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Source: *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 95, No. 3 (Sep., 1993), pp. 671-686

Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/679656>

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## How Native Is a “Native” Anthropologist?

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HOW “NATIVE” IS A NATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIST? How “foreign” is an anthropologist from abroad? The paradigm polarizing “regular” and “native” anthropologists is, after all, part of received disciplinary wisdom. Those who are anthropologists in the usual sense of the word are thought to study Others whose alien cultural worlds they must painstakingly come to know. Those who diverge as “native,” “indigenous,” or “insider” anthropologists are believed to write about their own cultures from a position of intimate affinity. Certainly, there have been scattered voices critiquing this dichotomy. Arguing that because a culture is not homogenous, a society is differentiated, and a professional identity that involves problematizing lived reality inevitably creates a distance, scholars such as Aguilar (1981) and Messerschmidt (1981a:9) conclude that the extent to which anyone is an authentic insider is questionable. Yet such critiques have not yet been adequately integrated into the way “native” anthropologists are popularly viewed in the profession.

In this essay, I argue against the fixity of a distinction between “native” and “non-native” anthropologists. Instead of the paradigm emphasizing a dichotomy between outsider/insider or observer/observed, I propose that at this historical moment we might more profitably view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations. The loci along which we are aligned with or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux. Factors

such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts may at different times outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider status. Instead, what we must focus our attention on is the quality of relations with the people we seek to represent in our texts: are they viewed as mere fodder for professionally self-serving statements about a generalized Other, or are they accepted as subjects with voices, views, and dilemmas—people to whom we are bonded through ties of reciprocity and who may even be critical of our professional enterprise?

I write as someone who bears the label of “native” anthropologist and yet squirms uncomfortably under this essentializing tag. To highlight the personal and intellectual dilemmas invoked by the assumption that a “native” anthropologist can represent an unproblematic and authentic insider’s perspective, I incorporate personal narrative into a wider discussion of anthropological scholarship. Tacking between situated narrative and more sweeping analysis, I argue for the *enactment of hybridity* in our texts; that is, writing that depicts authors as minimally bicultural in terms of belonging simultaneously to the world of engaged scholarship and the world of everyday life.

### The Problem in Historical Perspective

The paradigm that polarizes “native” anthropologists and “real” anthropologists stems from the colonial setting in which the discipline of anthropology was forged: the days in which natives were genuine natives (whether they liked it or not) and the observer’s objectivity in the scientific study of Other societies posed no problem. To achieve access to *the native’s* point of view (note the singular form), an anthropologist used the method of participant-observation among a variety of representative natives, often singling out one as a “chief informant” (Casagrande 1960). A chief informant might also be trained in anthropological modes of data collection so that the society could be revealed “from within.” As Franz Boas argued, materials reported and inscribed by a trained native would have “the immeasurable advantage of trustworthiness, authentically revealing precisely the elusive thoughts and sentiments of the native” (Lowie 1937:133 cited in Jones 1970:252). Or better yet, a smart and adequately Westernized native might go so far as to receive the education of a bona fide anthropologist and reveal a particular society to the profession with an insider’s eye. Ordinary people commenting on their society, chief informants friendly with a foreign anthropologist, or insiders trained to collect indigenous texts were all in some sense natives contributing to the enterprise of anthropology. Yet, it was only those who received the full professional initiation into a disciplinary fellowship of discourse who became the bearers of the title “native” anthropologist.

Even if such a “native” anthropologist went on to make pathbreaking professional contributions, his or her origins remained a perpetual qualifier. For example, writing the foreword to M. N. Srinivas’s classic monograph on the Coorgs, Radcliffe-Brown emphasized that the writer was “a trained anthropologist, himself an Indian” and went on to add that he had “therefore an understanding of Indian ways of thought which it is difficult for a European to attain over many years” (Srinivas 1952:v). As Delmos Jones has charged, it is likely that “natives” who could get “the inside scoop” were first admitted into the charmed circle of professional discourse because they were potential tools of data collection for white anthropologists (Jones 1970:252). Admittedly, in an era prior to extensive decolonization and civil rights movements, that “natives” were allowed to participate at all in professional discourse was remarkable. In this context, calling attention to, rather than smoothing over, “native” identity perhaps helped to revise the ingrained power imbalances in who was authorized to represent whom.

Viewed from the vantage point of the 1990s, however, it is not clear that the term *native anthropologist* serves us well. Amid the contemporary global flows of trade, politics, migrations, ecology, and the mass media, the accepted nexus of authentic culture/demarcated field/exotic locale has unraveled (Appadurai 1990, 1991; Clifford 1992; Gupta

and Ferguson 1992). Although many of the terms of anthropological discourse remain largely set by the West, anthropology is currently practiced by members (or partial members) of previously colonized societies that now constitute the so-called Third World (Altorki and El-Solh 1988; Fahim 1982; Kumar 1992; Nakhleh 1979; Srinivas, Shah, and Ramaswamy 1979). These scholars often have institutional bases in the Third World, but some have also migrated to Europe and the United States. Furthermore, in the First World, minority anthropologists also hold university positions and their contributions to ongoing discourse have helped to realign, if not overthrow, some of the discipline's ethnocentric assumptions (Gwaltney 1981; Jones 1970; Limon 1991). Feminist scholarship questioning the formulation of "woman as Other" has underscored the differences between women, and the multiple planes along which identity is constructed, thus destabilizing the category of "Other" as well as "Self" (Abu-Lughod 1990; Alarcon 1990; Lauretis 1986; Mani 1990; Mohanty and Russo 1991; Strathern 1987). It has also become acceptable to turn the anthropological gaze inward, toward communities in Western nations (Ginsburg 1989; Ginsburg and Tsing 1990; Martin 1987; Messerschmidt 1981b, Ortner 1991). The "field" is increasingly a flexible concept: it can move with the travels of Hindu pilgrims (Gold 1988), span Greek villagers and New Age American healers (Danforth 1989), or even be found in automobile garages of South Philadelphia (Rose 1987). In this changed setting, a rethinking of "insider" and "outsider" anthropologists as stable categories seems long overdue.

### Multiplex Identity

"If Margaret Mead can live in Samoa," my mother is reputed to have said when she moved to India, "I can live in a joint family." The daughter of a German father and American mother, she had just married my Indian father. Yet these terms—*German*, *American*, *Indian*—are broad labels deriving from modern nation-states. Should I instead say that my mother, the daughter of a Bavarian father and a WASP mother who lived in Taos, New Mexico, became involved with her fellow student at the University of Colorado: my Indian-from-India father? Yet, for anyone familiar with India shouldn't I add that my father's father was from the Kutch desert region, his mother from the dense Kathiawari forests, and that while he might loosely be called "Gujarati" his background was further complicated by growing up in the state of Maharashtra? Should I mention that Mayflower blood supposedly mingles with that of Irish potato famine immigrants on my maternal grandmother's side (I'm told I could qualify as a "D.A.R."), or that as temple builders, members of my paternal grandfather's caste vehemently claimed a contested status as Brahman rather than lower-ranking carpenter? Should I add that my father was the only Hindu boy in a Parsi school that would give him a strictly British education, inscribing the caste profession-based title "Mistri" (carpenter) onto the books as the surname "Contractor?" Or would it better locate my father to say that he remembers the days when signs outside colonial clubs read "No Dogs or Indians?" Also, is it useful to point out that my mother—American by passport—has now lived in India for over 40 years (more than two-thirds of her life) and is instructed by her bossy children on how to comport herself when she visits the United States?

I invoke these threads of a culturally tangled identity to demonstrate that a person may have many strands of identification available, strands that may be tugged into the open or stuffed out of sight. A mixed background such as mine perhaps marks one as inauthentic for the label "native" or "indigenous" anthropologist; perhaps those who are not clearly "native" or "non-native" should be termed "halfies" instead (cf. Abu-Lughod 1991). Yet, two halves cannot adequately account for the complexity of an identity in which multiple countries, regions, religions, and classes may come together. While my siblings and I have spent much of our lives quipping that we are "haylf" (pronounced with an American twang) and "hahlf" (with a British-educated accent), I increasingly wonder whether any person of mixed ancestry can be so neatly split down the middle,

excluding all the other vectors that have shaped them. Then too, mixed ancestry is itself a cultural fact: the gender of the particular parents, the power dynamic between the groups that have mixed, and the prejudices of the time all contribute to the mark that mixed blood leaves on a person's identity (cf. Spickard 1989).

Growing up in Bombay with a strongly stressed patrilineage, a Hindu Indian identity has weighted more than half in my self-definition, pushing into the background Pilgrim fathers and Bavarian burghers who are also available in my genealogical repertoire. This would seem to mark me as Indian and, therefore, when I study India, a "native" anthropologist. After all, researching aspects of India, I often share an unspoken emotional understanding with the people with whom I work (cf. Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). Performing fieldwork in Nasik on storytelling by a Hindu holy man whom I called "Swamiji," I had the benefit of years of association with not just Swamiji himself, but also the language and wider culture. Since Nasik was the town where my father grew up, a preexisting identity defined by kinship subsumed my presence as ethnographer (cf. Nakhleh 1979). Similarly, researching women's songs and lives in the Himalayan foothills, I bore the advantage of visiting the place practically every year since I was 15, and of my mother having settled there. All too well aware of traditional expectations for proper behavior by an unmarried daughter, in both places I repressed aspects of my cosmopolitan Bombay persona and my American self to behave with appropriate decorum and deference (cf. Abu-Lughod 1988).

In both Nasik and in Kangra, different aspects of identity became highlighted at different times. In Nasik, when elderly gentlemen wearing white Congress caps arrived and Swamiji pointed me out as "Ramji Mistri's granddaughter," my local roots were highlighted, and I felt a diffuse pride for my association with the Nasik landmark of the Victorian bungalow that my grandfather had built in the 1920s. Visiting Nathu Maharaj, the barber with buckteeth and stained clothes, to discuss interpretations of Swamiji's stories, I felt uncomfortable, even ashamed, of the ways in which my class had allowed me opportunities that were out of reach for this bright and reflective man. My gender was important in the observance of menstrual taboos not to touch Swamiji or the altar—injunctions that left me so mortified that I would simply leave town for several days. Borrowing the latest Stevie Wonder tapes from one of "the foreigners"—a disciple from New Jersey—I savored a rowdy release, becoming again a woman who had lived independently in a California university town. When Swamiji advised that in written texts I keep his identity obscure ("What need do I have for publicity?"—yet his doctor took me aside to advise that I disregard such modesty and identify him by name, "so people abroad will know his greatness"), I felt my role as culture broker with the dubious power to extend First World prestige to Third World realities. Yet, when Swamiji challenged my motives for taking his words on tape "to do a business," I was set apart from all planes of locally available identification, thrown outside a circle of fellowship forged by spiritual concerns, and lumped instead with academics who made it their business to document and theorize about other people's lives (Narayan 1989:59–62).

For my second extended research project in the Himalayan foothill region of Kangra, I had no deep local roots. Unmoored from a certain base for identification, the extent to which *others* can manipulate an anthropologist's identity came into dizzying focus (Dumont 1978; Stoller 1989). Explaining my presence, some of the village women I worked with asserted that I was from such-and-such village (where my mother lives), hence local. At other times I was presented as being "from Bombay," that is, a city dweller from a distant part of the country although still recognizably Indian. A wrinkled old woman I once fell into step with on an outing between villages asked if I was a member of the pastoral Gaddi tribe (to her, the epitome of a close-by Other). At yet other times, and particularly at weddings where a splash of foreign prestige added to the festivities, I was incontrovertibly stated to be "from America . . . she came *all* the way from there for this function, yes, with her camera and her tape recorder!" In the same household at different times, I was forced to answer questions about whether all Americans were

savages (*jangli log*) because television revealed that they didn't wear many clothes, and to listen as a member of a spellbound local audience when a dignified Rajput matron from another village came by to tell tales about how she had visited her emigrant son in New Jersey. In the local language, she held forth on how, in America, people just ate "round breads" of three sizes with vegetables and *masalas* smeared on top (pizza); how shops were enormous, with everything you could imagine in them, and plastic bags you could rip off like leaves from a tree; how you put food in a "trolley" and then a woman would press buttons, giving you a bill for hundreds and hundreds of rupees! Bonded with other entranced listeners, my own claims to authoritative experience in this faraway land of wonders seemed to have temporarily dropped out of sight.

Now it might be assumed that I had experienced these shifting identifications simply because of my peculiar background, and that someone who was "fully" Indian by birth and upbringing might have a more stable identity in the field. For a comparison, I could turn to Nita Kumar's lively and insightful *Friends, Brothers, Informants: A Memoir of Fieldwork in Banaras* (1992), which makes many of the same points. Instead, I look further back (to pre-postmodern times) and draw out some of the implications about identity from M. N. Srinivas's compelling ethnography, *The Remembered Village* (1976). Srinivas is one of India's most respected anthropologists, although given the division of labor between anthropologists as those who focus on the Other (tribal groups) and sociologists who research the Self (village and urban dwellers), in India he is known as a sociologist. Srinivas was educated in Oxford in the 1940s. On Radcliffe-Brown's advice, he planned to do fieldwork in a multi-caste village called Rampura in Mysore (Karnataka State). Srinivas's ancestors had moved several generations before from neighboring Tamil Nadu to rural Mysore; his father had left his village for the city so that his children could be educated. In returning from Oxford to live in a village, Srinivas stated his hope that "my study . . . would enable me better to understand my personal cultural and social roots" (1976:5).

But did the presence of these roots mean that he was regarded as a "native" returning home to blend smoothly with other "natives"? No, he was an educated urbanite and Brahman male, and the power of this narrative ethnography lies very much in Srinivas's sensitivity to the various ways in which he interacted with members of the community: sometimes aligned with particular groups, sometimes set apart. As he confesses, "It was only in the village that I realized how far I (and my family) had travelled away from tradition" (1976:18). From his account, one gets the impression that villagers found him a very entertaining oddity. He struggled regularly with villagers' expectations that he behave as a Brahman should (1976:33–40). Growing up in the city, he had not internalized rules of purity and pollution to the extent that they bound local Brahmans, and he found himself reprimanded by the headman for shaving himself *after* rather than before a ritual bath. On the other hand, a political activist criticized him for his involvement with the headman, rather than with all sections and factions of the village (1976:22). When he did move throughout the village, he found himself received with affection: "word must have gone round that I did not consider myself too high to mix with poor villagers" (1976:24). Yet, as he was a respected guest and outsider, villagers as a group also colluded in keeping details of unpleasant "incidents" regarding sex, money, and vendettas from him (1976:40–47). In a lighter vein, many villagers knew him by the exotic object he sported, a camera that fulfilled not just their ends (such as the use of photographs in arranging marriages) but also his anthropological responsibilities of recording for a foreign audience. He became "the camera man—only they transformed 'camera' into 'chamara' which in Kannada means the fly-whisk made from the long hair of yak tails" (1976:20). Villagers plied him with questions about the English, and the headman even planned a tour of England in which Srinivas was to be adopted as guide (1976:29). In short, his relationships were complex and shifting: in different settings, his caste, urban background, unintended affiliations with a local faction, class privilege,

attempts to bridge all sectors of the community, or alliance with a faraway land could be highlighted.

Even as insiders or partial insiders, in some contexts we are drawn closer, in others we are thrust apart. Multiple planes of identification may be most painfully highlighted among anthropologists who have identities spanning racial or cultural groups (Abu-Lughod 1988, 1991; Kondo 1986, 1990; Lavie 1990). Yet, in that we all belong to several communities simultaneously (not least of all, the community we were born into and the community of professional academics), I would argue that *every* anthropologist exhibits what Rosaldo has termed a "multiplex subjectivity" with many crosscutting identifications (1989:168–195). Which facet of our subjectivity we choose or are forced to accept as a defining identity can change, depending on the context and the prevailing vectors of power. What Stuart Hall has written about cultural identity holds also for personal identity:

Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical, they [identities] undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture, and power. Far from being grounded in a mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. [Hall 1989:70]

### Rethinking Connections through Fieldwork

We are instructed as anthropologists to "grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world" (Malinowski 1961[1922]:25). Yet who is this generic subject, "the native"? To use a clump term is to assume that all natives are the same native, mutually substitutable in presenting the same (male) point of view. Yet even received anthropological wisdom tells us that in the simplest societies, gender and age provide factors for social differentiation. To extend conceptual tools forged for the study of heuristically bounded, simple societies to a world in which many societies and subgroups interact amid shifting fields of power, these very tools must be reexamined. We would most certainly be better off looking for the natives' points of view to realize *their* visions of *their* worlds while at the same time acknowledging that "we" do not speak from a position outside "their" worlds, but are implicated in them too (cf. Mani 1990; Mohanty 1989; Said 1989): through fieldwork, political relations, and a variety of global flows.

Arjun Appadurai (1988) has persuasively teased out some of the underlying assumptions in anthropological use of the term *native* for groups who belong to parts of the world distant and distinct from the metropolitan West. As he argues, the concept is associated with an ideology of *authenticity*: "Proper natives are somehow assumed to represent their selves and their history, without distortion or residue" (1988:37). Those in the position to observe "natives," however, exempt themselves from being authentic and instead represent themselves in terms of complexity, diversity, and ambiguity. Furthermore, the term is linked to *place*. "Natives" are incarcerated in bounded geographical spaces, immobile and untouched yet paradoxically available to the mobile outsider. Appadurai goes on to show how in anthropological discourse, "natives" tied to particular places are also associated with particular *ideas*: one goes to India to study hierarchy, the circum-Mediterranean region for honor and shame, China for ancestor worship, and so on, forgetting that anthropological preoccupations represent "the temporary *localization* of ideas from *many* places" (1988:46, emphasis in original).

The critique that Appadurai levels at the term *native* can also be extended to *native anthropologist*. A "native" anthropologist is assumed to be an insider who will forward an authentic point of view to the anthropological community. The fact that the profession remains intrigued by the notion of the "native" anthropologist as carrying a stamp of

authenticity is particularly obvious in the ways in which identities are doled out to non-Western, minority, or mixed anthropologists so that exotic difference overshadows commonalities or complexities. That my mother is German-American seems as irrelevant to others' portrayal of me as "Indian" as the American mothers of the "Tewa" Alphonso Ortiz, the "Chicano" Renato Rosaldo, or "Arab" Lila Abu-Lughod. For those of us who are mixed, the darker element in our ancestry serves to define us with or without our own complicity. The fact that we are often distanced—by factors as varied as education, class, or emigration—from the societies we are supposed to represent tends to be underplayed. Furthermore, it is only appropriate (and this may be the result of our own identity quests) that sooner or later we will study the exotic societies with which we are associated. Finally, while it is hoped that we will contribute to the existing anthropological pool of knowledge, we are not really expected to diverge from prevailing forms of discourse to frame what Delmos Jones has called a genuinely "native" anthropology as "a set of theories based on non-Western precepts and assumptions" (1970:251).

"Native" anthropologists, then, are perceived as insiders regardless of their complex backgrounds. The differences between kinds of "native" anthropologists are also obliviously passed over. Can a person from an impoverished American minority background who, despite all prejudices, manages to get an education and study her own community be equated with a member of a Third World elite group who, backed by excellent schooling and parental funds, studies anthropology abroad yet returns home for fieldwork among the less privileged? Is it not insensitive to suppress the issue of location, acknowledging that a scholar who chooses an institutional base in the Third World might have a different engagement with Western-based theories, books, political stances, and technologies of written production? Is a middle-class white professional researching aspects of her own society also a "native" anthropologist?

And what about non-"native" anthropologists who have dedicated themselves to long-term fieldwork, returning year after year to sustain ties in a particular community? Should we not grant them some recognition for the different texture this brings to their work? It is generally considered more savvy in terms of professional advancement to do fieldwork in several different cultures rather than returning to deepen understandings in one. Yet to use people one has lived with for articles and monographs, and not maintain ties through time, generates a sort of "hit-and-run" anthropology in which engagement with vibrant individuals is flattened by the demands of a scholarly career. Having a safe footing to return to outside the field situation promotes "a contemplative stance . . . [that] pervades anthropology, disguising the confrontation between Self and Other and rendering the discipline powerless to address the vulnerability of the Self" (Dwyer 1982:269). Regular returns to a field site, on the other hand, can nourish the growth of responsible human ties and the subsuming of cultural difference within the fellowship of a "We-relation" (Schutz 1973:16–17). As George Foster and the other editors of the book *Long-Term Field Research in Social Anthropology* point out in their concluding comments, an ongoing personal involvement with people in the communities studied often makes for an interest in "action" or "advocacy" work (Foster et al. 1979:344). Looking beyond the human rewards to the professional ones, long-term fieldwork leads to the stripping away of formal self-presentations and the granting of access to cultural domains generally reserved for insiders, thus making better scholarship. Returns to the field allow for a better understanding of how individuals creatively shape themselves and their societies through time. Finally, repeated returns to the field force an anthropologist to reconsider herself and her work not just from the perspective of the academy but also from that of the people she purports to represent. As Paul Stoller has written about his long-term fieldwork among the Songhay in Niger:

Besides giving me the perspective to assess social change, long-term study of Songhay has plunged me into the Songhay worlds of sorcery and possession, worlds the wisdom of which



are closed to outsiders—even Songhay outsiders. My insistence on long-term study forced me to confront the interpretive errors of earlier visits. Restudying Songhay also enabled me to get a bit closer to “getting it right.” But I have just begun to walk my path. As Adamu Jenitongo once told me, “Today you are learning about us, but to understand us, you will have to grow old with us.” [Stoller 1989:6]

While Stoller was not born Songhay, his ongoing engagement has given him a niche in the society, a place from which he is invited to “grow old” *with* his teacher. Like all long-term relationships, his encounters in the field have had exhilarating ups and cataclysmic downs, yet persevering has brought the reward of greater insight. Do not anthropologists who engage sensitively in long-term fieldwork also deserve respect from their professional colleagues as partial insiders who have through time become bicultural (cf. Tedlock 1991)? Need a “native” anthropologist be so very different?

It might be argued that the condescending colonial connotations of a generic identity that cling to the term *native* could be lessened by using alternative words: *indigenous* or *insider*, for example. Yet the same conceptual underpinnings apply to these terms too: they all imply that an authentic insider’s perspective is possible, and that this can unproblematically represent the associated group. This leads us to underplay the ways in which people born within a society can be simultaneously both insiders and outsiders, just as those born elsewhere can be outsiders and, if they are lucky, insiders too. Also, as Elizabeth Colson has bluntly stated, “‘Indigenous’ is a misnomer, for all of us are indigenous somewhere and the majority of anthropologists at some time deal with their own communities” (Fahim et al. 1980:650). We are *all* “native” or “indigenous” anthropologists in this scheme, even if we do not appear so in every fieldwork context. Rather than try to sort out who is authentically a “native” anthropologist and who is not, surely it is more rewarding to examine the ways in which each one of us is situated in relation to the people we study.

### Situated Knowledges

Visiting Nasik as a child, I knew better than to touch Maharaj, the chubby Brahman cook, as he bent over to fill our shining steel *thalis* on the floor; yet, if asked, I would never have been able to explain this in terms of “purity and pollution.” I knew that servants were frequently shouted at and that they wore ill-fitting, cast-off clothes, but I did not call this “social inequality.” I observed that my girl cousins were fed after the boys and that although they excelled in school they were not expected to have careers, but I did not call it “gender hierarchy.” I listened raptly when the Harveys, a British couple who had stayed on after 1947, told us stories about viceroys and collectors, but I did not know the words “colonization” or “decolonization.” When, amid the volley of British authors who shaped our minds in school, we finally came across poems by Rabindranath Tagore, I noticed that these were different but could not call them “nationalist.” Reflecting on India with the vocabulary of a social analyst, I find that new light is shed on many of the experiences that have shaped me into the person—and professional—I am today.

In some ways, the study of one’s own society involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one. Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known. The reframing essentially involves locating vivid particulars within larger cultural patterns, sociological relations, and historical shifts. At one further remove, anthropological categories also rephrase these particulars as evidence of theoretical issues that cross cultures and are the special province of trained academics.

Yet, given the diversity within cultural domains and across groups, even the most experienced of “native” anthropologists cannot know everything about his or her own society (Aguilar 1981). In fact, by opening up access to hidden stores of research

materials, the study of anthropology can also lead to the discovery of many strange and unfamiliar aspects of one's own society (cf. Stewart 1989:14). I have learned, for example, a good deal more about village life, regional differences, and tribal groups than what my urban upbringing supplied. Institutions and belief systems that I took for granted as immutable reality—such as caste or Hinduism—have been dismantled as historical and discursive constructions. Even for a purported insider, it is clearly impossible to be omniscient: one knows about a society from particular locations within it (cf. Srinivas 1966:154).

As anthropologists, we do fieldwork whether or not we were raised close to the people whom we study. Whatever the methodologies used, the process of doing fieldwork involves getting to know a range of people and listening closely to what they say. Even if one should already be acquainted with some of these people before one starts fieldwork, the intense and sustained engagements of fieldwork will inevitably transmute these relationships. Fieldwork is a common plane binding professional anthropologists, but the process and outcome vary so widely that it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between the experiences of those with prior exposure and those who arrive as novices. As Nita Kumar writes in her memoir of fieldwork in Banaras (which she had only visited before as the sheltered, Anglicized daughter of a highly placed Indian government official): "Fieldwork consists of experiences shared by all anthropologists; the personal and the peculiar are significant as qualities that *always* but *differently* characterize each individual experience" (1992:6, emphasis in original).

To acknowledge particular and personal locations is to admit the limits of one's purview from these positions. It is also to undermine the notion of objectivity, because from particular locations all understanding becomes subjectively based and forged through interactions within fields of power relations. Positioned knowledges and partial perspectives are part of the lingo that has risen to common usage in the 1980s (Clifford 1986, 1988; Haraway 1988; Kondo 1986; Rosaldo 1989). Yet, let us not forget the prescient words of Jacques Maquet from an article in which he argued that decolonization laid bare the "perspectivist" character of anthropology in Africa, showing anthropology's claim to objectivity as entwined with power relations in which one group could claim to represent another. Arguing against objectivity in a polemic at least 20 years ahead of its time, he writes:

A perspectivist knowledge is not as such non-objective: it is partial. It reflects an external reality but only an aspect of it, the one visible from the particular spot, social and individual, where the anthropologist was placed. Non-objectivity creeps in when the partial aspect is considered as the global one. [Maquet 1964:54]

### Enacting Hybridity

"Suppose you and I are walking on the road," said Swamiji, the holy man whose storytelling I was researching in 1985. "You've gone to University. I haven't studied anything. We're walking. Some child has shit on the road. We both step in it. 'That's shit!' I say. I scrape my foot; it's gone. But educated people have doubts about everything. You say, 'What's this?!' and you rub your foot against the other." Swamiji shot up from his prone position in the deck chair, and placing his feet on the linoleum, stared at them with intensity. He rubbed the right sole against the left ankle. "Then you reach down to feel what it could be," his fingers now explored the ankle. A grin was breaking over his face. "Something sticky! You lift some up and sniff it. Then you say, 'Oh! This is *shit*.'" The hand that had vigorously rubbed his nose was flung out in a gesture of disgust.

Swamiji turned back toward me, cheeks lifted under their white stubble in a toothless and delighted grin. Everyone present in the room was laughing uncontrollably. I managed an uncomfortable smile.

"See how many places it touched in the meantime," Swamiji continued. "Educated people always doubt everything. They lie awake at night thinking, 'What was that? Why

did it happen? What is the meaning and the cause of it?' Uneducated people pass judgment and walk on. They get a good night's sleep."

I looked up at Swamiji from my position on the floor and tried to avoid the eyes of the others, who watched me with broad smiles on their faces. "What was that? Why did it happen? What is the meaning and the cause of it?" rang in my ears as a parody of my own relentless questioning as an anthropologist interviewing both Swamiji and his listeners. I had to agree that among the academics I represented analysis could often become obsessive. But I also felt awkward, even a little hurt. This parable seemed to dismiss all the years that education had dominated my life. It ridiculed my very presence in this room. In his peculiar mixture of sternness and empathy, Swamiji must have read the discomfort on my face. When he settled back into his deck chair, he turned to me again. "It's not that you shouldn't study," he said, voice low and kind. "You should gain wisdom. But you should realize that in the end this means nothing."

Once again, Swamiji was needing any possible self-importance that might be ballooning inside me as self-appointed documenter and analyst of what to others was everyday life. While others enjoyed his stories and learned from them, I brought the weightiness of perpetual enquiry to the enterprise. Every action was evaluated (at least partially) in terms of my project on folk narrative as a form of religious teaching. Now Swamiji had turned his technique of instruction through stories on me. Through a parable, he dramatized how we both coexisted in shared time and space, "walking the same road," yet each with a different awareness. The power relations of "structured inequality" (Dwyer 1982; Rabinow 1977) that allow anthropologists to subsume their subjects in representation had been turned upside down with such a critique.

This uncomfortable scene dramatizes how the issue of who is an insider and who is an outsider is secondary to the need for dismantling objective distance to acknowledge our shared presence in the cultural worlds that we describe. Pioneering works on "native" anthropology emphasized the need for such anthropologists to achieve distance. Yet, distance, as Dorinne Kondo (1986) has observed, is both a stance and a cognitive-emotional orientation that makes for cold, generalized, purportedly objective and yet inevitably prejudiced forms of representation. As Kondo argues, it can be replaced with the acceptance of "more experiential and affective modes of knowing" (1986:75) in which the ethnographer's identity and location are made explicit and informants are given a greater role in texts. This is what Michael Jackson (1989) more recently called "radical empiricism": a methodology and discursive style that emphasizes the subject's experience and involvement with others in the construction of knowledge (cf. Stoller 1992).

To question the discipline's canonical modes of objective distance is not, however, to forfeit subjective distance and pretend that all fieldwork is a celebration of *communitas*. Given the multiplex nature of identity, there will inevitably be certain facets of self that join us up with the people we study, other facets that emphasize our difference. In even the closest of relationships, disjunctures can swell into distance; ruptures in communication can occur that must be bridged. To acknowledge such shifts in relationships rather than present them as purely distant or purely close is to enrich the textures of our texts so they more closely approximate the complexities of lived interaction. At the same time, frankness about actual interactions means that an anthropologist cannot hide superficial understandings behind sweeping statements and is forced to present the grounds of understanding. Further, as Lila Abu-Lughod has argued in regard to what she calls "ethnographies of the particular," by writing in terms of "particular individuals and their changing relationships, one would necessarily subvert the most problematic connotations of culture: homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness" (1991:154).

These insights hold radical implications for anthropological modes of representation. As I see it, there are currently two poles to anthropological writing: at one end stand accessible ethnographies laden with stories, and at the other end stand refereed journal

articles, dense with theoretical analyses. We routinely assign narrative ethnographies in "Intro to Anthro" classes (even if these are written not by professional anthropologists, but by their wives [Fernea 1965; Shostak 1981]) because it is through narratives lively with people, places, and events that we know recalcitrant undergraduates are likely to be seduced by the discipline. Reading these ethnographies, we ourselves may forget we are judgmental professionals, so swept along are we in the evocative flow of other people's experiences. Narrative ethnography is one arena in which the literary critic Mary Louise Pratt's blunt diagnosis that ethnographic writing is boring (1986:33) simply does not apply. Journal articles, on the other hand, tend to be exclusively of interest to academics initiated into the fellowship of professional discourse, and subscribing members of a particular, academically formed society. Journal articles are written according to formulas that include a thesis introduced in the beginning and returned to at the end, and the convention that theoretical frameworks and generalized statements should be emphasized, suppressing vivid particulars. We read these articles with our minds more than our hearts, extorting ideas and references from their pages.

Need the two categories, compelling narrative and rigorous analysis, be impermeable? Increasingly, they seep into each other, and here I want to argue for an emerging style in anthropological writing that I call the *enactment of hybridity* (cf. Abu-Lughod 1992; Behar 1993; Jackson 1989; Kondo 1990; Lavie 1990; Rose 1987; Stoller 1989; Rosaldo 1989, Tedlock 1992). In using the word "enactment," I am drawing on Dorinne Kondo's view that "the *specificity* of . . . experience . . . is not opposed to theory; it *enacts* and *embodies* theory" (1990, emphasis in original): any writing, then, represents an enactment of some sort of theory. By "hybridity," I do not mean only a condition of people who are mixed from birth, but also a state that all anthropologists partake of but may not consciously include in our texts. As Edward Bruner (1993) has elegantly phrased it, every anthropologist carries both a personal and an ethnographic self. In this scheme, we are all incipiently bi- (or multi-) cultural in that we belong to worlds both personal and professional, whether in the field or at home. While people with Third World allegiances, minorities, or women may experience the tensions of this dual identity the most strongly, it is a condition of everyone, even of that conglomerate category termed "white men." Whether we are disempowered or empowered by prevailing power relations, we must all take responsibility for how our personal locations feed not just into our fieldwork interactions but also our scholarly texts. When professional personas altogether efface situated and experiencing selves, this makes for misleading scholarship even as it does violence to the range of hybrid personal and professional identities that we negotiate in our daily lives.

Adopting a narrative voice involves an ethical stance that neither effaces ourselves as hybrid nor defaces the vivid humanity of the people with whom we work. Narrative transforms "informants" whose chief role is to spew cultural data for the anthropologist into subjects with complex lives and a range of opinions (that may even subsume the anthropological enterprise). At a moment in which scholarship has a "multinational reception" (cf. Mani 1990), it seems more urgent than ever that anthropologists acknowledge that it is *people* and not theoretical puppets who populate our texts, and that we allow these people to speak out from our writings. Also, narratives are not transparent representations of what actually happened, but are told for particular purposes, from particular points of view: they are thus incipiently analytical, enacting theory. Analysis itself is most effective when it builds directly from cases evoked through narrative, so providing a chance to step away, reflect on, and reframe the riveting particulars of the story at hand. In including the perspective of the social analyst along with narratives from or about people studied, a stereoscopic "double vision" can be achieved (Rosaldo 1989:127-143). Some skillfully constructed analyses are as gripping as good mystery stories, starting from a conundrum, then assembling clues that finally piece together. Narrative and analysis are categories we tend to set up as opposites, yet

a second look reveals that they are contiguous, with a border open even to the most full-scale of crossovers.

Calling for a greater integration of narrative into written texts does not mean that analysis is to be abandoned, but rather that it moves over, giving vivid experience an honored place beside it. By translating professional jargon into "the language of everyday life" (cf. Abu-Lughod 1991:151), analysis can also be made intriguing to audiences who would otherwise be compelled only by narrative. Admittedly, writing cannot singlehandedly change the inequalities in today's world; yet, in bearing the potential to change the attitudes of readers, ethical and accessible writing unquestionably takes a step in the right direction. As companions clothed in nontechnical language, narrative and analysis join to push open the doors of anthropological understanding and welcome in outsiders.

### Conclusions

I have argued for a reorientation in the ways that we perceive anthropologists as "outside" or "inside" a society. The traditional view has been to polarize "real" anthropologists from "native" anthropologists, with the underlying assumption that a "native" anthropologist would forward an authentic insider's view to the profession. This view sprang from a colonial era in which inegalitarian power relations were relatively well defined: there was little question about the "civilized" outsider's ability to represent "primitive" peoples, and so it was worthy of note when a person excluded from dominant white culture was allowed to describe his or her own society. With changing times, however, the scope of anthropology has shifted to include industrialized societies, even as it is also practiced in "Third World" countries and by minority and "Third World" scholars. Identity, always multiplex, has become even more culturally complex at this historical moment in which global flows in trade, politics, and the media stimulate greater interpenetration between cultures.

In this changed setting, it is more profitable to focus on shifting identities in relationship with the people and issues an anthropologist seeks to represent. Even if one can blend into a particular social group without the quest of fieldwork, the very nature of researching what to others is taken-for-granted reality creates an uneasy distance. However, even if one starts out as a stranger, sympathies and ties developed through engaged coexistence may subsume difference within relationships of reciprocity. "Objectivity" must be replaced by an involvement that is unabashedly subjective as it interacts with and invites other subjectivities to take a place in anthropological productions. Knowledge, in this scheme, is not transcendental, but situated, negotiated, and part of an ongoing process. This process spans personal, professional, and cultural domains.

As we rethink "insiders" and "outsiders" in anthropology, I have argued that we should also work to melt down other, related divides. One wall stands between ourselves as interested readers of stories and as theory-driven professionals; another wall stands between narrative (associated with subjective knowledge) and analysis (associated with objective truths). By situating ourselves as subjects simultaneously touched by life-experience and swayed by professional concerns, we can acknowledge the hybrid and positioned nature of our identities. Writing texts that mix lively narrative and rigorous analysis involves enacting hybridity, regardless of our origins.

### Notes

*Acknowledgments.* This essay emerged from fieldwork in Nasik between June and September 1983, and July and October 1985, as well as an association with the place since birth. Formal fieldwork in Kangra took place between September 1991 and August 1992, although I have visited there since 1975. I am extremely grateful for an array of grants and fellowships through the years. In building on insights garnered collectively from research enabled by these different funding

sources, I lump them together here: a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship, a University of California at Berkeley Graduate Humanities Research Grant, a Robert H. Lowie Fellowship, a Charlotte W. Newcombe Dissertation Writing Fellowship, support from the University of Wisconsin Graduate School, an American Institute of Indian Studies Senior Fellowship, and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship. My deep thanks to Eytan Bercovitch, Ruth Behar, Ed Bruner, Janet Dixon-Keller, Ann Gold, Smadar Lavie, Maria Lepowsky, Renato Rosaldo, Janis Shough, Paul Stoller, Barbara Tedlock, Anna Tsing, and Kamala Visweswaran for conversations about and comments on issues raised in this essay.

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