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Beyond “Culture”: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference

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For a subject whose central rite of passage is fieldwork, whose romance has rested on its exploration of the remote (“the *most* other of others” [Hannerz 1986:363]), whose critical function is seen to lie in its juxtaposition of radically different ways of being (located “elsewhere”) with that of the anthropologists’ own, usually Western, culture, there has been surprisingly little self-consciousness about the issue of space in anthropological theory. (Some notable exceptions are Appadurai [1986, 1988], Hannerz [1987], and Rosaldo [1988, 1989].) This collection of five ethnographic articles represents a modest attempt to deal with the issues of space and place, along with some necessarily related concerns such as those of location, displacement, community, and identity. In particular, we wish to explore how the renewed interest in theorizing space in postmodernist and feminist theory (Anzaldúa 1987; Baudrillard 1988; Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Foucault 1982; Jameson 1984; Kaplan 1987; Martin and Mohanty 1986)—embodied in such notions as surveillance, panopticism, simulacra, deterritorialization, postmodern hyper-space, borderlands, and marginality—forces us to reevaluate such central analytic concepts in anthropology as that of “culture” and, by extension, the idea of “cultural difference.”

Representations of space in the social sciences are remarkably dependent on images of break, rupture, and disjunction. The distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is based upon a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy “naturally” discontinuous spaces. The premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which to theorize contact, conflict, and contradiction between cultures and societies. For example, the representation of the world as a collection of “countries,” as in most world maps, sees it as an inherently fragmented space, divided by different colors into diverse national societies, each “rooted” in its proper place (cf. Malkki, this issue). It is so taken for granted that each country embodies its own distinctive culture and society that the terms “society” and “culture” are routinely simply appended to the names

of nation-states, as when a tourist visits India to understand "Indian culture" and "Indian society," or Thailand to experience "Thai culture," or the United States to get a whiff of "American culture."

Of course, the geographical territories that cultures and societies are believed to map onto do not have to be nations. We do, for example, have ideas about culture-areas that overlap several nation-states, or of multicultural nations. On a smaller scale, perhaps, are our disciplinary assumptions about the association of culturally unitary groups (tribes or peoples) with "their" territories: thus, "the Nuer" live in "Nuerland" and so forth. The clearest illustration of this kind of thinking are the classic "ethnographic maps" that purported to display the spatial distribution of peoples, tribes, and cultures. But in all these cases, space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization are inscribed. It is in this way that space functions as a central organizing principle in the social sciences at the same time that it disappears from analytical purview.

This **assumed isomorphism of space, place, and culture** results in some significant problems. First, there is the issue of those who inhabit the border, that "narrow strip along steep edges" (Anzaldúa 1987:3) of national boundaries. The fiction of cultures as discrete, object-like phenomena occupying discrete spaces becomes implausible for those who inhabit the borderlands. Related to border inhabitants are those who live a life of border crossings—migrant workers, nomads, and members of the transnational business and professional elite. What is "the culture" of farm workers who spend half a year in Mexico and half a year in the United States? Finally, **there are those who cross borders more or less permanently—immigrants, refugees, exiles, and expatriates. In their case, the disjuncture of place and culture is especially clear:** Khmer refugees in the United States take "Khmer culture" with them in the same complicated way that Indian immigrants in England transport "Indian culture" to their new homeland.

A second set of problems raised by the implicit mapping of cultures onto places is to **account for cultural differences within a locality.** "Multiculturalism" is both a feeble acknowledgment of the fact that cultures have lost their moorings in definite places and an attempt to subsume this plurality of cultures within the framework of a national identity. Similarly, the idea of "subcultures" attempts to preserve the idea of distinct "cultures" while acknowledging the relation of different cultures to a dominant culture within the same geographical and territorial space. **Conventional accounts of ethnicity, even when used to describe cultural differences in settings where people from different regions live side by side, rely on an unproblematic link between identity and place.**¹ Although such concepts are suggestive because they endeavor to stretch the naturalized association of culture with place, they fail to interrogate this assumption in a truly fundamental manner. We need to ask how to deal with cultural difference while abandoning received ideas of (localized) culture.

Third, there is the important question of postcoloniality. To which places do the hybrid cultures of postcoloniality belong? Does the colonial encounter create a "new culture" in both the colonized and colonizing country, or does it

destabilize the notion that nations and cultures are isomorphic? As discussed below, postcoloniality further problematizes the relationship between space and culture.

Last, and most important, challenging the ruptured landscape of independent nations and autonomous cultures raises the question of **understanding social change and cultural transformation as situated within interconnected spaces**. The presumption that spaces are autonomous has enabled **the power of topography to conceal successfully the topography of power**. The inherently fragmented space assumed in the definition of anthropology as the study of cultures (in the plural) may have been one of the reasons behind the long-standing failure to **write anthropology's history as the biography of imperialism**. For if one begins with the premise that spaces have *always* been hierarchically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected, then cultural and social change becomes not a matter of cultural contact and articulation but one of rethinking difference *through* connection.

To illustrate, let us examine one powerful model of cultural change that attempts to relate dialectically the local to larger spatial arenas: articulation. **Articulation models**, whether they come from Marxist structuralism or from "moral economy," posit a primeval state of autonomy (usually labeled "precapitalist"), **which is then violated by global capitalism**. The result is that both local and larger spatial arenas are transformed, the local more than the global to be sure, but not necessarily in a predetermined direction. This notion of articulation allows one to explore the richly unintended consequences of, say, colonial capitalism, where loss occurs alongside invention. Yet, by taking a preexisting, localized "community" as a given starting point, it fails to examine sufficiently the processes (such as the structures of feeling that pervade the imagining of community) that go into the construction of space as place or locality in the first instance. **In other words, instead of assuming the autonomy of the primeval community, we need to examine how it was formed as a community out of the interconnected space that always already existed**. Colonialism, then, represents the displacement of one form of interconnection by another. This is not to deny that colonialism, or an expanding capitalism, does indeed have profoundly dislocating effects on existing societies. But by always foregrounding the spatial distribution of hierarchical power relations, we can better understand the process whereby a space achieves a distinctive *identity* as a place. **Keeping in mind that notions of locality or community refer both to a demarcated physical space and to clusters of interaction, we can see that the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality**.

It is for this reason that what Jameson (1984) has dubbed "postmodern hyperspace" has so fundamentally challenged the convenient fiction that mapped cultures onto places and peoples. In the capitalist West, a Fordist regime of accumulation, emphasizing extremely large production facilities, a relatively stable work force, and the welfare state, combined to create urban "communities" whose outlines were most clearly visible in company towns (Davis 1984; Harvey

1989; Mandel 1975). The counterpart of this in the international arena was that multinational corporations, under the leadership of the United States, steadily exploited the raw materials, primary goods, and cheap labor of the independent nation-states of the postcolonial "Third World." **Multilateral agencies and powerful Western states preached, and where necessary militarily enforced, the "laws" of the market to encourage the international flow of capital, while national immigration policies ensured that there would be no free (i.e., anarchic, disruptive) flow of labor to the high-wage islands in the capitalist core. Fordist patterns of accumulation have now been replaced by a regime of flexible accumulation—**characterized by small-batch production, rapid shifts in product lines, extremely fast movements of capital to exploit the smallest differentials in labor and raw material costs—built on a more sophisticated communications and information network and better means of transporting goods and people. At the same time, the industrial production of culture, entertainment, and leisure that first achieved something approaching global distribution during the Fordist era led, paradoxically, to the invention of new forms of cultural difference and new forms of imagining community. **Something like a transnational public sphere has certainly rendered any strictly bounded sense of community or locality obsolete. At the same time, it has enabled the creation of forms of solidarity and identity that do not rest on an appropriation of space where contiguity and face-to-face contact are paramount. In the pulverized space of postmodernity, space has not become irrelevant: it has been reterritorialized in a way that does not conform to the experience of space that characterized the era of high modernity. It is this that forces us to reconceptualize fundamentally the politics of community, solidarity, identity, and cultural difference.**

Imagined Communities, Imagined Places

People have undoubtedly always been more mobile and identities less fixed than the static and typologizing approaches of classical anthropology would suggest. **But today**, the rapidly expanding and quickening mobility of people combines with the refusal of cultural products and practices to "stay put" to give a profound sense of a loss of territorial roots, of an erosion of the cultural distinctiveness of places, and of ferment in anthropological theory. The apparent deterritorialization of identity that accompanies such processes has made **Clifford's** question (1988:275) a key one for recent anthropological inquiry: "What does it mean, at the end of the twentieth century, to speak . . . of a 'native land'? **What processes rather than essences are involved in present experiences of cultural identity?'**"

Such questions are of course not wholly new, but issues of collective identity today do seem to take on a special character, when more and more of us live in what Said (1979:18) has called "a generalized condition of homelessness," a world where identities are increasingly coming to be, if not wholly deterritorialized, at least differently territorialized. **Refugees, migrants, displaced and stateless peoples**—these are perhaps the first to live out these realities in their most

complete form, but the problem is more general. In a world of diaspora, transnational culture flows, and mass movements of populations, old-fashioned attempts to map the globe as a set of culture regions or homelands are bewildered by a dazzling array of postcolonial simulacra, doublings and redoublings, as India and Pakistan apparently reappear in postcolonial simulation in London, prerevolution Tehran rises from the ashes in Los Angeles, and a thousand similar cultural dreams are played out in urban and rural settings all across the globe. In this culture-play of diaspora, familiar lines between “here” and “there,” center and periphery, colony and metropole become blurred.

Where “here” and “there” become blurred in this way, the cultural certainties and fixities of the metropole are upset as surely, if not in the same way, as those of the colonized periphery. In this sense, it is not only the displaced who experience a displacement (cf. Bhabha 1989:66). For even people remaining in familiar and ancestral places find the nature of their relation to place ineluctably changed, and the illusion of a natural and essential connection between the place and the culture broken. “Englishness,” for instance, in contemporary, internationalized England is just as complicated and nearly as deterritorialized a notion as Palestinian-ness or Armenian-ness, since “England” (“the real England”) refers less to a bounded place than to an imagined state of being or moral location. Consider, for instance, the following quote from a young white reggae fan in the ethnically chaotic neighborhood of Balsall Heath in Birmingham:

there’s no such thing as “England” any more . . . welcome to India brothers! This is the Caribbean! . . . Nigeria! . . . There is no England, man. This is what is coming. Balsall Heath is the center of the melting pot, ’cos all I ever see when I go out is half-Arab, half-Pakistani, half-Jamaican, half-Scottish, half-Irish. I know ’cos I am [half Scottish/half Irish] . . . who am I? . . . Tell me who I belong to? They criticize me, the good old England. Alright, where do I belong? You know, I was brought up with blacks, Pakistanis, Africans, Asians, everything, you name it . . . who do I belong to? . . . I’m just a broad person. The earth is mine . . . you know we was not born in Jamaica . . . we was not born in “England.” We were born here, man. It’s our right. That’s the way I see it. That’s the way I deal with it. [Hebdige 1987:158–159]

The broad-minded acceptance of cosmopolitanism that seems to be implied here is perhaps more the exception than the rule, but there can be little doubt that the explosion of a culturally stable and unitary “England” into the cut-and-mix “here” of contemporary Balsall Heath is an example of a phenomenon that is real and spreading. It is clear that the erosion of such supposedly natural connections between peoples and places has not led to the modernist specter of global cultural homogenization (Clifford 1988). But “cultures” and “peoples,” however persistent they may be, cease to be plausibly identifiable as spots on the map.

The irony of these times, however, is that as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, *ideas* of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient. It is here that it becomes most visible how imagined communities (Anderson 1983) come to be attached to imagined places, as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined home-

lands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality. The set of issues surrounding the construction of place and homeland by mobile and displaced people is addressed in different ways by a number of the articles in this issue.

Remembered places have often served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people. This has long been true of immigrants, who (as Leonard [1992] shows vividly) use memory of place to construct imaginatively their new lived world. "Homeland" in this way remains one of the most powerful unifying symbols for mobile and displaced peoples, though the relation to homeland may be very differently constructed in different settings (see Malkki, this issue). Moreover, even in more completely deterritorialized times and settings—settings where "home" is not only distant, but also where the very notion of "home" as a durably fixed place is in doubt—aspects of our lives remain highly "localized" in a social sense, as Peters (1992) argues. **We need to give up naive ideas of communities as literal entities (cf. Cohen 1985), but remain sensitive to the profound "bifocality" that characterizes locally lived lives in a globally interconnected world,** and the powerful role of place in the "near view" of lived experience (Peters 1992).

The partial erosion of spatially bounded social worlds and the growing role of the imagination of places from a distance, however, themselves must be situated within the highly spatialized terms of a global capitalist economy. The special challenge here is to use a focus on the way space is imagined (but not *imaginary*!) as a way to explore the processes through which such conceptual processes of place making meet the changing global economic and political conditions of lived spaces—the relation, we could say, between place and space. As Ferguson (this issue) shows, important tensions may arise when places that have been imagined at a distance must become lived spaces. For places are always imagined in the context of political-economic determinations that have a logic of their own. Territoriality is thus reinscribed at just the point it threatens to be erased.

The idea that space is made meaningful is of course a familiar one to anthropologists; indeed, there is hardly an older or better established anthropological truth. East or West, inside or outside, left or right, mound or floodplain—**from at least the time of Durkheim, anthropology has known that the experience of space is always socially constructed. The more urgent task, taken up by several articles in this issue, is to politicize this uncontested observation. With meaning making understood as a practice, how are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this? What is at stake?**

Such questions are particularly important where the meaningful association of places and peoples is concerned. **As Malkki (this issue) shows, two naturalisms must be challenged here. First is what we will call the ethnological habit of taking the association of a culturally unitary group (the "tribe" or "people") and "its" territory as natural,** which is discussed in the previous section. A second, and closely related, naturalism is what we will call **the national habit of taking the association of citizens of states and their territories as natural.** Here the exemplary

image is of the conventional world map of nation-states, through which school-children are taught such deceptively simple-sounding beliefs as that France is where the French live, America is where the Americans live, and so on. Even a casual observer, of course, knows that not only Americans live in America, and it is clear that the very question of what is a “real American” is largely up for grabs. But even anthropologists still talk of “American culture” with no clear understanding of what that means, because we assume a natural association of a culture (“American culture”), a people (“Americans”), and a place (“the United States of America”). Both the ethnological and the national naturalisms present associations of people and place as solid, commonsensical, and agreed-upon, when they are in fact contested, uncertain, and in flux.

Much recent work in anthropology and related fields has focused on the process through which such reified and naturalized national representations are constructed and maintained by states and national elites. (See, for instance, Anderson 1983; Handler 1988; Herzfeld 1987; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Kapferer 1988; Wright 1985.) Borneman (this issue) presents a case where state constructions of national territory are complicated by a very particular sort of displacement, as the territorial division and reformation of Germany following the Second World War made unavailable to the two states the claims to a territorially circumscribed home and culturally delineated nation that are usually so central to establish legitimacy. Neither could their citizens rely on such appeals in constructing their own identities. In forging national identities estranged in this way from both territory and culture, Borneman argues, the postwar German states and their citizens employed oppositional strategies, ultimately resulting in versions of the displaced and decentered identities that mark what is often called the postmodern condition.

Discussions of nationalism make it clear that states play a crucial role in the popular politics of place making and in the creation of naturalized links between places and peoples. But it is important to note that state ideologies are far from being the only point at which the imagination of place is politicized. Oppositional images of place have of course been extremely important in anticolonial nationalist movements, as well as in campaigns for self-determination and sovereignty on the part of ethnic counter-nations such as the Hutu (Malkki, this issue), the Eritreans, and the Armenians. Bisharat (1992) traces some of the ways in which the imagining of place has played into the Palestinian struggle, showing both how specific constructions of “homeland” have changed in response to political circumstances and how a deeply felt relation to “the land” continues to inform and inspire the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. Bisharat’s article serves as a useful reminder, in the light of nationalism’s often reactionary connotations in the Western world, of how often notions of home and “own place” have been empowering in anticolonial contexts.

Indeed, future observers of 20th-century revolutions will probably be struck by the difficulty of formulating large-scale political movements *without* reference to national homelands. Gupta (this issue) discusses the difficulties raised in attempting to rally people around such a nonnational collectivity as the nonaligned

movement; and he points out that similar problems are raised by the proletarian internationalist movement, since, "as generations of Marxists after Marx found out, it is one thing to liberate a nation, quite another to liberate the workers of the world" (Gupta, this issue). Class-based internationalism's tendencies to nationalism (as in the history of the Second International, or that of the U.S.S.R.), and to utopianism imagined in local rather than universal terms (as in Morris's *News from Nowhere* [1970], where "nowhere" [*utopia*] turns out to be a specifically English "somewhere"), show clearly the importance of attaching causes to places and **the ubiquity of place making in collective political mobilization**.

Such place making, however, need not be national in scale. One example of this is the way idealized notions of "the country" have been used in urban settings to construct critiques of industrial capitalism (cf. in Britain, Williams 1973; for Zambia, Ferguson, this issue). Another case is the reworking of ideas of "home" and "community" by feminists like Martin and Mohanty (1986) and Kaplan (1987). Rofel (this issue) gives another example in her treatment of the contested meanings of the spaces and local history of a Chinese factory. Her analysis shows both how specific factory locations acquired meanings over time and how these localized spatial meanings confounded the modernizing, panoptic designs of planners—indeed, how the durability of memory and localized meanings of sites and bodies calls into question the very idea of a universal, undifferentiated "modernity."

It must be noted that **such popular politics of place can as easily be conservative as progressive**. Often enough, as in the contemporary United States, the association of place with memory, loss, and nostalgia plays directly into the hands of reactionary popular movements. This is true not only of explicitly national images long associated with the Right, but also of imagined locales and nostalgic settings such as "small-town America" or "the frontier," which often play into and complement antifeminist idealizations of "the home" and "family."²

Space, Politics, and Anthropological Representation

Changing our conceptions of the relation between space and cultural difference offers a new perspective on recent debates surrounding issues of anthropological representation and writing. **The new attention to representational practices has already led to more sophisticated understandings of processes of objectification and the construction of other-ness in anthropological writing**. However, with this said, it also seems to us that **recent notions of "cultural critique" (Marcus and Fischer 1986) depend on a spatialized understanding of cultural difference that needs to be problematized**.

The foundation of cultural critique—a dialogic relation with an "other" culture that yields a critical viewpoint on "our own culture"—assumes an already-existing world of many different, distinct "cultures," and an unproblematic distinction between "our own society" and an "other" society. As Marcus and Fischer put it, the purpose of cultural critique is "to generate critical questions from one society to probe the other" (1986:117); the goal is "to apply both the

substantive results and the epistemological lessons learned from ethnography abroad to a renewal of the critical function of anthropology as it is pursued in ethnographic projects at home” (1986:112).

Marcus and Fischer are sensitive to the fact that cultural difference is present “here at home,” too, and that “the other” need not be exotic or far away to be other. But the fundamental conception of cultural critique as a relation between “different societies” ends up, perhaps against the authors’ intentions, spatializing cultural difference in familiar ways, as ethnography becomes, as above, a link between an unproblematized “home” and “abroad.” The anthropological relation is not simply with people who are different, but with “a different society,” “a different culture,” and thus, inevitably, a relation between “here” and “there.” In all of this, the terms of the opposition (“here” and “there,” “us” and “them,” “our own” and “other” societies) are taken as received: the problem for anthropologists is to use our encounter with “them,” “there,” to construct a critique of “our own society,” “here.”

There are a number of problems with this way of conceptualizing the anthropological project. Perhaps the most obvious is the question of the identity of the “we” that keeps coming up in phrases such as “ourselves” and “our own society.” Who is this “we”? If the answer is, as we fear, “the West,” then we must ask precisely who is to be included and excluded from this club. Nor is the problem solved simply by substituting for “our own society,” “the ethnographer’s own society.” For ethnographers, as for other natives, the postcolonial world is an interconnected social space; for many anthropologists—and perhaps especially for displaced Third World scholars—the identity of “one’s own society” is an open question.

A second problem with the way cultural difference has been conceptualized within the “cultural critique” project is that, once excluded from that privileged domain “our own society,” “the other” is subtly nativized—placed in a separate frame of analysis and “spatially incarcerated” (Appadurai 1988) in that “other place” that is proper to an “other culture.” Cultural critique assumes an original separation, bridged at the initiation of the anthropological fieldworker. The problematic is one of “contact”: communication not within a shared social and economic world, but “across cultures” and “between societies.”

As an alternative to this way of thinking about cultural difference, we want to problematize the unity of the “us” and the otherness of the “other,” and question the radical separation between the two that makes the opposition possible in the first place. We are interested less in establishing a dialogic relation between geographically distinct societies than in exploring the processes of production of difference in a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces. The difference is fundamental, and can be illustrated by a brief examination of one text that has been highly praised within the “cultural critique” movement.

Marjorie Shostak’s *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman* (1981) has been very widely admired for its innovative use of life history, and has been hailed as a noteworthy example of polyphonic experimentation in ethnographic writing

(Clifford 1986, 1988:42; Marcus and Fischer 1986:58–59; Pratt 1986). But with respect to the issues we have discussed here, *Nisa* is a very conventional, and deeply flawed, work. The individual, *Nisa*, is granted a degree of singularity, but she is used principally as the token of a type: “the !Kung.” The San-speaking !Kung of Botswana (“the Bushmen” of old) are presented as a distinct, “other,” and apparently primordial “people.” Shostak treats the Dobe !Kung as essentially survivals of a prior evolutionary age: they are “one of the last remaining traditional gatherer-hunter societies,” racially distinct, traditional, and isolated (1981:4). Their experience of “culture change” is “still quite recent and subtle,” and their traditional value system “mostly intact” (1981:6). “Contact” with “other groups” of agricultural and pastoral peoples has occurred, according to Shostak, only since the 1920s, and it is only since the 1960s that the isolation of the !Kung has really broken down, raising for the first time the issue of “change,” “adaptation,” and “culture contact” (1981:346).

The space the !Kung inhabit, the Kalahari desert, is clearly radically different and separate from our own. Again and again the narrative returns to the theme of isolation: in a harsh ecological setting, a way of life thousands of years old has been preserved only through its extraordinary spatial separateness. The anthropological task, as Shostak conceives it, is to cross this spatial divide, to enter into this land that time forgot, a land (as Wilmsen [1989:10] notes) with antiquity but no history, to listen to the voices of women, which might reveal “what their lives had been like for generations, possibly even for thousands of years” (Shostak 1981:6).

The exoticization implicit in this portrait, in which the !Kung appear almost as living on another planet, has drawn surprisingly little criticism from theorists of ethnography. Pratt has rightly pointed out the “blazing contradiction” between the portrait of primal beings untouched by history and the genocidal history of the white “Bushman conquest” (1986:48). As she says,

What picture of the !Kung would one draw if instead of defining them as survivors of the stone age and a delicate and complex adaptation to the Kalahari desert, one looked at them as survivors of capitalist expansion, and a delicate and complex adaptation to three centuries of violence and intimidation? [Pratt 1986:49]

But even Pratt retains the notion of “the !Kung” as a preexisting ontological entity—“survivors,” not products (still less producers), of history. “They” are victims, having suffered the deadly process of “contact” with “us.”

A very different and much more illuminating way of conceptualizing cultural difference in the region may be found in Wilmsen’s devastating recent critique of the anthropological cult of “the Bushman” (1989). Wilmsen shows how, in constant interaction with a wider network of social relations, the difference that Shostak takes as a starting point came to be produced in the first place—how, one might say, “the Bushmen” came to be Bushmen. He demonstrates that San-speaking people have been in continuous interaction with other groups for as long as we have evidence for; that political and economic relations linked the supposedly isolated Kalahari with a regional political economy both in the colonial and

precolonial eras; that San-speaking people have often held cattle; and that no strict separation of pastoralists and foragers can be sustained. He argues powerfully that the Zhu (!Kung) have never been a classless society, and that if they give such an impression, "it is because they are incorporated as an underclass in a wider social formation that includes Batswana, Ovaherero, and others" (Wilmsen 1989:270). Moreover, he shows that the "Bushman/San" label has been in existence for barely half a century, the category having been produced through the "retribalization" of the colonial period (1989:280); and that "the cultural conservatism uniformly attributed to these people by almost all anthropologists who have worked with them until recently, is a consequence—not a cause—of the way they have been integrated into the modern capitalist economies of Botswana and Namibia" (1989:12).

With respect to space, Wilmsen is unequivocal:

it is not possible to speak of the Kalahari's isolation, protected by its own vast distances. To those inside, the outside—whatever "outside" there may have been at any moment—was always present. The appearance of isolation and its reality of dispossessed poverty are recent products of a process that unfolded over two centuries and culminated in the last moments of the colonial era. [1989:157]

The process of the production of cultural difference, Wilmsen demonstrates, occurs in continuous, connected space, traversed by economic and political relations of inequality. Where Shostak takes difference as given and concentrates on listening "across cultures," Wilmsen performs the more radical operation of interrogating the "otherness" of the other, situating the production of cultural difference within the historical processes of a socially and spatially interconnected world.

What is needed, then, is more than a ready ear and a deft editorial hand to capture and orchestrate the voices of "others"; what is needed is a willingness to interrogate, politically and historically, the apparent "given" of a world in the first place divided into "ourselves" and "others." A first step on this road is to move beyond naturalized conceptions of spatialized "cultures" and to explore instead the production of difference within common, shared, and connected spaces—"the San," for instance, not as "a people," "native" to the desert, but as a historically constituted and de-propertyed category systematically relegated to the desert.

The move we are calling for, most generally, is away from seeing cultural difference as the correlate of a world of "peoples" whose separate histories wait to be bridged by the anthropologist and toward seeing it as a product of a shared historical process that differentiates the world as it connects it. For the proponents of "cultural critique," difference is taken as starting point, not as end product. Given a world of "different societies," they ask, how can we use experience in one to comment on another? But if we question a pre-given world of separate and discrete "peoples and cultures," and see instead a difference-producing set of relations, we turn from a project of juxtaposing preexisting differences to one of exploring the construction of differences in historical process.

In this perspective, power does not enter the anthropological picture only at the moment of representation, for the cultural distinctiveness that the anthropologist attempts to represent has always already been produced within a field of power relations. There is thus a politics of otherness that is not reducible to a politics of representation. Textual strategies can call attention to the politics of representation, but the issue of otherness itself is not really addressed by the devices of polyphonic textual construction or collaboration with informant-writers, as writers like Clifford and Crapanzano sometimes seem to suggest.

In addition to (not instead of!) textual experimentation, then, there is a need to address the issue of "the West" and its "others" in a way that acknowledges the extra-textual roots of the problem. For example, the area of immigration and immigration law is one practical area where the politics of space and the politics of otherness link up very directly. Indeed, if the separateness of separate places is not a natural given but an anthropological problem, it is remarkable how little anthropologists have had to say about the contemporary political issues connected with immigration in the United States.³ If we accept a world of originally separate and culturally distinct places, then the question of immigration policy is just a question of how hard we should try to maintain this original order. In this perspective, immigration prohibitions are a relatively minor matter. Indeed, operating with a spatially naturalized understanding of cultural difference, uncontrolled immigration may even appear as a danger to anthropology, threatening to blur or erase the cultural distinctiveness of places that is our stock in trade. If, on the other hand, it is acknowledged that cultural difference is produced and maintained in a field of power relations in a world always already spatially interconnected, then the restriction of immigration becomes visible as one of the main means through which the disempowered are kept that way.

The enforced "difference" of places becomes, in this perspective, part and parcel of a global system of domination. The anthropological task of de-naturalizing cultural and spatial divisions at this point links up with the political task of combating a very literal "spatial incarceration of the native" (Appadurai 1988) within economic spaces zoned, as it were, for poverty. In this sense, changing the way we think about the relations of culture, power, and space opens the possibility of changing more than our texts. There is room, for instance, for a great deal more anthropological involvement, both theoretical and practical, with the politics of the U.S./Mexico border, with the political and organizing rights of immigrant workers, and with the appropriation of anthropological concepts of "culture" and "difference" into the repressive ideological apparatus of immigration law and the popular perceptions of "foreigners" and "aliens."

A certain unity of place and people has been long assumed in the anthropological concept of culture. But anthropological representations and immigration laws notwithstanding, "the native" is "spatially incarcerated" only in part. The ability of people to confound the established spatial orders, either through physical movement or through their own conceptual and political acts of re-imagination, means that space and place can never be "given," and that the process of their sociopolitical construction must always be considered. An anthropology

whose objects are no longer conceived as automatically and naturally anchored in space will need to pay particular attention to the way spaces and places are made, imagined, contested, and enforced. In this sense, it is no paradox to say that questions of space and place are, in this deterritorialized age, more central to anthropological representation than ever.

Conclusion

In suggesting the requestioning of the spatial assumptions implicit in the most fundamental and seemingly innocuous concepts in the social sciences such as “culture,” “society,” “community,” and “nation,” we do not presume to lay out a detailed blueprint for an alternative conceptual apparatus. We do, however, wish to point out some promising directions for the future.

One extremely rich vein has been tapped by those attempting to theorize interstitiality and hybridity: in the postcolonial situation (Bhabha 1989; Hannerz 1987; Rushdie 1989); for people living on cultural and national borders (Anzaldúa 1987; Rosaldo 1987, 1988, 1989); for refugees and displaced peoples (Ghosh 1989; Malkki, this issue); and in the case of migrants and workers (Leonard 1992). The “syncretic, adaptive politics and culture” of hybridity, Bhabha points out (1989:64), questions “the imperialist and colonialist notions of purity as much as it question[s] the nationalist notions.” It remains to be seen what kind of politics are enabled by such a theorization of hybridity and to what extent it can do away with all claims to authenticity, to all forms of essentialism, strategic or otherwise (see especially Radhakrishnan 1987). Bhabha points to the troublesome connection between claims to purity and utopian teleology in describing how he came to the realization that

the only place in the world to speak from was at a point whereby contradiction, antagonism, the hybridities of cultural influence, the boundaries of nations, were not sublated into some utopian sense of liberation or return. The place to speak from was through those incommensurable contradictions within which people survive, are politically active, and change. [1989:67]

The borderlands are just such a place of incommensurable contradictions. The term does not indicate a fixed topographical site between two other fixed locales (nations, societies, cultures), but an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject. Rather than dismissing them as insignificant, as marginal zones, thin slivers of land between stable places, we want to contend that the notion of borderlands is a more adequate conceptualization of the “normal” locale of the postmodern subject.

Another promising direction that takes us beyond culture as a spatially localized phenomenon is provided by the analysis of what is variously called “mass media,” “public culture,” and the “culture industry.” (Especially influential here has been the journal, *Public Culture*.) Existing symbiotically with the commodity form, profoundly influencing even the remotest people that anthropologists have made such a fetish of studying, mass media pose the clearest challenge

to orthodox notions of culture. National, regional, and village boundaries have, of course, never contained culture in the way that anthropological representations have often implied. However, the existence of a transnational public sphere means that the fiction that such boundaries enclose cultures and regulate cultural exchange can no longer be sustained.

The production and distribution of mass culture—films, television and radio programs, newspapers and wire services, recorded music, books, live concerts—is largely controlled by those notoriously placeless organizations, multinational corporations. The "public sphere" is therefore hardly "public" with respect to control over the representations that are circulated in it. Recent work in cultural studies has emphasized the dangers of reducing the reception of multinational cultural production to the passive act of consumption, leaving no room for the active creation by agents of disjunctures and dislocations between the flow of industrial commodities and cultural products. However, we worry at least as much about the opposite danger of *celebrating* the inventiveness of those "consumers" of the culture industry (especially on the periphery) who fashion something quite different out of products marketed to them, reinterpreting and remaking them, sometimes quite radically, and sometimes in a direction that promotes resistance rather than conformity. The danger here is the temptation to use scattered examples of the cultural flows dribbling from the "periphery" to the chief centers of the culture industry as a way of dismissing the "grand narrative" of capitalism (especially the "totalizing" narrative of late capitalism), and thus of evading the powerful political issues associated with Western global hegemony.

The reconceptualization of space implicit in theories of interstitiality and public culture has led to efforts to conceptualize cultural difference without invoking the orthodox idea of "culture." This is a yet largely unexplored and underdeveloped area. We do, clearly, find the clustering of cultural practices that do not "belong" to a particular "people" or to a definite place. Jameson (1984) has attempted to capture the distinctiveness of these practices in the notion of a "cultural dominant," whereas Ferguson (1990) proposes an idea of "cultural style," which searches for a logic of surface practices without necessarily mapping such practices onto a "total way of life" encompassing values, beliefs, attitudes, et cetera, as in the usual concept of culture. We need to explore what Homi Bhabha calls "the uncanny of cultural difference."

cultural difference becomes a problem not when you can point to the Hottentot Venus, or to the punk whose hair is six feet up in the air; it does not have that kind of fixable visibility. It is as the strangeness of the familiar that it becomes more problematic, both politically and conceptually . . . when the problem of cultural difference is ourselves-as-others, others-as-ourselves, that borderline. [1989:72]

Why focus on that borderline? We have argued that *deterritorialization* has destabilized the fixity of "ourselves" and "others." But it *has not thereby created subjects who are free-floating monads*, despite what is sometimes implied by those eager to celebrate the freedom and playfulness of the postmodern condition. As Martin and Mohanty (1986:194) point out, indeterminacy, too, has its political

limits, which follow from the denial of the critic's own location in multiple fields of power. Instead of stopping with the notion of deterritorialization, the pulverization of the space of high modernity, we need to theorize **how space is being reterritorialized in the contemporary world. We need to account sociologically for the fact that the "distance" between the rich in Bombay and the rich in London may be much shorter than that between different classes in "the same" city.** Physical location and physical territory, for so long the *only* grid on which cultural difference could be mapped, need to be replaced by multiple grids that enable us to see that connection and contiguity—more generally the representation of territory—vary considerably by factors such as class, gender, race, and sexuality, and are differentially available to those in different locations in the field of power.

Notes

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It was Arjun Appadurai who first suggested that the two themes might be brought together, and who first put us in touch with each other. For that, he has our thanks and appreciation. Akhil Gupta would also like to thank Lisa Rofel for co-organizing the original panel and Purnima Mankekar, whose critical reading and commentary throughout has contributed much to the project. James Ferguson would like to acknowledge the influence of Liisa Malkki's thinking in shaping his ideas about space, place, and identity. Her acute comments and imaginative discussion contributed greatly to this introductory article. We are both grateful to John Peters for a helpful critical reading of the article at a late stage.

¹This is obviously not true of the "new ethnicity" literature, of texts such as Anzaldúa (1987) and Radhakrishnan (1987).

²See also Robertson (1988, 1991) on the politics of nostalgia and "native place-making" in Japan.

³We are, of course, aware that a considerable amount of recent work in anthropology has centered on immigration. However, it seems to us that too much of this work remains at the level of describing and documenting patterns and trends of migration, often with a policy science focus. Such work is undoubtedly important, and often strategically effective in the formal political arena. Yet there remains the challenge of taking up the specifically *cultural* issues surrounding the mapping of otherness onto space, as we have suggested is necessary. One area where at least some anthropologists have taken such issues seriously is that of Mexican immigration to the United States (e.g., Alvarez 1987; Bustamente 1987; Chavez 1991; Kearney 1986, 1990; Kearney and Nagengast 1989; and Rouse 1991). Another example is Borneman (1986), which is noteworthy for showing the specific links between immigration law and homophobia, nationalism and sexuality, in the case of the Cuban "Marielito" immigrants to the United States.

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