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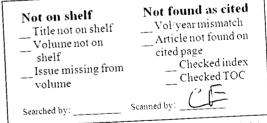
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REFUNCTIONING ETHNOGRAPHY

The Challenge of an Anthropology of the Contemporary

Douglas R. Holmes and George E. Marcus

W e begin this chapter with some basic orientations that are driving our work these days. Part of it is sticking with the so-called *Writing Culture* critiques of anthropology (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) and trying to figure out what are their most productive legacies in the present. Part of it has to do with the changing circumstances of producing anthropological research that we experience every day in the supervision of graduate students. And relatedly, part of it has to do with contemplating the systematic changes that are necessary in the practice of ethnography to accommodate the kinds of new social and cultural formations that are emerging within frames of work that are conceived distinctively as contemporary. We see a need to "refunction ethnography" or at least to provide it with an alternative formulation to the classic Malinowskian one so as to address certain problems of research. We are pursuing this as a project by producing a series of small studies and discussion papers (Holmes, 1993; Holmes &

Marcus, 2004; Marcus, 1999b, 1999d, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2003).

⬚ BEYOND MALINOWSKI'S STAGING

Early in the essay in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific,* in which fieldwork is evoked and its practices are inculcated, Malinowski (1928/1961) intones, "Imagine yourself, suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight" (p. 46). Anthropologists have always thought about each other's fieldwork and about teaching it to initiates not just in terms of stories or tales of the field but also, in more analytic moments, strongly in terms of images and scenarios. Such a dramaturgical regime of method is most effective when the experience of fieldwork actually corresponds at least roughly to the imaginary that anthropologists make out of what they

report to each other from distant experiences that are theirs alone. There is a great premium placed on ethnography that is able to set scenes that can be entered through concretely visualized and situated thought experiments.

Another distinctive, if not peculiar, aspect of the professional lore about fieldwork in anthropology is that it is highly specific and richly evoked for the early phases of fieldwork experience with the image (as per Malinowski) of "first contact" and heightened otherness in mind. The initiate's experience of fieldwork is how the imaginary is slanted, even when it expresses the experience of seasoned field-workers. But what about the continuing research of an anthropologist who has been working in a particular site for a decade or even decades? Is there any model of method in anthropology for what fieldwork is like for the virtuoso? Is it even recognizable as fieldwork according to the Malinowskian mise-en-scène? Our point is that the later work of mature ethnographers usually operates free of the tropes of their earlier work. And we would argue that somehow initiatory fieldwork in certain arenas where many younger anthropologists are working today requires something of the more diffuse and open idea of what fieldwork can be that seems to be characteristic of virtuoso fieldwork, if only it were articulated in the traditional imaginary under which ethnographers-in-the-making train. So this is a problem of pedagogy. Students now enter anthropology inspired by complex social and cultural theories from the interdisciplinary ferment of the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as by the examples of mature second and third works of senior anthropologists—themselves deeply influenced by this period of interdisciplinary ferment—that they admire and want to emulate, and then are faced with a still powerful culture of method that insists that they do something less ambitious. We insist that a new set of regulative norms of fieldwork are needed to release ethnographers-in-the-making from the emphatic and vivid "being there-ness" of the classic imaginary of fieldwork.

Now, turning to the actual challenges to the traditional fieldwork imaginary, what in the world (today) has led to fieldwork's entanglements in multiple and heterogeneous sites of investigation and in complicitous forms of collaboration that have changed markedly what anthropologists want from "natives" as subjects and have deeply compromised claims to authoritative knowledge even of the revised sorts reinstantiated by the reflexive critiques of the 1980s? The conventional understanding of these developments has lain in certain presumptions about the nature of postmodernity that circulated widely in the arenas of interdisciplinary work of the past two decades, namely that as cultures and settled populations have fragmented and become mobile and transnational, as well as more cosmopolitan locally (or at least more invaded or intervened on), fieldwork has simply had literally to follow, when it could, these processes in space. Furthermore, the weight of political and ethical critique of the traditional fieldwork relationship that generated ethnographic data, as revealed by the scrupulous reflexive probing of the postmodern gaze, broke the modicum of innocence and naïveté necessary to sustain the distance in the ethnographer's relationship to subjects, so that complicity with subjects—a state of ambiguity and improper seeming alliance—now pervades the scene of fieldwork, signaling a loss of innocence in the wake of postmodern exposures. Herein both the intensity of focus and the integrity of relationship that have shaped the Malinowskian scene of fieldwork have been challenged.

Although we are sympathetic to this conventional understanding of the challenges to the traditional composure of fieldwork, they do not arise simply from the complexities of a postmodern or now globalizing world. After all, many anthropologists can easily continue doing the same thing, and in fact many do; in many situations, it is even valuable to do so. But our take on what generates multisitedness and complicit relations in fieldwork projects today has more to do with the self-esteem of anthropology in the diminution of its distinctive documentary function amid many competing and overlapping forms of representation comparable to its own. In effect, every project of ethnography enters sites of fieldwork through zones of collateral counterpart knowledge that it

cannot ignore in finding its way to the preferred scenes of ordinary everyday life with which it is traditionally comfortable. This condition alone makes fieldwork both multisited in nature, and heterogeneously so, as well as complicit with certain subjects (often experts or authorities in the scene of fieldwork, so to speak), who are crucial to bounding fieldwork and giving it orientation. The fundamental problem here is in confronting the politics of knowledge that any project of fieldwork involves and the ethnographer's trying to gain position in relation to this politics by making this terrain itself part of the design of fieldwork investigation.

Thus, since the 1980s, any critical anthropology worthy of the name not only tries to speak truth to power—truth as subaltern and understood within the closely observed everyday lives of ordinary subjects as the traditional milieu of fieldwork, power as conceptualized and theorized but not usually investigated by the strategies of fieldwork—but also tries to understand power and its agencies in the same ethnographically committed terms and in the same boundaries of fieldwork in which the subaltern is included. Ethnographic understanding itself, as a dominated segment of the dominant (in Pierre Bourdieu's terms), suggests an alternative modality relevant to the circumstances of contemporary fieldwork in which incorporating a second-order perspective on often overlapping, kindred official, expert, and academic discourses as counterpart to the ethnographer's own is an essential and complicating formulation of the traditional mise-en-scène of fieldwork. It is what accounts most cogently for making much of contemporary fieldwork multisited and political. It also makes contemporary fieldwork both slightly alienated and slightly paranoid in ways that are both inevitable and productive (Marcus, 1999c).

The keenly reflexive critical anthropology after the 1980s is well suited to this incorporation of cultures of the rational as a strategic part of its sites of fieldwork. Indeed, if there was one great success of these earlier critiques, it was to create an anthropology of current formations of knowledge and their distributions in a way that was thoroughly new and original. In a sense, all anthropology since has been most effectively an intimate critique of diffused Western knowledge practices in the name of specific communities of subjects misrepresented by, excluded from, seduced by, or victimized by such practices. The emerging innovation of fieldwork currently is to treat such power/knowledges as equal subjects of fieldwork in their complex and obscured connections to the scenes of everyday life as the cultivated and favored milieu of classic ethnography. But to be effective, such fieldwork has to do something more with this complex field of engagements than just provide distanced, however reflexive, description and interpretation. At the moment, a pervasive and sometimes cloying discourse and rhetoric of moral redemption holds this vacant place of an alternative, fully imagined and worked out alternative function for ethnography. Eventually, this rhetorical placeholder might be replaced by more active techniques that are styled in the range between ideas of experimentation and ideas of activism.

So contemporary critical ethnography orients itself through the imaginaries of expert others—through what we call para-ethnography—and operates through found zones of powerful official or expert knowledge-making practices so as to find more traditional subjects for itself. But what does it want of the complicit collaborations it makes with counterpart subjects in these domains, and what does it make of the scene of ethnography? This is distinctly not about an ethnography of elite cultures (Marcus, 1983); rather, it is about an access to a construction of an imaginary for fieldwork that can be shaped only by alliances with makers of visionary knowledge who are already in the scene or within the bounds of the field. The imaginaries of knowledge makers who have preceded the ethnographer are what the dreams of contemporary fieldwork are made of. But what are the practices/aesthetics of technique that go along with such complicitous, multisited fieldwork investigations?

■ ECOLOGIES OF KNOWLEDGE

As the anthropologist arrives at the gleaming headquarters of a multinational pharmaceutical

corporation in New Jersey, the imposing governmental offices of the Bank of Japan, the sprawling alternative arts space in an urban ward of Cape Town, the courtrooms of the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, the offices of software engineers in Uttar Pradesh, or the research laboratories of the World Health Organization in Hong Kong, he or she is faced with unsettling questions. What do I do now? How do I start the fieldwork that is at the heart of my profession? How do I engage the human subjects who can enliven my research and can make my theoretical ideas anthropological? These are not just the questions that haunt the graduate student facing his or her first stint of fieldwork. They are the deep preoccupations that arise on a more or less daily basis, and it is with a veritable ethnographic treatment of the politics and ecologies of such knowledge forms that every project of the ethnography of the contemporary begins.[1] This initial ethnographic treatment produces both the context and the scaffolding of fieldwork. We suppose that this sensitivity to the zones of discourses in play as the portal through which every ethnographic project enters, and indeed constitutes the field, comes from the emphases of the 1980s critiques on reflexivity, representation, rhetorics, and especially politics. But rather than viewing these functions as constitutive of the Malinowskian project within its traditional boundaries, we see them as shaping different and methodologically more challenging conceptions of this theme of fieldwork and the practices they elicit. For us, the kind of reflexivity that is most valuable is the one that positions anthropologists within a field of already existing discourses as subjects of ethnography themselves so that they can find their way to the classic subjects of ethnography.

The work of Fortun (2001), Maurer (1995, 1999, 2002a, 2002b), Riles (2000, 2004a, 2004b, in press), and Miyazaki (2000, 2003, 2004), among many others,[2] demonstrates this rethinking of how projects of ethnography can begin deeply and critically within discourses of the rational that evoke ecologies and politics of knowledge that can be examined ethnographically. Moreover, the work of these authors has identified the

deeply reflexive and complicit character of this kind of ethnography and the ways in which *theory* becomes implicated in this work. As Miyazaki (2003) notes regarding his work on Japanese securities traders,

> My ultimate goal is to carve out a space for a different kind of anthropological knowledge formation that finds an opportunity, rather than a problem, in social theorists' collective sense of belatedness. I suggest that the explicit construction of temporal incongruity as an opportunity in financial transactions makes financial markets a particularly suitable site for such exploration. (p. 256)

He further notes how the dilemmas of his subjects, securities traders, are analogous to those of the social theorists and how this convergence creates the basis of a distinctive kind of knowledge production:

> I suggested that social theorists' attention to financial markets as a new target of criticism has resulted from, and in turn intensified, their own collective sense of a temporal incongruity between their knowledge and its object of contemplation, the market. My response to this condition has been to point to analogues of such a sense of temporal incongruity in the financial markets themselves. I have argued that the traders I knew generated prospective momentum in their work precisely by reorienting the temporality of their work so as to continually re-create various forms of temporal incongruity. These analogies to the problems of social theory would suggest that the task of social theorists must be not so much to find new objects of contemplation on the constantly receding horizon of the new, such as financial markets, as to reflect on the work of temporal incongruity as an engine of knowledge formation, more generally. (p. 262)

In a sense, then, the anthropologist finds the literal field by working through the imaginaries of his or her counterparts who are already there, so to speak. This transforms the well-established scene of fieldwork as the encounter with the "other" into a much more complex scene of multiple levels, sites, and kinds of association in producing ethnographic knowledge.

We have become associated with discussing the predicament that we have been describing in terms of the emergence of multisited ethnographic research (Marcus, 1999b). Anthropology cannot remain local but rather must follow its objects and subjects as they move and circulate. This is true, and there are special problems with this, both practical and otherwise. But multisited fieldwork arises as much from the hypersensitivity of anthropology to the ecologies and politics of knowledge in which it operates that are necessary to constitute any subject today for fieldwork investigation. It cannot bracket these in the name of disciplinary authority but rather must incorporate them within the field of fieldwork, so to speak. This in itself is what generates multisitedness in its most pragmatic and feasible sense because there is no doubt that anthropological studies of the contemporary have most often taken the form of examining the relation of institutions to subjects, of systems to everyday life, and of domination to resistance. It is just that now these leading tropes of the contemporary terrain of fieldwork must be thought through in terms of the specific capacities and limits of ethnography as method and as a matter of design in how these tropes literally emerge in the constitution of fieldwork strategies, serendipity, and opportunities. The self-consciously multisited character of fieldwork comes into being as an epiphenomenon of the need to constitute the field and the object of study by incorporating both communities of often elite discourse and communities of often subaltern subjects. From this comes a rethinking of a whole set of issues of fieldwork—complicity instead of rapport (Marcus, 2001), the necessity of collaborations and their personal politics, the uneven distribution or depth of knowing in ethnography (both thickness and thinness as virtues of ethnographic description are in play), the changing nature of the object of study, the grounding of abstract relations that define cultural systems in forms of human action and knowing.

For us, one of the most important settings for developing this project of refunctioning that we are proposing is a pedagogical one. We want to give a sense of what, during recent years, has made the traditional regulative ideals of fieldwork unstable in the work of anthropology and an object for refunctioning. Part of it has to do with failures in the reigning folkloric, storytelling mode of inculcating ethnography as the distinctive practice in the professional culture of anthropology by which fieldwork has long been regulated, thought about, and idealized. This involves articulating certain dimensions that were always there in the Malinowskian staging or mise-en-scène of fieldwork but are now more important than ever in guiding adequately student ethnographers-in-the-making in the kinds of research they are increasingly undertaking. Yet at the same time, it is not clear—based on old governing tropes—what fieldwork is to be experientially in these student projects and what kinds of data it is supposed to generate. Thus, part of the destabilization has to do with the conditions that are reshaping research projects and demanding both more and different emphases from the old ethos in its vision and imaginings of what fieldwork is. This is hardly worthy of the term "crisis" as in the 1980s "crisis of representation," but like the diffusely articulated reflexively critical tendencies growing before the critique of ethnographic writing, there is now a comparable situation with regard to fieldwork. The Malinowskian mise-en-scène is by no means an empty term or guide, but it only roughly covers the forms and norms it actually takes now when applied to new projects.

In our recent work, we have been making a diverse range of arguments about this changing nature of fieldwork, especially for students in new topical arenas, grouped around the notion of what the multisited terrain of contemporary projects does to the focused Malinowskian mise-en-scène and around the concept of complicity as redefining the core relationship of collaboration in fieldwork on which authoritative ethnographic claims to knowledge have always depended. We have used the term mise-en-scène several times in referring to the imaginary that mediates and regulates the expression of method in anthropology. Fieldwork has been a vividly theatrical object of

thought in anthropology from its very inception and ideological consolidation by Malinowski as the key symbol, initiatory rite, and method of anthropology. Much of the rest of this chapter is devoted to elucidating the terms of a refunctioned ethnography.

▣ FOR METHOD

In earlier post-1986 writing, we emphasized the problem of passing through zones of representation and somehow incorporating them into the purview of fieldwork. As we noted, *acting* on this problem immediately generates the special problems of multisited fieldwork to which we have been alluding. But our efforts here are also a specific response to the possibilities that we both have encountered in pursuing initially the ethnography of elites, and now the ethnography of expertise, in the potential for these figures to define the reflexive politics of positioning for any anthropological research on the contemporary. Probing the ecologies of discourse that orient fieldwork projects today is indeed what the ethnography of elites, and now experts, has most productively become.

If the opening gambit of the ethnography is an orienting foray into a strategically selected culture of expertise, then that milieu of fieldwork cannot be treated conventionally or traditionally. Experts are to be treated not as collateral colleagues helping to inform fieldwork to occur elsewhere but instead as subjects fully within our own analytical ambit whose cognitive purview and social action range potentially over multiple, if not countless, sites and locales. Nor can they be treated as conventional "natives" or tokens of their cultures to be systematically understood; instead, they must be treated as agents who actively participate in shaping emergent social realms. These subjects must be treated like collaborators or partners in research, a fiction to be sustained more or less strongly around the key concept of para-ethnography.[3]

The para-ethnographic is a self-conscious critical faculty operating in expert domains as a way of dealing with contradictions, exceptions, and facts that are fugitive, suggesting a social realm and social processes not in alignment with conventional representations and reigning modes of analysis. Making ethnography from the found para-ethnographic redefines the status of the subject or informant and asks what different accounts one wants from such key figures in the fieldwork process. We have conceptualized the para-ethnographic as a kind of *social* thought—expressed in genres such as "the anecdotal," "hype," and "intuition"—within institutions dominated by a technocratic ethos, an ethos that, under changed contemporary circumstances, simply does not discipline thought and action as efficiently as it once did.

The para-ethnographer is an expert subject like the genetic engineer who is perplexed by the significance of his or her own cognitive practices and who, in the shadow of his or her formal knowledge work, creates intricate *cultural* narratives that might never be fully voiced but nonetheless mimic the form and the content of an ethnographic engagement with the world. Various fragmentary discourses are continuously spun off from this kind of knowledge work that connects formal scientific inquiry to the existential condition of the scientist cum para-ethnographer, on the one hand, and to a wider social imaginary, on the other. Ethical and moral apprehensions as well as professional and commercial preoccupations, although typically not fully articulated, nonetheless circulate in complex relationship to formal scientific practices, thereby constituting the substance of para-ethnography as well as part of the ecology of discourse that creates the field or ground in which strategies and designs of anthropological research take form. The questions, motives, and purposes that project anthropologists into fieldwork are not simply those raised within the discipline of anthropology or posed by the contextualizing social theories or historical narratives of contiguous academic specializations; rather, they arise from orienting engagements with counterparts and actors already defined within the field of ethnographic inquiry. Through this process, the formal *problematic* of contemporary ethnography is established (Fischer, 1999, 2003; Marcus, 1999a; Rabinow, 2003).

Under the conditions we are stipulating, where meaning is fugitive and social facts are elusive, distinct dilemmas are created for the individual. Cultural innovations continually destabilize social consensus, posing characteristic struggles for the perplexed subject—struggles that gain expression through various manifestations of the para-ethnographic. We are interested in how these para-ethnographic narratives become linked together among different expert subjects, conferring a distinctive *social* character on, for the most part, technical knowledge. What we refer to as internarratives not only link domains of expertise, often in unlikely ways, but also allow expertise to be juxtaposed in ways that render them acutely relevant to a broad range of anthropological questions. Expertise in science, politics, law, business, finance, and art must increasingly confront reciprocal expertise (and subaltern discourses) on human rights, social justice, and environmentalism, to name just a few. These critical and insurgent discourses can emerge from what are very familiar ethnographic concerns—the economic, political, and/or environmental plights of subaltern subjects or indigenous peoples—but they gain articulation in courts and through legal proceedings, in government bureaus and scientific agencies, within universities and museums, in nongovernmental organizations and a diverse range of international forums as well as through our own anthropological practices of representation and advocacy. The interchange between and among various established and alternative domains of expertise can create decisive axes of analysis that can orient a multisited staging of fieldwork. Thus, these bridging discourses can link the ethnography of experts to the lives and struggles of ordinary people. In this way, inquiry into cultures of expertise may well become an aspect of virtually all major projects pursued by anthropologically informed ethnography, even those projects that start from highly localized sets of interests and concerns.[4]

Our delineation of para-ethnography developed out of analysis of the unusual expertise of an infamous political actor, the French nationalist Jean-Marie Le Pen. Observations of Le Pen and his colleagues revealed an eerie convergence between their insurgent forms of political experimentation and those practices that encompass the professional métier of the ethnographer. Insurgent political narratives are, for the most part, designed not merely to circulate among experts but also to shape social thought and action across countless sites and among diverse publics. Le Pen's para-ethnography demonstrates the potential of this kind of narrative to establish a multisited scene providing the intellectual substance and the conceptual links between and among sites. By aligning the work of the anthropologist with that of highly problematic political figures such as Le Pen, we establish the problem of "complicity" as pivotal in defining the ethics and politics of fieldwork—in ways that were disguised in the Malinowskian scene in the off-stage presence of the colonial official.

■ SCHEMATIC EXCHANGE

We turn to a particular case of political expertise that illustrates the shift in the staging of the ethnographic encounter we have been discussing. We draw on an interview that was part of a multisited ethnographic project that moved from the rural districts of northeast Italy, to the political and bureaucratic precincts of the European Parliament in Strasbourg and Brussels, and finally to the impoverished districts of the East End of London. The subject of the exchange on which we focus here is Le Pen. Holmes conducted the interview at the headquarters of the European Parliament in Strasbourg during the early 1990s. The voice—the "I"—here is superficially that of Douglas Holmes, but it actually represents our combined responses to this unusual conversation.

What made it pivotal for our thinking is that the exchange began with rather conventional premises whereby the subject, Le Pen, served as an informant, as an interlocutor who could provide an "insider account" or the "native point of view," as it were, on a distinctive form of extreme right-wing French nationalism, but in the course of the exchange a series of disruptions introduced

by Le Pen (and tacitly accepted by Holmes) revealed the operation of what we are terming the para-ethnographic. In what follows, we show that what initially appeared to be a subtle shift in the staging of the encounter, in which Le Pen's role was recast from "key informant" to "para-ethnographer," can incites a wide-ranging reassessment of anthropological ethnography. We present the case as a scenario—as a thought experiment—that focuses on the nature of the encounter and how it operated in the service of anthropological knowledge. The scenario also encompasses the technical language and terminology that we have developed to rebuild and refunction ethnography.

Fieldwork at the European Parliament, the consultative body of the European Union (EU), was as part of a study of European integration that spanned the decade from late 1980s to the late 1990s, focusing on interviews with a very broad range of political figures. The meeting with Le Pen, leader of the National Front, was unplanned and came after discussions with other leaders of the party.[5]

The conversation with Le Pen defied my expectations and understanding of how the ethnographic relationship is staged and how ideas are shaped and exchanged through this kind of relationship. This sense that something about the ethnographic relation was shifting as I was participating in it had been building over the course of my work at the parliament. But only when I encountered Le Pen, with his lurid charms, his extravagance, and his audacity in openly challenging the tenets of the interview process, did I fully grasp the extent to which the ethnographic relationship was being recast. In one important way, this was not a surprise; Le Pen's theatricality is renowned, and his performances are widely acknowledged to be masterful and compelling despite (or because of) their extremist character. He prides himself on the texture, the subtlety, and the range of his emotional message. What others consider to be distasteful about his performance, Le Pen claims as the distinctive means by which he engages the intimate struggles that circumscribe the lives of his public. Linking the theatrical and emotional dimensions of his political

practice is a formidable intellectual tradition that intersects with the foundational concepts of humanistic anthropology—the traditions and lineages of what Isaiah Berlin terms the "Counter-Enlightenment." From this intellectual tradition, Le Pen distills what he believes to be the essence of human nature and the character of cultural affinity and difference, ideas that imbue fervent political yearning and foreshadow an exclusionary political economy.

The manner in which Le Pen insinuated this vision into our meeting was decisive in both defining the key *theoretical* issue of Holmes's project—the supranational character of advanced European integration—and fully revealing the possibilities of what we refer to here as the para-ethnographic. Acknowledging the operation of the para-ethnographic also exposed the interleaved affinities—or what we term "complicities"—linking the knowledge work of figures such as Le Pen and our own knowledge work.

My first impression during the meeting was that Le Pen was parodying and baiting me. In retrospect, I think that there is no doubt that was exactly what he was doing. It was, however, by no means merely a rhetorical maneuver on his part; rather, it was a deep substantive challenge. He was asserting that the distinctive domain of his political expertise was "culture." He was claiming a mastery over cultural ideas, cultural practices, and cultural meanings that far exceeded anything I, or any other mere academic, was capable of exercising.

To demonstrate his prowess, he laid out a remarkable vision of Europe, a vision predicated on solving the central conundrum—the core riddle of advanced European integration. He asserted that European integration that presents itself, at least at the time of the interview, as a wide-ranging economic undertaking was in fact a radical social and cultural project aimed at creating a *supranational* multiracial and multicultural Europe. Moreover, the project, as he understood it, was unfolding unmarked, unrecognized, and unnarrated. He had assumed for himself the task of giving voice to this process, giving the project of European integration a language and thereby a new political reality.

He recognized that at the heart of the project is a deep antagonism toward the political economy of the European nation-state, its regulatory regimes, and its cognitive purview. He saw integration as a wide-ranging scheme to usurp the powers of the nation-state, a scheme that ironically was engineered through the nation-state itself. The state, in this view, is by no means irrelevant, particularly as it has come to operate intergovernmentally within the EU; rather, it no longer constitutes the preeminent instrument defining *society* in Europe (Connolly, 1995; Milward, 1999; Moravcsik, 1998).

Framing Le Pen's insights are a number of fundamental analytical challenges. As the dominant position of the European nation-state is usurped through the process of integration, so too are many of the phenomenological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that underpin the social sciences. Inquiry into the supranational operation of the EU reveals how deeply our extant repertoire of analytical concepts, our historical perspectives, and even our ethical and moral assumptions are predicated on the nation-state as a social fact. Thus, when we seek to examine European integration, we must confront phenomena that aggressively challenge all of our means and methods by which we produce knowledge. But of course, this is precisely what makes the EU—as it continually reinvents itself—such a profoundly important object of study (Holmes, 2003).

Le Pen's ambition during the early 1990s was to define the discourse on the emergence of a multiracial and multicultural society by eviscerating its moral and intellectual foundations. He thereby escaped the tightly sequestered world of right-wing French nationalism and established the premises of a supranational politics of Europe, a politics emphatically opposed to integration. Indeed, during the early 1990s, Le Pen was the first to elaborate what could be construed as a new political articulation of what is at stake in advanced European integration.

Le Pen's political innovations are compelling intellectually and have had a powerful appeal for new *European* constituencies—despite their overt fascist resonance. What Le Pen delineated exceeds what is conventionally understood as "politics"; rather, he conjured a complex sociology and metaphysics that tethers the new political economy of the EU to emerging existential struggles taking shape in the lives of virtually all Europeans. He recognized that integration was paradoxically creating new domains of alienation and estrangement in which radical formation of meaning are being contested (Bauman, 1997, 2001; Holmes, 2000, pp. 59–74).

Le Pen was hardly inclined to submit to the role of mere informant for someone else's project; on the contrary, he sought to both control and disrupt our interchange at every turn. As I became essentially the audience for his performance, I detected something oddly familiar about Le Pen's discourse, particularly the way in which he conceptualized overarching social and cultural struggles that could be read in the sacred and profane experience of situated subjects. The way in which he drew on anecdotal accounts to create intricately woven narratives about contemporary Europe sounded ethnographic to me; indeed, our exchange in some ways sounded like the musings of social anthropologists. His narratives were, of course, hardly disinterested, yet they seemed at least superficially to be ethnographic. In other words, what struck me was that Le Pen needed something akin to an ethnographic purview to pursue his political insurgency. This insight provoked a series of questions with which we continue to grapple. What is the nature of this kind of "ethnographic" purview? How does it operate? How do we draw these knowledge practices of our subjects into a broader anthropological project? How does this kind of collaborative knowledge practice recast our relationship to our subjects? And what are the ethical implications of this kind of collaboration? More broadly, we recognized even with this initial rendering of the para-ethnographic that new strategies and designs for problematizing research had become possible (Rabinow, 2003).

◨ COMPLICITIES

As we examined carefully the intersection between ethnography and para-ethnography, we

developed the notion of the "illicit discourse" to mark out domains of complicity. Le Pen's discourse was overtly "illicit" insofar as it was predicated on malevolent cultural distinctions, but it was also "illicit" insofar as it challenges our claim as anthropologists to have a unique authority over this form of knowledge practice. More broadly, we have used the concept of illicit discourse to mark a conceptual space for working out the formidable moral and ethical challenges posed by the collaborative imperatives of para-ethnography. The para-ethnographer in this case is not merely involved in a complex "sensemaking" but rather is involved in an aggressive knowledge practice in the service of wide-ranging theoretical and ideological agendas. Le Pen's para-ethnography draws on "theory" and "ideology" that seek to explain cultural and racial affinity and difference in ways that challenge the culture concept as it has come to underwrite humanistic anthropology. On this kind of complex collaborative terrain, our ethical and moral conceits are open to direct challenge from the theoretically and ideologically informed positions of our subjects (Holmes, 2000).

The most powerful illicit discourse that we discerned from the engagement with Le Pen focused on the problem of "society" as key to our reciprocal practices of "ethnography." Le Pen and we sought constructions of European society as a moral framework, an analytical construct, and an empirical fact; we needed to conjure new representations of society to do our respective work. This was the foundation of a deep convergence of our ethnography and Le Pen's para-ethnography. Le Pen used his representation of society to configure deeply rancorous political meaning. We created a representation of society to configure a critical analysis of European politics, most notably of politics like those framed by Le Pen (Holmes, 1993).

Le Pen understands viscerally that as society framed by the bourgeois nation-state is eclipsed, a space is created for a radical politics that draws on latent cultural idioms to align a new conceptualization of collectivity. This view of society espoused by Le Pen could be used, as Holmes demonstrated, to frame an analytic of European integration. But Le Pen's disturbing "theoretical" innovation also depends on a "method"—a para-ethnography—that allowed him to narrate the usurpation of the nation-state and its significance not just for those traditional political constituencies displaced and estranged by this process but also for all Europeans. Inlaid in his narrative was a complex structure of feeling that configured a new emotional landscape for a supranational Europe on which sublime yearnings are crosscut by acute fears and anxieties. Again, he recognized that integration was paradoxically creating new domains of alienation and estrangement in which radical formation of meaning were establishing the terms of struggle over multiracial and multicultural society. Le Pen had, in this way, defined a distinctive tableau not only for his political insurgency but also for our ethnographic experimentation. In other words, European integration became a domain that we could enter analytically via the ecology of discourses that Le Pen had articulated (Marcus, 1999a, 1999b).

■ CONNECTIVE TISSUE

Political narratives defining European pluralism are obviously designed not merely to circulate within the political precincts of the EU but also to shape social thought and action within countless sites across this burgeoning polity. Thus, Le Pen's para-ethnography is decisive in another crucial way in that he demonstrates the potential of what we term the "internarrative" in the construction of a multisited scene. Internarratives serve as the connective tissue and the intellectual substance, as it were, of multisited ethnography; they provide the conceptual bridges between and among sites.

Insurgent politicians seek to create narratives that can enter the lifeworlds of a newly constituted public. The initial trajectory of this kind of communicative action is, in the case of Le Pen, from his headquarters in Paris to the homes, bars, workplaces, sports clubs, and so on of French and European citizens, where his narratives circulate in informal conversations, in press accounts, and in the shop talk of local politicians. These political

narratives are interpreted and endowed with distinctive configurations of meaning in these diverse local contexts. They are also refracted back to Paris, to Le Pen's headquarters, and to the political offices of all those who seek to oppose him, where they can be recalibrated and recommunicated to align a complex discursive field.

By taking a marginal nationalist discourse and recrafting it as a supranational European discourse, Le Pen set the terms of debate on a multiracial and multicultural Europe and, for our purposes, established an analytical tableau that extends across innumerable sites. Thus, the discourse on pluralism that he crafted can take profoundly different forms depending, for example, on whether it is configured across the borderlands of Ireland or Poland within working-class neighborhoods of Marseille or Vilnius. In these diverse sites, this narrative enlivens distinctive human predicaments, conferring on them a fraught conceptual and emotional substance that can be explored ethnographically. Thus, a multisited ethnography was constructed across this tableau inspired by Le Pen, revealing how contemporary formulations of European pluralism gain expression as intimate cultural practices in rural districts of northeast Italy, as a racialized political economy within the institutions of the EU, and as a violent idiom of alienation and estrangement in the East End of London (Holmes, 2000). In this staging, multiple points of entry, through which one can discover countless interlocutors who endow European integration with diverse human voices, were established.

⬚ CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES

In our effort to reconcile the troubling affinities between the knowledge work of figures like Le Pen and our own knowledge work, we recognized a unusual creative process—an "intimate artifice"—whereby the ethnographer and paraethnographer create either a shared framework of analysis or frameworks that operate in some kind of reciprocal relationship through which interleaved formations of knowledge are generated

and exchanged dialectically. These collaborative exchanges operate at each stage of the ethnographic project.

The creative challenge posed by the type of fieldwork on which we focus here involves delineating the phenomenon to be studied, establishing an analytic tableau populated with human subjects who define it, endowing it with social form and cultural content. For us, this is a complex collaborative process whereby a discursive space on which a multisited ethnography can be staged is created, a discursive space where the actions of our subjects and our own analytical practices can be observed and where they and we shape a social reality.

In the case that we have discussed, a discursive space was circumscribed—Holmes terms it "integralism"—allowing us to view European integration simultaneously from the standpoints of its diverse theoretical underpinnings, its intellectual lineages, and its technocratic practices as well as allowing us to engage ethnographically the ways in which integrations inspire political insurgencies radically opposed to its abiding ideals. Moreover, the collaborative space encompassed by integralism created a dynamic purview from which we can view integration in terms of its manifold contradictions, revealing not merely its institutional manifestations but also its profoundly human character— the ways in which it has come to align consciousness and mediate intimacy. For us, this is the essence of a multisited mise-en-scène, a staging that can reveal the interplay between metatheoretical issues and the intricacies of human experience.

Inevitably, as we explore the dilemmas of expertise in other domains, we reciprocally expose our own professional limitations and liabilities. Not the least of these is the curious effect of observing how what we claim to be our distinctive practices as ethnographers can be deployed in creative ways by our subjects, conferring on their knowledge work a status that equals, if not exceeds, our own. To do an engaged and critical ethnography of expertise, we not only must build into our projects, as a methodological first principle, an acknowledgment of the uncertain nature of our own intellectual practices as

ethnographers but also must actively exploit this unsettling condition as a driving force of our inquiry. By drawing complicity to the heart of our methods and ethics, a circumstantial *activism* becomes plausible (Marcus, 1999b).

We view this kind of collaboration as not merely an elicitation of preexisting social and cultural elements but also the systematic crafting of discursive spaces that capture newly constituted social and cultural phenomena as they take form within a continuously unfolding contemporary. We believe that this kind of activism rekindles the most radical aspirations of the anthropological project. In this collaborative framing—this intimate artifice—an activism that is theoretical, empirical, ethical, political, and existential in its scope and purview can be built into the constitution of the ethnographic relationship (Fortun, 2001).

Thus, para-ethnography is not merely a matter of identifying a new ethnographic subject—an accomplished autodidact; rather, it opens far deeper questions of how culture operates within a continuously unfolding contemporary. What is at stake in our conceptualization of the para-ethnographic are formations of culture that are *not* fully contingent on convention, tradition, and "the past" but rather constitute future-oriented cognitive practices that can generate novel configurations of meaning and action. Indeed, this gives rise to our most radical assertion—that spontaneously generated para-ethnographies are built into the structure of the contemporary and give form and content to a continuously unfolding skein of experience.

◨ NOTES

1. Most of the graduate projects that we supervise begin or end with such encounters, even though they may operate for considerable periods of time in the traditional mise-en-scène of anthropological fieldwork of sustained residence among ordinary (accessible?) people—in villages, on shop floors, in neighborhoods, on hospital wards, in classrooms. But these encounters are now given ethnographic import and treatment, and the main puzzle of fieldwork becomes their multileveled relation to these other more conventional and manageable sites of fieldwork. For example, we currently have a student who is researching the implementation of "freedom of information act" laws in Poland as an index of "democratization" there, the initial challenge of which has been to understand, by self-conscious fieldwork strategy, the "local" intellectual and official culture by which these laws have been conceived and formulated. Another student who has worked on concepts of risk among financiers in Korea moved back and forth between and among firms and particular neighborhoods in Seoul, sites that offered her variably "thick" and "thin" ethnography but created the context of relationship in which she found her focused object of study—not what went on in either set of sites but rather the nature of the real and imaginary relationships between and among them. A third student has spent long periods among contemporary Mayan villagers who live on or near ancient ruins, but the project has achieved its cogency only by extending fieldwork into the daily operations of the formidable regional and national bureaucracies of cultural heritage in Mexico. Of work that has been published by former students, that of Bargach (2002), Fortun (2001), and Hernandez (2002) exemplifies this emergence of multisited fieldwork in very different styles, but each study requires the sort of refunctioning of traditional notions of fieldwork that we have described.

2. The ethnographic studies of contemporary politics, of science and technology, of corporate business and markets, and of art worlds are the primary arenas of contemporary life where the refunctioning of ethnography that we describe has been emerging. The primary example that we work through in this essay comes from European politics. The recent study of Australian aboriginal painting by Myers (2002) is probably the most important example of such ethnography on art worlds. The Late Editions volume edited by Marcus (1998) provides sources on the ethnographic study of corporations. See also the work of Maurer (1995, 1999, 2002a, 2002b). However, it is in the burgeoning field of science and technology studies that the most impressive shift in the practice of ethnography can be observed. See Downey and Dumit (1997), Latour and Woolgar (1988), Marcus (1995), Pickering (1995), Rabinow (1999), Reid and Traweek (2000), Strathern (1992), and Traweek (1988).

3. Although we try to give our own specific conception to para-ethnography as an object of fieldwork investigation, it is certainly deeply connected to the long-standing interest in American cultural anthropology of probing "native points of view" through ethnographic investigation. Put simply, anthropology works through the understandings of others and the claim to be able to

achieve knowledge of these understandings through fieldwork investigation. The influential discussions in social theory (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994) of the importance of reflexivity itself as a major structural dimension of contemporary life have only enhanced this traditionally rooted interest in the para-ethnographic as an object of ethnography. For an elaborated discussion of this connection between the native point of view and para-ethnography, see Holmes and Marcus (2004).

4. A superb case in point is the recent work by Petryna (2002) on Chernobyl nuclear accident survivors that was named winner of the best first book published by an anthropologist, awarded in 2003 by the American Ethnological Society. Petryna worked closely with a group of survivors, participating in their everyday lives, characteristic of the vantage point of traditional ethnography. But she quickly found that to do justice to her topic, and to her subjects, she had to conduct multiple parallel ethnography: "My decision to abstain from judgment is also supported on empirical grounds. . . . Worlds of science, statistics, bureaucracy, suffering, power, and biological processes coevolve here in particular and unstable ways. How to discern their patterns as locally observable realities that affect people's daily lives and sense of moral and bodily integrity—or put another way, how to do an ethnography of the relationships among biological, political, and social processes as those relationships evolve—is a major creative challenge of this work" (p. 120).

5. The anthropology of contemporary Europe is a particularly cogent setting for the refunctioning of ethnography based in multisited strategies of fieldwork. The emergence of the EU and its institutions has made every locally focused study in Europe—no matter the specific venue or topic—at the same time a study of the overarching EU frame. With everything parallel processed, so to speak, there is no likely topic on contemporary Europe that is not at least multisited in its social space. Thus, this area of anthropology has been especially prescient in the refunctioning of ethnography as we discuss it. To understand the new anthropology of Europe that has emerged around the problematic of advanced European integration, see Abélès (1992, 1995, 1996, 2000), Bellier (1994, 1997), and Shore (2000).

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