how it was done methodologically and experientially (it actually reinforced what I call the classic Malinowskian *mise-en-scene*, which has created problems in the present that I will also want to discuss) - but about how it was thought about and conceived as well as expanding the intellectual communities in which fieldwork became

an attractive object of interest and potential appropriation. To the considerable ambivalence of anthropologists, the practices that distinctively defined them, and made them a guild in the social sciences, became fashionable in art worlds and among humanists. Thus, the classic tropes of fieldwork were remythologized in a way consistent with the critical sensibilities and theories of the time and not just for anthropologists, but for other intellectual communities who saw it as useful to their projects and predicaments. In a sense, anthropology has been dealing with this combined revitalization and appropriation of its classic method ever since. Anthropologists have been both contemptuous and flattered by the mimicry. Beyond this, they have not yet assessed what this flow in the traffic between anthropology and the arts might mean beneficially for the as yet poorly articulated contemporary conditions of doing fieldwork that are finally reshaping the powerful Malinowskian imaginary of fieldwork which has stood in for method in anthropology.

The shared intellectual tool and doctrine that defined the Writing Culture collaboration and then proliferated as a signature style in theoretical discourse, interpretative writing, and artworks was the exercise of an acute and sometimes unrelenting critical reflexivity, intended at first to unmask and transgress a hegemonic regime of naturalistic modes of narration and representation, and then to encourage different kinds of relationships and normative communities of knowledge production in the act of research or art making itself. Critical reflexivity suited the revolutionary/reform impulses of left-liberal intellectual life in the decidedly conservative times of the 80s and 90s. In the post-Cold War World confusions of new world order hopes and nightmares, these longstanding impulses now lack any contemporary social compass altogether, and the exercise of critical reflexivity is less in the service of normative political visions than the means to discover what critique might be within new social arrangements whose cultural and political contours are not yet clear.

The use of this tool has fared quite differently in the domains where it has been selfconsciously deployed. In the productions of artworks and performances, it has been a powerful, open-ended means of introducing the purpose of social and cultural critique into various media. In the name of breaking with all forms of naturalist representation and performance (anti-naturalism being a longstanding battle-cry in modernist art criticism and production), it has broken boundaries, questioned effects, and extended art into realms where it had not gone. In anthropology, critical reflexivity was the means of making visible and then gesturing beyond the tropes of ethnographic writing, but rather than breaking with the *mise-en-scene* of fieldwork as the chronotope where all of this writing is imagined (perhaps in the world of the 1980s, there was not the impetus, indeed the necessity, to break with this chronotope, that there is now), it ended by reinforcing it and being entrapped by it. Critical reflexivity

led mostly to genres of autoethnography of varying emphasis and quality in which the Malinowskian scene of fieldwork was made and remade according to probing understandings of the conditions of producing anthropological knowledge across boundaries of cultural difference and translation, but it failed to generate new strategies, forms, and norms of practice to encounter the more complex, parallel and fragmented worlds which many fieldwork projects must now negotiate.

Finally, then, critical reflexivity in its anthropological form could not breach the historically embedded purpose in ethnography of documentation and realist or naturalist interpretation arising from it. Relations in fieldwork might be conceived differently, and the old empiricist naturalism of ethnographic representation might have been thoroughly undermined by the practice of reflexivity, but the genre form itself remains resolutely associated with a documentary function. In my opinion, this holding onto to realist purpose is not such a bad or damning thing, but is an inevitable if not even a desirable dimension of intellectual work, and especially in an ethnographic form. Long ago Raymond Williams, inspired by Brechtian theater, and the possibility of what he termed subjunctive critical strategies in performance, contested those who attack realism as a bourgeois form yet propose no particular alternative to it except a different kind of criticism (Williams 1981). Only momentarily flirting with avant-garde circles of expression and reception, anthropology's strength, appeal, and effectiveness depends on retaining realist expression in novel and critical forms. The tradition of fieldwork is up to this, but only in new configurations. Artists, to whom fieldwork in its critically reflexive mode has appealed, have seen this potential within its anthropological practice. Anthropologists themselves have not, or have not seen it as clearly, in my opinion. In this difference there remains, I believe, the direction for further stimulating discussions and collaborations between artists and anthropologists concerning the practice of fieldwork.

By the mid 90s, the working artist's appropriation of ethnographic methods, under the stimulus of the Writing Culture critiques, that was also couched in the appeal of identity politics that followed these critiques was subjected to a shrewd critical commentary in a very brief essay by Hal Foster, "Artist as Ethnographer?", included in a volume that Fred Myers and I edited (Marcus and Myers 1985). Foster claimed that the cultural or ethnic other had replaced the working class in whose name the artist struggles. What had been the site of ethnographic fieldwork becomes the site of artistic transformation, which is also the potential site of political transformation. The classic Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* of anthropology defines a place of marginality and alterity which for the identity politics following the Writing Culture critique became the primary site of the subversion of dominant culture. In this cultural politics

of marginality enacted by the work of art, Foster sees the danger of ideological patronage of which Walter Benjamin had warned.

Additionally, Foster foresaw that the coming struggles over culture would not be located in marginal spaces, or enclaves, but in a field of immanence defined by the processes of a globalizing multinational capitalism in which older geopolitical models of center and periphery (in terms of which ethnography as well was founded and developed) would no longer hold. "The artist as ethnographic fieldworker today may seek to work with sited communities," says Foster, "with the best motives of political engagement and institutional transgression, only in part to have this work recoded by its sponsors as social outreach, economic development, public relations or art." (Foster 1995:306)

This turn to the ethnographic also goes along with certain developments in advanced art in the Anglo-American metropolises. Foster notes the shift over the last 35 years from an investigation of the objective constituents of the art work, first to its spatial conditions of perception, then to the corporeal bases of this perception-shifts remarked in the minimalist work in the early 60s through conceptual art, performance art, body art and site specific work in the early 70s. As Foster states, "Along the way the institution of art could no longer be described simply in terms of physical space (studio, gallery, museum); it was also a discursive network of other practices and institutions, other subjectivities and communities. And what are the results for art? The ethnographic mapping of a given institution or a related community is a primary form that site-specific art now assumes. But new site-specific work threatens to become a museum category - a means to mundane virtuous critique. Here values like authenticity, originality, and singularity banished under critical taboo from postmodernist art return as properties of the site, neighborhood, or community engaged by the artist." (Foster 1995: 306) Such work serves the purposes of its art sponsor, Foster says, the show becomes the spectacle where cultural capital collects. And he ends with this scenario that he admits is a caricature (Foster 1995: 307).

"An artist is contacted by a curator about a site specific work. He or she is flown into town in order to engage the community targeted for collaboration by the institution. However, there is little time or money for much interaction with the community. Nevertheless a project is designed and an installation in the museum and/or a work in the community follows. Few of the principles of the ethnographic participant-observer are observed, let alone critiqued. And despite the best intentions of the artist, only limited engagement of the sited other is effected. Almost naturally the focus wanders from collaborative investigation to 'ethnographic self-fashioning' in which the artist is not decentered so much as the other is fashioned in artistic guise."

While I agree with much of what Foster argues, I want to take three exceptions to his critique.

1. In delivering his critique of artists as ethnographers Foster seems to assume the perspective and voice of what would be the traditional anthropologist and its hint of resentment these artists are just playing at the serious pursuit of ethnography, below standard, in the interests of accumulating their symbolic capital in the experimental ethos of artistic endeavor. Perhaps this is truer of site-specific installation art, but such a generic charge of bad faith or naivete is not warranted. One must allow for the fact that the fieldwork deployed in certain art projects is well thought out and adequate for its purposes in a sophisticated way. This suggests that once fieldwork/ethnography is proliferated as an ideal practice to wider communities, as occurred in the Writing Culture critiques, then its virtues cannot be solely owned by anthropology - or at least a charitable appropriation of it is the wise orientation to adopt. Further, in the case of some areas of art, as in theater and film which I want to address in a moment, it is important to acknowledge that there have long been investigative and preparatory practices that, while similar to anthropological fieldwork in its forms, have actually quite an independent genealogy and purpose of how they fit into a distinctive configuration of artistic practices. It is to these cases and arenas of artistic production, once they are identified, and understood and respected as parallel but separate from the fashionable (or even earnest) mimicry of anthropological practices that anthropologists can learn something cogent for the quite considerable instabilities in applying the traditional model of fieldwork to their current projects. There is a tangential topic here of considerable importance and interest about the dangers of the mutual envy or wannabeism that recent discussions between anthropology and art sometimes spawn - Foster examines this phenomenon and its mutual sources as part of his critiques as well. I have preferred to look at this issue in terms of specific instances of collaborative projects, both historical and recent, involving particular artists and anthropologists who have occupied the same, traditionally conceived Malinowskian scene of fieldwork. The problem has not been so much the distanced academic posture of mutual envy, but the creation of even stronger tendencies to exoticize the present third - the local native to whom their mutual fieldwork is oriented. These have often been successful intellectual collaborations but at the expense of the way natives become the subjects of such collaborations.

2. It is the standard of the traditional modality of anthropological fieldwork - what I have called the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* - to which Foster holds the artistic mimicry of fieldwork accountable, and indeed, it is this traditional modality that artists have found attractive to appropriate, as Foster has explained in detail. For artists, fieldwork out of anthropology is a stable practice

- however flawed by its deep association with the production of a distinct form of documentary naturalism. Still, it is a space, especially as reimagined through the Writing Culture critiques, in which interesting art could be made. But from what is happening inside contemporary anthropology (anthropology which is markedly different from even the 1990s in some of its newer topical interests), fieldwork as a signature practice is increasingly unstable, as I will argue.

Fieldwork itself - what its spatial boundaries and temporal limits are, what its forms are, what one wants from subjects now, how it is constructed, designed and thought about in training - rather than the ethnographic text and its form is currently the object of experimentation in anthropological pedagogy and practice, especially for student ethnographers in the making as they develop new topics in circumstances quite different from their teachers and forebears (Marcus 1998). While not deserving of the term crisis (as in the crisis of representation of the 1980s) there is certainly a widely felt but as yet poorly articulated sense - especially among students - that the ethos of fieldwork and the modes of inculcating it in professional culture do not meet the realities of enacting it in present circumstances of inquiry. In this sense, the emergent critique of fieldwork in anthropology is about where the critique of ethnographic texts was before its articulation in the Writing Culture initiative of the 80s. On the side of anthropology at least, the question is of what value can the example of art world appropriations of their central practice, albeit in its traditional form, be to their own predicament now of reimagining the traditional modality of fieldwork, perhaps even to incorporate aspects of the broader styles of investigation that constitute certain sorts of art works that have themselves incorporated fieldwork into their process? What resonance then can the art world's experimental appropriations of the traditional modalities of fieldwork in anthropology for its own complex purposes have for an anthropology that by necessity is moving on from the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* toward reinventions of it? I would like to think that there is much at this juncture of reinvention that anthropology can learn from certain artistic domains where what looks like fieldwork has been incorporated within more complex practices of investigation. An examination of these art practices has much to show anthropology as it faces up to the further diminution of its distinctive documentary function and becomes involved in projects for which the classmodality of fieldwork is unsatisfying. I believe that new techniques, or at least a new aesthetic of technique, even of a formal sort, are needed to amend the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene*, the sorts of techniques that are already indulged by certain arts that have shown an affinity and desire for aspects of the art of ethnography itself within their own processes. But which arts?

3. I would agree that the appropriation of ethnographic fieldwork by the trend

of site-specific, installation art, to which it seems well suited, is vulnerable in the way Foster caricatured in his critique. However, where I have found similar appropriations or practices parallel to ethnographic fieldwork, behind the scenes, so to speak, is in theater and film that are not so vulnerable to the sort of critique Foster made of site specific art with ethnographic pretensions. While the conduct of what looks like ethnographic fieldwork in the preparatory phases to film or theater production might be just as short term (and apparently superficial from the angle of anthropological self-esteem and sensibility in the classic mode) it is not as easily assimilated as the cultural capital of more powerful and sponsoring cultural institutions. Rather what is ethnographic investigation in the complex collective actions which result in a theatrical or filmic production is deeply embedded within these processes, so much so that what looks like a moment or phase of anthropological fieldwork in such efforts should perhaps be rethought, expanded, or extended in terms of the powerful concept of fieldwork that regulates the professional culture of anthropology. Working through what look like fieldwork in the crafts of theater and film, by applying meta ethnographic perspective itself to them, would offer anthropology both a fresh channel to continue discussions and collaborations with art beyond the stakes of this traffic in the 90s, and also provide itself with an appropriate model of alternative practice in order to address the current challenges to the traditional modality of fieldwork. The point is not to turn anthropological fieldwork into a form of theater - more than it already is - but to use experience and techniques of the latter to reinvent the boundaries and functions of fieldwork in anthropology.

My own personal experience and sense of this value of theater practice for a realist ethnography in question began with Raymond Williams comments in a 1981 book of interviews with him on the potential of the techniques of Brechtian theater for rescuing the realist tradition of leftist social science and historical writing. He outlined what for me would be a project of critical ethnography based on probing scenarios of possibilities in sites of fieldwork - the replacement of an indicative by a subjunctive function for ethnographic fieldwork but still within the realist tradition. What impressed me was how the techniques of one major strain of modernist theater might be deployed for this purpose in a practice like ethnography. In subsequent years, through the Writing Culture critique and after, I sustained an interest in and an eye for the paraethnographic dimensions of the investigations, workshops, and processes of designing the look of film and theater productions as well as the research that went into performance styles. For instance, I was particularly interested in the construction of Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers*, and the pre-production work of the American independent filmmaker John Sayles for a number of his films, but especially *Matewan*. At the same time, for the theater, I began to pay attention to the history of collaborations between theater

artists and anthropologists, the latter most often in the role of dramaturgs. There were the well known instances of Colin Turnbull and the dramatization of his *Ik* book, and the collaborations of Victor Turner with Richard Schechner toward the end of the former's life and career. More recently, I gained rich material on how theatrical productions incorporate ethnographic investigations by following Dorine Kondo's entrance into the world of Asian-American theater and especially her work in the 90s as a one of a group of dramaturgs for the creation and production of Anna Deveare Smith's play, *Twilight*: Los Angeles, 1992 (for which Kondo produced a dialogic account included in one of the volumes of my Late Editions series of annuals documenting the 1990s as *fin-de-siecle*, Marcus 1993). Smith's theatrical work is produced through the most ethnographically engaged research that I know in contemporary theater, making the dramaturgical process in which Kondo participated a unique access to commentary and debate on fieldwork in this venue built into the process of theatrical production itself.

Finally, in the later 90s, I became involved in co-sponsoring in Houston a series of installations by a group of Cuban and Venezuelan artists. One of these, the *Market From Here*, was based on the themes of the Writing Culture critique, the nature of fieldwork and the anthropologist's reflexivity. It was created by the Cuban artist and critic, Abdel Hernandez, and a leading scenographer of the Venezuelan theater, Fernando Calzadilla. The installation was created from months of collaborative fieldwork in the Catia urban market of Caracas, and was recreated in Houston. I admired Calzadilla's part in this project, especially the translation of his fieldwork into the design of the installation. Subsequently, I have maintained active exchanges with Calzadilla, and my interest in his work has shifted to his work as a designer of theatrical productions in Venezuela and elsewhere, for which he has established a considerable reputation. Calzadilla's deep theoretical and practical knowledge of all elements of producing theater, only enhanced the level of our discussions about scenography. In connection with my thinking about the predicaments of the traditional fieldwork modality in anthropology and the need to reinvent it for a range of the research projects that especially younger anthropologists are now taking on, I found aspects of my discussion with Calzadilla over the last three years very relevant to thinking about these problems of fieldwork in anthropology, and his account of how fieldwork fits into his craft and the larger picture of producing theater personally satisfying in a way that many recent accounts of fieldwork in anthropology have not been. I am still not completely clear about what it is in Calzadilla's practice as stage designer that fulfills a sense of need in the reimagining of fieldwork in anthropology, but I want to devote the remainder of this paper to speculating a bit about this. After a discussion of what it is about the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* that requires a reinvention of its norms and forms, I want to return to my exchanges with

Calzadilla to focus briefly on one particular example that we discussed of preparing the stage for a production of a Garcia Lorca play in Caracas in 1994.

Now I want to shift and give a sense of what in recent years has made the traditional regulative ideals of fieldwork unstable in the work of anthropology, and a object for reinvention or reimagination. Part of it has to do with the failure of the reigning folkloric formation by which fieldwork has long been regulated, thought about, and idealized to articulate certain dimensions that were always there in the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene*, but are more important than ever now, and the inadequacy of this formation finally to guide, especially student ethnographers-in-the-making, in the kinds of research that they are increasingly undertaking - it is not clear based on old governing tropes what fieldwork is to be experientially in these projects and what kinds of data it is supposed to generate. And part of the destabilization has to do with the conditions that are reshaping research projects and demanding both more and different emphases from the old ethos in its vision and imaginings of what fieldwork is. This is hardly yet worthy of the term crisis as in the 80s crisis of representation but like the diffusely articulated reflexively critical tendencies growing before the critique of writing in the 80s there is now a comparable situation with fieldwork - the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* is by no means an empty term or guide but it only roughly covers the forms and norms it actually takes when applied now. In my recent work I have been making a diverse range of arguments about this changing nature of fieldwork, especially for students in new topical arenas, grouped around the notion of what the multi-sited terrain of contemporary projects does to the focussed Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* and around the concept of complicity as redefining the core relationship of collaboration in fieldwork on which authoritative ethnographic claims to knowledge have always depended.

First as to the state of the folkloric mode by which fieldwork has been constituted in the professional culture of anthropology and the key role it has played in initiating students into career defining fieldwork projects .... I have not carelessly used the term *mise-en-scene* several times in referring to the imaginary that mediates and regulates the expression of method in anthropology. Fieldwork has been a vividly theatrical or filmic object of thought in anthropology with a distinctive visual style from its very inception and ideological consolidation by Malinowski as the key symbol, initiatory rite, and method of anthropology (to wit-early in the essay in the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in which fieldwork is evoked and its practices inculcated, Malinowski intones: "Imagine yourself, suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight." Malinowski, 192 :32) Anthropologists have always thought about each other's fieldwork and in

teaching it to initiates not just in terms of stories, tales of the field, but even in more analytic moments strongly in terms of images and scenarios. Such a dramaturgical regime of method is at its most effective when the experience of fieldwork actually corresponds roughly at least to the imaginary that anthropologists make out of what they report to each other from distant experiences that are theirs alone. There is a great premium placed on ethnography that is able to set scenes that can be entered through concretely visualized and situated thought experiments. I would just remark here that there is a particular affinity or appropriateness for thinking through the craft of scenography as a form of ethnography.

Another distinctive, if not peculiar aspect, of the professional lore about fieldwork in anthropology is that it is highly specific and richly evoked for the early phases of fieldwork experience with the image (as per Malinowski) of "first contact" and heightened otherness in mind. The initiate's experience of fieldwork is how the imaginary is slanted, even when it expresses the experience of seasoned fieldworkers. But what of the continuing research of an anthropologist who has been working in a particular site for a decade, or even decades? Is there any model of method in anthropology for what fieldwork is like for the virtuoso? Is it even recognizable as fieldwork according to the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene*? My point is that the later work of mature ethnographers usually operates free of the tropes of earlier work. And I would argue that somehow initiatory fieldwork in certain arenas in which many younger anthropologists are working today requires something of the more diffuse and open idea of what fieldwork can be that seems to be characteristic of virtuoso fieldwork, if only it were articulated in the traditional imaginary under which ethnographers-in-the-making train. So this is a problem of pedagogy. Students enter anthropology inspired by complex social and cultural theories as well as the examples of mature second and third works of senior anthropologists that they admire and want to emulate, and then are faced with a still powerful culture of method that insists that they do something less ambitious. My foreshadowing point here is to suggest that there are aspects of the craft of scenography, especially scenography which incorporates fieldwork of the Malinowskian sort, that are useful to think through in considering an alternative imaginary for fieldwork that might take account of the *aporia* of what fieldwork is in mature work, obscured by the strong bias of first contact in the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene*. Norms of fieldwork are in need of release from the emphatic and vivid being there-ness of the classic imaginary of fieldwork.

Now, turning to the actual challenges to the traditional fieldwork imaginary, what in the world (today) has led to fieldwork's entanglements in multiple and heterogeneous sites of investigation and in complicitous forms of collaboration that have changed markedly what anthropologists want from "natives"

as subjects and have deeply compromised claims to authoritative knowledge even of the revised sorts reinstated by the reflexive critiques of the 80s? The conventional understanding of these developments has lain in certain presumptions about the nature of postmodernity that circulated widely in the arenas of interdisciplinary ferment of the last two decades, namely that as cultures and settled populations have fragmented, have become mobile and transnational as well as more cosmopolitan, so fieldwork has had literally to follow, when it could, these processes in space. And furthermore, the weight of political and ethical critique of the traditional fieldwork relationship that generated ethnographic data as revealed by the scrupulous reflexive probing of the postmodern gaze broke the modicum of innocence and naivete necessary to sustain the distance in the ethnographer's relationship to subjects - so that complicity with subjects - a state of ambiguity and improper seeming alliance - now pervades the *mise-en-scene* of fieldwork, signaling a loss of innocence and naivete in the wake of postmodern exposures. Herein both the intensity of focus and the integrity of relationship that has shaped the Malinowskian scene have been challenged.

While I am sympathetic to this conventional understanding of the challenges to the traditional composure of fieldwork they do not arise simply from the complexities of a postmodern or now globalizing world. After all, many anthropologists can easily continue doing the same old thing and many do, and in many situations, it is even valuable to do so. But my take on what generates multi-sitedness and complicit relations in fieldwork projects today has more to do with the self-esteem of anthropology in the diminution of its distinctive documentary function amid many more competing and overlapping forms of representation comparable to its own. In effect, every project of ethnography enters sites of fieldwork through zones of collateral, counterpart knowledges which it cannot ignore in finding its way to the preferred scenes of ordinary, everyday life with which it is traditionally comfortable. This condition alone makes fieldwork both multi-sited in nature, and heterogeneously so, as well as complicit with certain subjects. The fundamental problem here is confronting the politics of knowledges that any project of fieldwork involves and the ethnographer's trying to gain position in relation to this politics by making this terrain itself part of the design of fieldwork investigation.

Thus, since the 1980s, any critical anthropology worthy of the name not only tries to speak truth to power-power as conceptualized and theorized, truth as subaltern and understood within the closely observed everyday lives of ordinary subjects -but also tries to understand power and its agencies in the same ethnographically committed terms and in the same boundaries of fieldwork in which the subaltern is included. Ethnography understanding itself, in Bourdieu's terms, as a dominated segment within the dominant, suggests an alter-

native modality relevant to the circumstances of contemporary fieldwork in which incorporating a second order perspective on often overlapping, kindred official, expert, and academic discourses as counterpart to the ethnographer's own is an essential and complicating reinvention of the traditional *mise-en-scene*. It is what accounts most cogently for making much of contemporary fieldwork multi-sited and political. It also makes it both slightly alienated and slightly paranoid in ways that are both inevitable and productive.

The keenly reflexive critical anthropology after the 80s is well suited to this incorporation of cultures of the rational as a strategic part of its sites of fieldwork. Indeed, if there is one great success of the 80s critiques it was to create an anthropology of present knowledges and their distributions in a way that was thoroughly new and original. In a sense, all anthropology since has been most effectively an intimate critique of diffused Western knowledge practices in the name of specific communities of subjects misrepresented, excluded from, seduced, or victimized by such practices. The emerging innovation of fieldwork at present is to treat such power/knowledges as equal subjects of fieldwork in their complex and obscured connections to the scenes of everyday life as the cultivated and favored milieu of classic ethnography. But to be effective, such fieldwork has to do something more with this complex field of engagements than just distanced, however reflexive, description and interpretation. At the moment a pervasive sometimes cloying discourse and rhetoric of moral redemption holds this vacant place of an alternative, fully imagined and worked out alternative function for ethnography. Eventually this rhetorical place holder might be replaced by more active techniques that are styled in the range between ideas of experimentation and ideas of activism. Here is where I consider concepts and crafts of staging, design, and performance from the worlds of film and theater might be stimulating.

Anthropology in the midst of this transition in its sense of what fieldwork should do and is capable of is thus much in need of exemplars of practices which move and produce knowledge forms in such reconfigured spaces of investigation. It is this which certain artistic practices such as scenography that have found an affinity with the classic fieldwork modality, can offer back to anthropology at this juncture, and in so doing further develop as well the traffic in art and anthropology keyed to a mutual interest in fieldwork.

So contemporary critical ethnography orients itself through the imaginaries of expert others and works through found zones of powerful official or expert knowledge making practices in order to find more traditional subjects for itself. But what does it want of the complicit collaborations it makes with counterpart subjects in these domains, and what does it make of the scene of ethnography? This is distinctly not about an ethnography of elite cultures, but

rather an access to a construction of an imaginary for fieldwork that can only be shaped by complicitous alliance with makers of visionary knowledge who are already in the scene or within the bounds of the field. The imaginaries of knowledge makers who have preceded the ethnographer are what the dreams of contemporary fieldwork are made of. But what are the practices/aesthetics of technique that go along with such complicitous, multi-sited fieldwork investigations? For this we return in conclusion to the humble, exquisitely subtle craft of the scenographer.

Here is an example culled from my exchanges with Fernando Calzadilla: his account of how he prepared the set design for a 1994 production in Caracas of Garcia Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. As Calzadilla states: "The basic principles of the production were about discovery, unveiling, avoiding artificiality to show the narratives that compose our collective imaginary; to transform quotidian events into exciting acts; to support the player for everything starts with her, and to avoid a naturalistic proposition that would function simply as decor. There was no adaptation from the original text: it was Garcia Lorca to the last comma ... From day one, those of us directly involved in the production intuitively knew that the play should be located in a Venezuelan town."

Consequently Calzadilla and his wife spent three months in two communities with a 400 year old tradition of closed, rural, conservative life. ("These towns share an uncommon characteristic in Venezuela: they have remained lost in time, oblivious to the modernizing frenzy that brought the oil economy in the 1930s", says Calzadilla) His account of his time in these towns reads very much like the initial experience of fieldwork in the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene*. Given the time pressures in theatrical production this was an unusually long time to do this sort of preparatory fieldwork which as such is not that uncommon an activity in Venezuelan dramaturgy. ("Three months sounds like a particularly long time if you compare it with the traditional six week rehearsal/production period that most professional theater companies allow, says Calzadilla) In this, Calzadilla potentially corresponds to Hal Foster's critique of the brevity and superficiality of the practice of fieldwork with which he charges site-specific artists. But in Calzadilla's case the fieldwork, of this emblematically traditional sort, can only be assessed by its transformations in design craft of staging the Lorca play. From day one the fieldwork had its rationale in the complex performance text of Lorca's play and the role of scenography within it. The submergence of a bounded traditional fieldwork experience within a larger multi-sited design is instructive - the idea of design could shift the norms and forms of fieldwork in line with where it is moving circumstantially - in mature work or any multi-sited work, it only moves forward as critique by staging.

Simply and materially Calzadilla's fieldwork produced objects and artifacts with which to design the staging and look of the production. But more subtly it is a certain sensibility derived from fieldwork - and not the ability to represent others - that travels or moves to another location of intellectual work - in the case of scenography, creating a uniquely local space-time for the performance text of the Lorca play in Caracas. This is fieldwork, as I intimated earlier, adequate for the scenographer's purposes, perhaps not for the very traditional anthropological ones, but nonetheless that involves a distinctive sense of ethics, function, and purpose. What is recognizable as anthropological fieldwork here is organically embedded in a broader process of design.

Calzadilla goes on to describe his key creative effect in the staging of this play: "I was in a delicate situation, walking on a tight rope between reality and illusion, and I had to provide the hic and nunc of the performance. I needed to create a space where these elements would become significant and not a sample case of our good job as fieldworkers. I took the risk, supported by the rest of the team, of laying bare the house's structure; removing all the walls for a play whose central theme is confinement and oppression. What we did with this move was to create a fiction within the reality of the performance so that our fieldwork experience did not translate directly but was mediated by an unreal space that focused attention on the drama by contrast, and not on the objects. Had we presented the objects in a naturalistic environment, they would have turned into curiosity cabinet items, adornment. The overwhelming presence of the real object in a naturalistic space would have highlighted the fictional aspect of the embodied characters rather than support the actresses in their performance - an objectification of the person, specifically critical in a case of an all female cast. What we needed was to highlight the reality of the event, the reality of the performers, and the drama they were going to enact. Translating fieldwork experience onto the stage to create a space where the actors could perform the myth (in this case, Lorca's text), meant giving them enough material to stand and relate to the characteristics, physical and otherwise, of the particular space."

What Calzadilla makes clear is that fieldwork's most substantive contribution to the production is not in what the audience can literally see, but in constituting what he calls the internal narratives of the production, which are opaque to the audience, and which originate within the "raw materials" provided by the fieldwork. Calzadilla says, "They might seem totally inconsequential to the performance but I know from talking with the actresses and from the audience response that they were not. The play was awarded best lighting and set design and several actresses won acting prizes for their work in *Bernarda*. I remember how an actress identified her character so strongly with the space I provided her that she continued adding stuff in making the space hers. Calza-

dilla goes on to give exquisite details of how the staging created a working and visceral imaginary for the production - for example, he describes what the effects on the emotive quality of movement were by his decision to build a real title floor on the set - something that the audience could not even see, but which shaped a milieu by the feeling of barefeet on tile.

Of course anthropological ethnography is not scenography, although sometimes I wish it were more so, but given the sorts of predicaments which the fieldwork paradigm currently faces in anthropology, I think the craft of scenography as practiced by Calzadilla, among others, can provide inspirations, rather than merely nice analogies, for its reinvention. I can just reference some of these briefly.

1. Calzadilla desessentializes the tropes of classic fieldwork while practicing and incorporating them in a broader process of investigation and intellectual work. This is what inevitably happens in contemporary multi-sited fieldwork - the exceeding of the bounds of the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* - without the result being conceived or named. The movement between contexts of work and the changing functions of investigation in Calzadilla is something that is regularly experienced in contemporary fieldwork projects. Fieldwork in anthropology needs for its imaginary a different chronotope of practice, for much many aspects of scenography is a good model to think with.
2. Since new fieldwork projects exceed single sites and solely documentary purposes, a concept of design as it is used in crafts like scenography (and there are many such artistic modes of practice which employ the idea of design) might offer an idea of process that could be used in anthropology to affect the crucial situation of pedagogy in the training of students for their first ethnographic projects. Anthropologists like their folkloric means of inculcating fieldwork in professional culture but the evocation of design might give them more and different things to talk about. The concept and example of design would do the conceptually applied work of incorporating the Malinowskian *mise-en-scene* into a regime of alternative sets of expectations from fieldwork through writing for the ethnographic process in anthropology.
3. Calzadilla's process places an emphasis on the idea and reality of collaborations - of various sorts and requirements - indeed the work process of scenographer is a skein of progressive collaborations from the inception of any project. The idea of collaboration at the core of the production of ethnographic knowledge was critically highlighted by the 1980s critiques, but as an emphasis it settled subsequently into a particular genre style of writing ethnography. In the multi-sited space, collaborations and complicities define the politics of knowledge that also shape the design of inquiry. What Calzadilla knows from



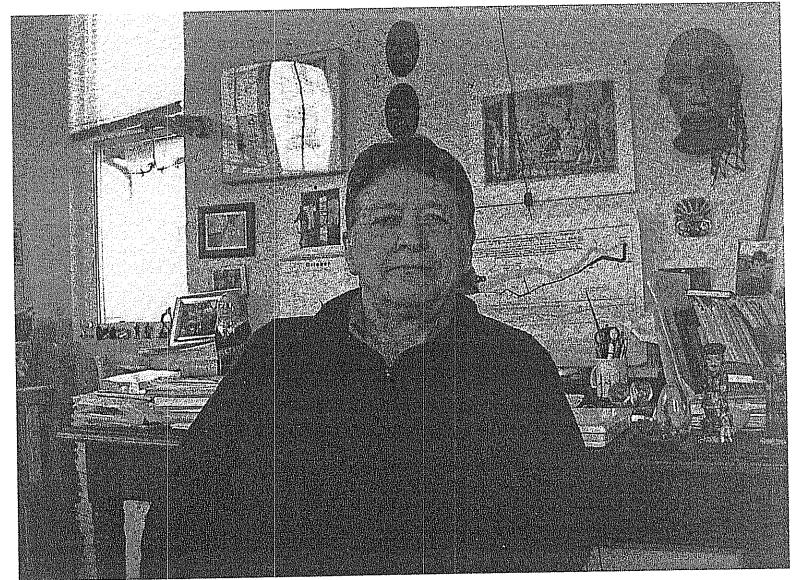
George Marcus

fieldwork, as only the initiating collaboration, moves through a complex series of them which are never other than prominent in the account of his work and its results. Contemporary ethnography seems to operate in a very similar way, but not yet in the norms or forms that it narrates to itself professionally. This of course creates new problems for asserting the expertise of authority, the ethic of making relationships in a complex field of collaborations, but the regime of collaborations as usual is something that anthropology should aspire to at the level at which it is practiced in artistic circles that produce theater and film.

In bringing this paper to a close, it seems to me that the discussions between anthropologists and artists of their mutual interest in fieldwork can proceed further at this juncture by working through, on the one hand, the destabilization of the traditional modality of fieldwork in anthropology, which is occurring inexorably, and on the other hand, the manifest practices of fieldwork in the various configurations of a multitude of specific art practices. In particular, what seems right to me now, at least for anthropology in its current predicaments with methods, is trying to learn something from the humbler but more subtle crafts, like scenography engaged with here, behind and within the scenes of the performance events of theater and film.

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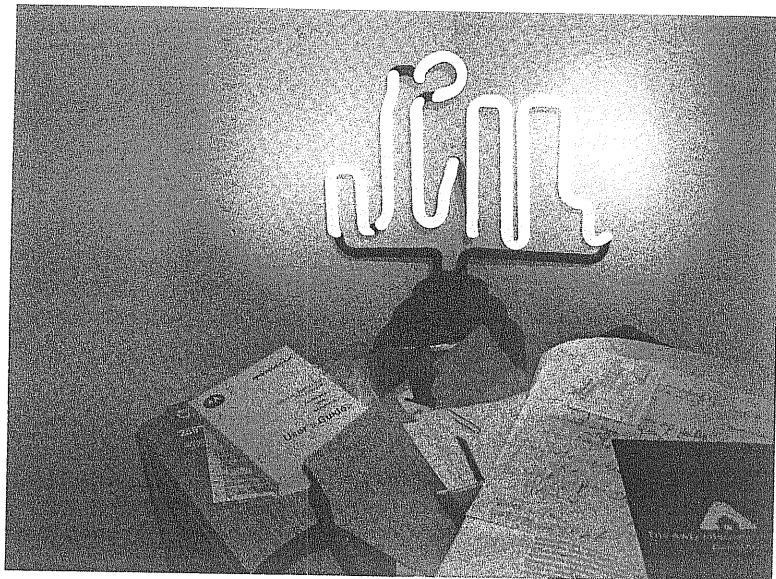
#### Me on Myself: George E. Marcus

In my home workplace, I have always surrounded myself with 'little things' filled with autobiographical significance — moments of a life of Maussian 'gift' exchanges, a veritable memory palace of welcome distraction, as I take my eyes from the word processor or look up from the book or document.

The case of what remains of a childhood collection of Britain's Limited lead soldiers, and the shelf on top, of figures that I have added from travels over the years.

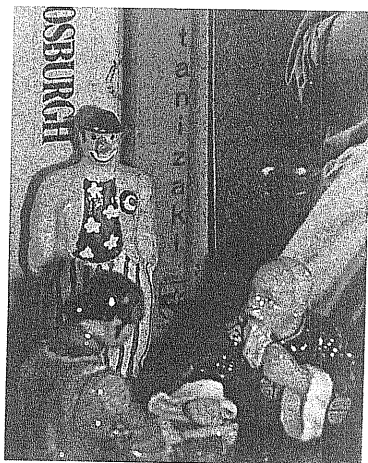
Photographs of my children, and my parents, an image of TS Eliot from a TLS where he is drawing a diagram of one of his plays in his office at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study in 1948. A Gorbachev Russian doll, kukri, kris, Semai blowpipe and dart quiver on the wall, a diner neon clock, African and Colombian masks, a Navajo tourist drum from Santa Fe, pandanus fans from Tonga, quill pens, inks from Venice, presents from students (stiletto from Spain, wood bowl from Costa Rica, straw basket from Senegal, castanets from Colombia, meerscham pipe from Istanbul, etc., etc.), telegrapher key from ham radio days, dead uncle's whiskey flask, grandfather's gold pocket watch, tiles from Fronteira palace, Lisboa, custom made perfume from Berlin in gift wrapping, -etc., etc.

Enough! You get the idea.



### Amidst Bibelots and Tchotchkes

This collection and how it has held me in place, so to speak, has been a source of great womb-like pleasure and security, but also a bit troubling that I was so attached to things.



A few years ago I moved to southern California after 30 years in Houston. To make a break with those years, I wanted to feel that I could just go — to leave everything behind — to make a new beginning. How exciting. But alas in my new workplace deep in the suburbs of still spreading tract home uniformity on a magnificent coastal landscape, I find myself sitting amid my things — the bourgeois amid his bibelots — once again. And I'm happy in my work. It's me, for sure and finally.

Scenography as ethnography indeed!

*Martin Schmidl*

## Realism Lineup – Artistic Research, Caricature, Ethnographic Turn, Political Art, Spurensuche

### Research Methods by Artists in the Context of Realism

One format, often picked by artists, or authors, asked to contextualise artwork in catalogues, is an awkward way of derivation by using famous prototypes: Goya, Duchamp and me. The following mix of visual work is both a tribute to those often pretentious attempts and also a subjectivist arrangement of references. However this personal test is touching the issue of the following text, where I want to analyse the concept of research artwork in the context of Realism. I use the term Realism though Jean Clair, in the preface of the Centre Georges Pompidou exhibition catalogue "Realism", emphasised its imprecision: "The term does not mean anything, as you know." (Hulten, Metken, 1980/81, 13). Though hard to define, I was always interested in artwork linked with the wider idea of a Realism addressed in the subtitle of the same exhibition: "Entre Révolution et Réaction". In this respect the French enlightenment should be considered a cornerstone of the understanding of Realism I will address. More precisely, I would roughly divide the arts since this period in work broaching the issue of freedom either a concept of embodiment or a concept of work. So to say, either the artist and his work itself are representing the idea of freedom or the artist considers the idea of freedom as his basic working ground. All of the artwork showed and discussed below, act on the assumption of freedom as a concept of work. Consequentially the text is trying to deduce a progression in the fine arts, leading to working modes resembling scientific methods of research, recently subsumed under the term "ethnographic turn". In the catalogue of the exhibition "Urban Collisions" at NGBK (Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst) in Berlin, Mirijam Wenzel referring to recent video artwork wrote, that "the rising appreciation in the cultural sciences for the political and social relevance of individual statements, caused a still formative 'ethnographic turn', producing an upvaluation of the documentary." (Wenzel, in Becker, Berlin, 2003). This development is often discussed in regard to documentary-based artwork shown at the documenta of 1997 and 2002. In a 2006 critique of that field, Helmut Draxler was diagnosing: "Artists do not work scientifically. (...) If artists are doing a bit of research about, this mainly results in (...) massive misapprehensions, at the most this gets close to science (for ex. Frasers, Siekmanns and others work)", and furthermore he said, "In this process the information exhibitions of the nineties have gone to pot. A