

*Chapter 1*

# **Intercultural Studies**

## ***A Local-Global Approach***

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One would think that cultural studies would be a natural place to look for guidance in creating new educational principles and strategies for human development in this century. Its basic premises and methodologies ought to be compatible with an emergent ethics of global intelligence and its desiderata of crossdisciplinary and crosscultural responsive understanding, dialogue, and cooperation, as conditions of generating new local and global knowledge. Unfortunately, the field of cultural studies, as developed and practiced especially in North American academia and then exported to other academic environments in various countries from around the world, is as much at an impasse as other academic disciplines.

Since its inception in the 1970s, cultural studies has largely operated on the basis of an ideological and political alliance among such academic schools as Marxism, poststructuralism, feminism, and postcolonial studies. Its methodology has largely been a “hermeneutics of suspicion,” based on social critical discourse, which originated with Marx and Nietzsche, in the nineteenth century, and was most notably continued, in the twentieth century, by the Frankfurt school of social critical thought, Freudian and other schools of psychoanalysis, and French and Anglo-American poststructuralism. Initially, the field of cultural studies fulfilled a useful role in examining certain asymmetric mechanisms of socioeconomic, cultural, and sexual power inside and outside Western “developed” societies. Yet, it had no solutions to offer beyond the traditional Marxist notions of class struggle, to which it added the notions of gender and race conflict.

The latest academic avatars of cultural studies often lack the cosmopolitan sophistication of their predecessors, in part because they have mostly limited their object of study, and social critique, to global or local popular culture as a manifestation of “late,” consumerist capitalism. Furthermore, since the collapse of their political alliance during the last decade of the twentieth cen-

tury, they have again relapsed into splinter groups and factions that are vying for academic authority and such administrative and financial advantages as may come with it. They have built their own academic disciplines, departments, and interdisciplinary programs and have joined the academic bureaucratic establishment, often with a vengeance. They have contributed to the contentious, legalistic atmosphere of North American academia, swept by successive waves of political correctness that are, to some degree, reminiscent of the cultural policies of East European communist regimes in the 1950s, or the Soviet “proletcultism” of the 1930s. Therefore the field of cultural studies, at least as it is largely practiced today in the West and its former colonies, is hardly in a position to offer any viable solutions for advancing global intelligence. On the contrary, it tends to inhibit such advancement, with its perennial oppositional discourses that are continuously co-opted by the very forces it allegedly struggles against.

Literary studies, one of the major fields that, together with cultural anthropology (particularly ethnography), philosophy, history, film studies, social studies, and women’s studies, has mostly participated in the interdisciplinary programs of cultural studies, does not seem to fare much better. The common wisdom in North American academia has it that, despite their desperate interdisciplinary efforts, literature and literary studies are dying, if not already dead. This terminal state of crisis is brought about, it is often argued, by the onset of the new information and communication technologies or the Digital Age, which will eventually replace the printed page with the electronic screen. The very term “literature” (coming from the Latin word *littera*, “letter”) seems to suggest that this Western form of discourse, dependent as it is on print technology, is fast becoming obsolete in a culture in which writing is largely replaced by word processing and digital imaging.<sup>1</sup>

A related problem that has come back to haunt North American literary studies is precisely their turn toward interdisciplinarity and cultural studies. Specifically, they have adopted the utilitarian and quantitative methodologies of the social sciences to such an extent that they are now in danger of losing their identity as an independent field of research. Consequently, literary studies have come to be perceived, especially by cost-and-benefit minded college administrators, as nothing more than an insignificant, and often politically troublesome, appendix to the social sciences. It is small wonder, then, that those who have built their careers, if not staked their entire intellectual and emotional lives, on literature and literary studies, should feel acute anxiety. This anxiety might variously translate into demoralization, cynicism, switch of career tracks or, at the other end of the psychological spectrum, self-defensive or aggressive apologies for the literary profession. Indeed, according to the compensatory mechanism of emotional polarizations, there are even those who claim that literature is all there is, from the hard sciences to virtual reality, to human history, to the Text of the World.

Yet, it would surely be too soon to give up on literary studies (or on cultural studies, for that matter). The “death of literature,” or its emotional counter slogan, “everything is literature,” belongs to the same crisis-oriented vocabulary as the “death of God,” “death of the author,” and “death of the subject.” All of them are part of the inflated rhetoric of modernity, with its acute consciousness of “all-devouring Time” and its frenzied drive for ever new sensations, whether physical or conceptual. Their rhetorical force has, however, greatly diminished with ad nauseam repetition. Literature is alive and well and living in a globalized world, like the rest of us. On the other hand, if the “death of literature” signifies no more than the death of literature and language departments as they are organized and function in today’s disciplinary university, then one should cheer this process along, rather than mourn it. It is high time for academic reform in the field of literary studies as well, which does not mean that this field will die, but that it will renew itself and become again relevant to today’s world.

In fact, literary studies are in an excellent position to contribute substantially to what appears to be a worldwide shift of knowledge paradigms, rather than to fight a losing, rearguard, academic action or be swallowed up by the social sciences. Even though some forms of literary studies might be more fashionable than others in the present intellectual climate, and even though literary studies, no less than cultural studies, continue to be plagued by ideological and political factionalism especially in the United States, the artistic tools and rhetorical strategies of literature in general are, or could be, among the most productive in the reconfiguration of knowledge and the creation of new cognitive paradigms that are the mark of our global age. It is this message that one may find not only in the Euro-American field of literary theory, e.g., in the recent work of Wolfgang Iser, Edward Said, Wlad Godzich, Paul Bové, James Hans, Arnold Krupat, Virgil Nemoianu, Gabriele Schwab, Kurt Spellmeyer, Frederick Turner, and the present author, but also in other human sciences, e.g. in the work of “metahistorians” such as Hayden White; sociologists such as Erving Goffman, Richard Brown, and Mike Featherstone; or ethnographers and anthropologists such as Victor Turner, James Clifford, Stephen A. Tyler, Paul Rabinow, George Marcus, and Michael Fischer, among others.

In this chapter, I shall focus on the productive feedback loops that have, for more than two decades, been circulating between ethnography as the vanguard of a postcolonial, revisionist, cultural anthropology and a literary theory that, while not ignoring the important lessons of deconstruction, attempts to move beyond some of its nihilistic implications. Starting from such feedback loops, I shall stage a crossdisciplinary comparison and dialogue that should help us develop the theoretical and methodological principles and practice of a reconstructed field of *intercultural studies*. This field would go beyond the current ideological and political impasse of cultural studies, while preserving and reorienting some of its valuable insights. It would situate itself in the van-

guard of a much needed, comprehensive study of and dialogue among world cultures, not only from a local, national, or regional perspective, but also from a global one.

## 1. The Aesthetic Turn in Experimentalist Ethnography and the Anthropological Turn in Literary Studies: A Transdisciplinary Perspective

The “experimentalist” ethnography is the locus where much of the crossdisciplinary interface between anthropological and literary studies took place during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Many of the theoretical assumptions that ground the new ethnography can be found in an early collective volume, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus and entitled, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986). In the Introduction to this volume, significantly entitled “Partial Truths,” James Clifford lists some of these assumptions. According to him, the scholars whose essays are gathered in the volume see culture “as composed of seriously contested codes and representations; they assume that the poetic and the political are inseparable, that science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes.” They also assume that “the writing of cultural descriptions is properly experimental and ethical,” while their emphasis on text creation and rhetoric highlights “the constructed, artificial nature of cultural accounts.” (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 2) For Clifford, the written, literary component of ethnographic accounts is what gives them their peculiar, amphibolous character of partial truths and partial fictions.

In order to prevent “empiricist heckles” over the notion that ethnographies are mere fictions or literature, rather than objective, scientific accounts, Clifford attempts to redefine the term “fiction” (and, as we shall see later on, the term “literature” as well). For him, fiction, as commonly employed in contemporary textual theory, no longer means falsehood, or the mere opposite of truth. Rather, it “suggests the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and exclusive.” (6) In this sense, “even the best ethnographic texts—serious true fictions—are systems or economies of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control.” (7)

Clifford borrows such theoretical concepts as “dialogism,” “polyphony,” and “otherness” from Mikhail Bakhtin (who initially develops them in his literary analyses of Dostoevsky’s novels) in order to reform the monological narrative techniques of traditional ethnography. According to Clifford, this ethnography gave the voice of the ethnographer a “pervasive authorial function” and to others—usually members of the alien culture to be studied—the role of sources or “informants” to be cited, paraphrased, and interpreted. As a result, “polyvocality was restrained and orchestrated.” (15) By contrast, the

new ethnography recognizes “dialogism and polyphony” as modes of textual production. It questions the “monophonic authority” of traditional ethnography, which has always claimed to represent other cultures, at the same time that it has, presumably, hindered them from presenting themselves. Traditional ethnography, as the handmaiden of anthropology, “looked out at clearly defined others, defined as primitive, or tribal, or non-Western, or pre-literate, or nonhistorical.” By contrast, new ethnography “encounters others in relation to itself, while seeing itself as other.” (23)

In turn, Talal Asad, in his essay on “The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology” included in the same volume, critically examines the notion of “the translation of cultures” that social anthropology seems to have regarded as one of its main projects since the 1950s. This notion, also borrowed from literary and linguistic studies, presupposes that cultures, much like foreign languages, need to undergo a process of translation in order to be properly understood outside their own, “natural” habitat. Most importantly, Asad implicitly questions the process of understanding itself and the ways in which Western scientific communities, including anthropologists, acquire and classify knowledge. These ways largely involve the projection or imposition of Western cultural constructs upon remote and mostly nonwestern cultures. Thus, anthropological processes of understanding and/or acquiring knowledge, including cultural translation, are “inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power—professional, national, international.” (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 163)

According to Asad, languages themselves are not “equal,” because there are “asymmetrical tendencies and pressures in the languages of dominated and dominant societies.” (164) The anthropologist needs therefore to consider the possibility that cultural translation might be “vitiating” by such tendencies and pressures. Asad offers the example of Arabic, which undergoes forcible transformations under the influence of English, signaling “inequalities in the power (i.e., in the *capacities*) of the respective languages in relation to the *dominant* forms of discourse that have been and are still being translated.” (158, italics in the original)

Asad also questions the authority of ethnographers to read the “implicit” in foreign cultures. The ethnographic method of “decoding the other” is akin to the psychoanalyst’s work and, as such, is a “form of theological exercise.” (161). According to the psychoanalytic approach, social anthropologists are trained to decode implicit meanings. These meanings are not the ones that the native speaker actually acknowledges in his speech, or accepts from outside his culture, but those he is presumably capable of “sharing with scientific authority in ‘some ideal situation.’” (162) Consequently, social anthropologists are not trained to introduce or enlarge cultural capacities learned from other cultures into their own, but rather “to translate other cultural languages as texts.” (160)

One should, again, note that such textual interpretive methods were borrowed, via psychoanalysis, from literary studies, specifically from hermeneutics. As is well known, Freud himself developed psychoanalysis as a form of hermeneutics applied to the human psyche that he in turn conceived as an implicit, multilayered text to be decoded and explicated. In Freud's work, moreover, there is no positivistic or disciplinary split between science and literature, both appearing as complementary forms of knowledge.

As we can see from the preceding citations, Asad does not explicitly formulate the principles of a new kind of cultural translation that should guide the social anthropologist's work, although these principles are easily deducible from his text. Cultural translation ought to enhance the translator's cultural capacities, his ability to transform his own culture by learning from others. Indeed, to put it in an aphoristic manner, translation is exploring and learning, like an infant, new ways of life. The idea of cultural translation remains very important in current anthropological and literary studies and deserves further elaboration. I shall return to it, later on in this chapter, when I shall propose the concept of *intercultural translation*, based on Asad's critique of traditional anthropological notions of cultural translation and Wolfgang Iser's concept of hermeneutics as translation acts.

Paul Rabinow, in his essay on "Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology," takes up some of the same critical issues, but also offers a program of action, or an ethical code for the new anthropology. According to Rabinow, this anthropology does not need a theory of indigenous epistemologies or "a new epistemology of the other." Instead, it should *anthropologize* the West. For example, it should show how "exotic" the Western constitution of reality is. To this purpose, it should focus on those branches that are most taken for granted as universal, such as epistemology and economics, and making them appear "as historically peculiar as possible." (241) Anthropology should also pluralize and diversify its approaches. In Rabinow's view, one way of going against economic or philosophic "hegemony" is to "diversify centers of resistance." One should also avoid the error of "reverse essentializing," because, after all, "Occidentalism is not a remedy for Orientalism." (241)

Rabinow also reflects critically on the work of the experimentalist ethnographers or "metaethnographers," as he calls them, such as Clifford. According to him, they "ignore the relations of representational forms and social practice" when they claim that ethnography is a form of literature, or metafiction, or metatruth. Instead, they should, like Pierre Bourdieu, be mindful of the "strategies of cultural power that advance through denying their attachment to immediate political ends and thereby accumulate both symbolic capital and 'high' structural position." (252) Rabinow equally questions the claim of the metaethnographers that their kind of writing emerged because of decolonization. He suggests the possibility that academic politics

might have had something to do with it, instead. Although asking if “longer, dispersive, multi-authored texts would yield tenure might seem petty,” it is nevertheless important to determine the “situatedness of the anthropologist within academia.” (253)

Finally, Rabinow surveys the various theoretical positions in cultural anthropology, including ethnography. He distinguishes four different theoretical approaches: interpretative, critical, political, and critical-cosmopolitan. These approaches, all of a hermeneutical nature, form an “interpretive federation,” to which Rabinow claims he equally belongs. His obvious sympathies lie with critical cosmopolitanism, however, in which “the ethical is the guiding value.” (258) He describes this approach as an “oppositional position, one suspicious of sovereign powers, universal truths, overly relativized preciousness, local authenticity, moralisms, high and low. Understanding is its second value, but an understanding suspicious of its own imperial tendencies. It attempts to be highly attentive to (and respectful of) difference, but it is also wary of the tendency to essentialize difference.” (258) Critical cosmopolitanism is an “ethos of macro-interdependencies, with an acute consciousness (often forced upon people) of the inescapabilities and particularities of places, characters, historical trajectories and fates.” (258)

The program envisaged by Rabinow is partly carried out by George E. Marcus and Michael J. Fischer in their influential book on *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. First published, just like *Writing Culture*, in 1986, but re-edited with a new introduction in 1999, this book is a comprehensive account of the significant transformations that ethnography has spearheaded in the field of anthropology, as well as of the ways in which anthropology as an academic discipline, or cluster of disciplines, can reposition itself within a global reference frame. It is particularly useful, because it places the recent developments in ethnography in both a cultural-historical perspective and an interdisciplinary one. Although one may not necessarily agree with Marcus and Fischer’s particular cultural-historical narratives, one can nevertheless appreciate their narrative strategy that allows them to view their field from both the inside and the outside. The authors thus succeed in gaining the historical and emotional distance needed for any cultural critical project that also wishes, as theirs does, to propose a concrete program of disciplinary reforms.

In their brief history of anthropology as an academic discipline, Marcus and Fischer focus mostly on its British, French, and North American versions. They appear to divide this history into three main phases: the generalist, the positivist, and the self-reflexive or critical phase. The generalist phase coincided with the birth of anthropology as an academic field, in the second half of the nineteenth century, under the sign of the grand theories of scientific progress, based on the belief in the possibility of a universal, rational Science of Man. According to Marcus and Fischer, what have now become

the specialized subfields or disciplines of archeology, ethnology, biological anthropology, and sociocultural anthropology were at that time “integrated in the competencies of individual anthropologists, who sought generalizations about humankind from the comparison of data on the range of past and present human diversity.” (17) Anthropologists such as James Frazer and Edward Tylor in England, Emile Durkheim in France, and Lewis Henry Morgan in the United States pursued “ambitious intellectual projects that sought the origins of modern institutions, rituals, customs, and habit of thought through the contrasts of evolutionary stages in the development of human society.” (17) They rarely traveled or did fieldwork, however, being mostly “armchair” anthropologists.

The second stage of British and American academic anthropology came during the first three decades of the twentieth century and can best be understood “in the broader context of the professionalization of the social sciences and the humanities into specialized disciplines of the university, especially in the United States.” (17) Positivistic notions of science resulted in divisions of academic labor, disciplinary specialization, analytic languages and standards, and distinctive methodologies. Under these conditions, the “generalist fields of the nineteenth century—those well established, like history, and the upstarts, like anthropology—were now mere disciplines among a multitude of others; their grand projects became the specialties of bureaucratized academia.” (17-18)

According to Marcus and Fischer, anthropology did not feel at ease in this new disciplinary environment. While attempting to find its place as one of the social sciences, it remained somewhat of a maverick among these sciences, precisely because of its generalist origins and practices. One should add that, in the late twentieth century, when “interdisciplinarity” and “unity of knowledge” became the order of the day in North American universities, especially under pressure from upper administrators who found the disciplinary institutional paradigm to be too rigid to accommodate the explosion of knowledge led by the physical and life sciences, anthropology easily rediscovered its “interdisciplinary” vocation, just as philosophy, history, and literature did. This is not to say that any of these fields has yet recovered from the onslaught of logical and scientific positivism and academic bureaucratization, or that any of them has become genuinely crossdisciplinary.<sup>2</sup>

Be it as it may, it was during the second phase of its development, the authors claim, that anthropology came into its own as an academic discipline. This was largely due to ethnography whose innovation was to bring together “into an integrated professional practice the previously separate processes of collecting data among non-Western peoples, done primarily by amateur scholars or others on the scene, and the armchair theorizing and analysis, done by the academic anthropologists.” (18) Ethnography has also spearheaded the third phase of self-reflexive and critical anthropology, which began and flourished during the last three decades of the twentieth century and continues to

the present day. Marcus and Fischer connect this phase with the broader context of what they see as the crisis of representation in the human sciences.

The authors take the French sense of “human sciences” (*les sciences humaines*) to include not only the conventional social sciences, but also law, art, architecture, philosophy, psychology, literature, and even the theoretical natural sciences. By “crisis of representation” they mean not only questioning the validity of all of our theoretical and methodological assumptions about social reality, but also a historical paradigm that tends to recur throughout Western intellectual history. This paradigm is broadly characterized by the suspension of grand social theories and systems of thought in favor of “rich experimentation and conceptual risk-taking.” (10) The older, dominant theoretical frameworks are not denied, but are used in new, eclectic ways. According to Marcus and Fischer, our intellectual history can thus be seen as an “alternate swing of the pendulum between periods in which paradigms, or totalizing theories, are relatively secure, and periods in which paradigms lose their legitimacy and authority—when theoretical concerns shift to problems of the interpretation of the details of a reality that eludes the ability of dominant paradigms to describe it, let alone explain it.” (12) Our contemporary age (in the past three decades) has experienced just this kind of swing from a period of grand theories to eclectic experimentation and exploration of new ways of describing “at the microscopic level the process of change itself.” (15)

For Marcus and Fischer, the absence of paradigmatic authority in their discipline reveals itself in the fact that at present there are many anthropologies, such as ethnosemantics, British functionalism, French structuralism, cultural ecology, psychological anthropology, etc. These subdisciplines, moreover, use a variety of eclectic approaches. For example, some of them synthesize Marxist theory with structuralism, semiotics, and other forms of symbolic analysis; some merge language studies with social theory; and some employ scientific frameworks such as sociobiology with a view to attaining a fully “scientific” anthropology. Nevertheless, all of them take the practice of ethnography as their “common denominator in a very fragmented period.” (16) In turn, ethnography gives rise to “interpretive anthropology,” that is, the “explicit discourse that reflects on the doing and writing of ethnography itself.” (16) Here, then, we have Rabinow’s “interpretive federation,” led not by critical cosmopolitanism, but by ethnography as cultural critique, or interpretive anthropology.

The question for Marcus and Fischer is how to give renewed relevance to the field(s) of anthropology in the present climate of theoretical skepticism. In other words, how can anthropology best represent itself in a period of representational crisis? They argue that during such periods, “a jeweler’s-eye view of the world is needed, and this is precisely where the strength and attractiveness of cultural anthropology reside at the moment”. (15) Ethnography again comes in handy, because it has long been dealing with “problems of the recording, interpretation and description of closely observed social and cultural processes”. (15)

According to Marcus and Fischer, it is also during periods of crises, when paradigmatic authority is absent, that one should expect a diffusion of ideas across disciplinary boundaries. They contend that anthropology should take advantage of this fact and seize the opportunity of regaining and putting to use its generalist vocation (now called “interdisciplinarity”). From a theoretical standpoint, anthropology “has always been creatively parasitic, testing out (often ethnocentric) generalities about man on the basis of specific other culture cases, investigated firsthand by the ethnographic method.” (19) Because its concerns cross the traditional divide between the social sciences and the humanities, anthropology can in fact serve “as a conduit for the diffusion of ideas and methods from one to the other.” (16)

Marcus and Fischer’s historical account of paradigmatic shifts, both inside and outside their field, can be modified, expanded, and refined. For example, the historical pendulum that they see as alternating between two models of knowledge, one that involves authoritative totalizing theories and one that involves absence of paradigmatic authority, is a “partial truth,” only partially plausible. Western intellectual history, or any other history, appears much messier and cannot easily fit into any such binary, linear cognitive models. For example, what Marcus and Fischer call a period of fragmentation may also be attributed to the positivistic turn and excessive specialization in academic research, rather than to a crisis of representation. This kind of positivist, disciplinary approach does favor “jeweler’s-eye” analyses and distrusts grand theories, because it perceives them as largely “untestable” through experimental scientific methods. But this hardly means that it has at any time lost faith in such scientific methods or, indeed, in the grand rationalist project of the Science of Man.

On the other hand, even if we decide to work with Marcus and Fischer’s binary models of knowledge, we need to make them more dynamic and interactive. One may, for instance, postulate that the two models, instead of following a pendulum-like movement, overlap in all historical periods and often engage in causally reciprocal, feedback loops. Grand theories continuously emerge and disappear in various fields at various times in different parts of the world. Conversely, the process of questioning the possibility of knowledge (any kind of knowledge) parallels the process of questioning any kind of authority, whether intellectual or not, and is continuously present during different historical periods, in different Western societies.

Some paradigmatic shifts may, furthermore, become visible only in retrospect and are asynchronous in relation to different fields of knowledge and disciplines. In another context (Spariosu 1989) I have argued, for instance, that the Romantic period in literature and the arts, which flourished in various European countries between the end of the eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century, reached its full impact in science only at the beginning of the twentieth century. They then became an authoritative paradigm only in the

1950s, with the acceptance of the principles of relativity and quantum mechanics in physics. (These were worked out precisely during the 1920s and 1930s, when Marcus and Fischer place their swing of the pendulum away from grand-style theories.) Periods of intellectual skepticism can coincide and coexist with periods of great faith in the Science of Man, as seems to have been the case during most of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

In order to add depth and credibility to their historical account of the birth and development of their field, Marcus and Fischer could have mentioned other Western anthropological traditions that were at least as important as the British and the French, and certainly more important than the North American one, in shaping anthropology into a modern academic discipline. Four major European traditions in ethnography immediately come to mind: the Portuguese, Peninsular-Hispanic, Italian, and German ones, with such illustrious predecessors as Marco Polo, Columbus, Hernán Cortés, Amerigo Vespucci, Vasco da Gama, Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Garcilaso de la Vega, and other voyagers and ethnographers who led or accompanied European expeditions to the so-called New World; Giambattista Vico, as well as Kant, Herder, Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt, the Grimm brothers, and other Romantic thinkers who contributed to the creation of a national spirit (and, ultimately, of the nation-state), based on their ethnographic studies. The list may also include the Russian, Dutch, and Scandinavian explorers, as well as those of Central and Eastern Europe who in the nineteenth century were subjects of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires. One should also include the important Hellenistic, Arabic, African, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, and Mayan contributions to ethnography during different periods in the history of humankind.

What is of interest in Marcus and Fischer's narrative constructions, however, is not so much their historical validity, which may variously be contested or subscribed to, but their performative quality, i.e., their ability to become authoritative paradigms (although we need to examine and redefine what we mean by "authoritative" as well), resulting in new research programs and, generally, in the transformation of anthropology and other disciplines within human studies. These studies should now be considered not only within their local, European and North American, reference frames, but also within a global one. Marcus and Fischer start this process in their Introduction to the second edition of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*. Later on in the present chapter I shall return to this second Introduction in order to discuss the role of interpretive anthropology within a global framework. I shall also review, at that time, the research programs proposed by Marcus and Fischer for their discipline, which could play an important part in the reconstruction of the field of intercultural studies as well. For now, I would like to turn to the literary side of the interdisciplinary dialogue that I have been staging here, in order to take into consideration other theoretical building blocks that could equally contribute to this task.

Not unlike his colleagues in anthropology, Wolfgang Iser, one of the foremost literary theorists of our time, is concerned with the question of the contemporary relevance of his discipline in a period of cognitive paradigmatic shifts. He addresses this question in his latest books: *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (1989), *The Fictive and the Imaginary* (1992), and *The Range of Interpretation* (2000). In the first two of these books, Iser develops what he calls a “literary anthropology.” Thereby, he implicitly acknowledges the cultural anthropological turn in contemporary literary studies, which meets halfway ethnography’s turn toward literature.

According to Iser, literary anthropology has arisen as a historical necessity in our age, because literature has again reached a turning point (as it did with the invention of printing a few centuries ago), evidenced by the numerous pronouncements about its imminent demise under the pressure of the contemporary mass media. But what is fading away is less the literary phenomenon itself than its traditional functions as perceived by the various poetics and aesthetic theories of the past. Hence, for Iser literary anthropology has a triple objective (which parallels to some extent the methodological objectives of Marcus and Fischer’s interpretive anthropology): to map out the changing functions of literature over time, to determine what its new functions might be in a postmodern age, and to understand its enduring place in the human overall scheme of things. Inevitably, the second and third objectives will to some extent overlap according to the “temporizing of essence” effect, described by Kenneth Burke (and implicitly referred to by Iser), through which any poetics or aesthetics tends to equate the function(s) of literature with its nature.

Iser begins his literary anthropological project by sketching a broad historical outline of the traditional functions of literature in the West. The classical and neoclassical notions of literature as mimesis, which assigned the literary work the task of making nature accessible to human beings, or even perfecting it, were replaced by the Romantic notions of literature as the creation of a genius, that is, as a realm of freedom opposed to the realm of nature, even as it imitates natural process. Thus, in the nineteenth century, the old relationship of complementarity between art and nature gradually turned into one of opposition, with literature being seen as either absolutely independent from or even more real than reality. These views led to the interrelated notions of art as a religious surrogate and as an ennobling instrument of humanistic culture, which in turn led, ironically, to the bourgeois utilitarian notion of art as a means of gaining social status. According to Iser, it is largely against these bourgeois notions of high culture that Dada, Surrealism, and the 1968 French student movement rebelled, but in doing so, they created their own notions of literature as practical (revolutionary) agent.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the concept of literature as reaction to and interpretation of reality—a concept to which Iser equally subscribes—has moved to the forefront of literary theory and criticism. This

development in literary studies is part of the earlier realization, variously articulated by Nietzsche, Vaihinger, Husserl, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, and also taken up, as we have seen, by some experimental ethnographers, that our acts of cognition are acts of interpretation and that, in turn, our acts of interpretation are acts of world-making or ontological acts. Interpretation is a way of selecting, combining, and ordering, but also omitting, ignoring, or even suppressing, bits of reality in order to create a coherent whole, structure, or system. Iser points out that, once the hermeneutic complex of structure, function, and communication comes to the center stage of Western thought, it unfolds with a certain historical inevitability.

What underlies the hermeneutic complex is its search for meaning, or its semantic orientation: The concept of structure “describes the production of meaning,” the concept of function “gives concrete definition to the meaning,” while the concept of communication “elucidates the experience of meaning.” (Iser 1989: 231) In other words, the work of art is always reduced to its semantic dimension. Yet, Iser contends that the semantic dimension is not the ultimate dimension of the literary text, but of literary theory, “whose discourse is aimed at making the text translatable into terms of understanding.” (232)

By contrast, for Iser the ultimate dimension of the literary text is “the imaginary.” Whereas meaning tends toward precision, the imaginary is diffuse by its very nature. Its diffusiveness eludes semantic determination, allowing it to be transformed into “many gestalten.” (232) In turn, within the literary text, the imaginary is continuously shaped by the fictive. Consequently, in his next book, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*, Iser proposes a triadic model of interplay between the imaginary, the fictive, and the real as the conceptual basis for his literary anthropology.

Iser defines both the imaginary and the fictive in functional terms, tracing the history of their uses. He points out that imagination has variously been considered as a human faculty (by the Romantics and S.T. Coleridge in particular), as a creative act (by Jean-Paul Sartre), and as Ur-fantasy or radical imaginary (by Cornelius Castoriadis). All of these conceptualizations show that the imaginary is a featureless and inactive potential that lacks its own intentionality. An outside agent must, therefore, activate it, such as the subject (in Coleridge), or consciousness (in Sartre), or the psyche and the sociohistorical (in Castoriadis). Within the literary work, it is the fictive that becomes this activating agent.

In turn, the fictive is a functional category no less slippery than the imaginary, having a long history in terms of its literary, philosophical, and scientific uses. Iser traces the history of its philosophical uses from Francis Bacon to Nelson Goodman (Iser 1992: 87-170)—of course, one could easily have traced this history all the way back to the Sophists, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. One could now also add the new ethnographers’ use of it, for example in Clifford’s concept of “partial truth” in relation to ethnographic discourse. According to Iser, the most important feature of the fictive is its double meaning, or its abil-

ity to cross boundaries through its “fictionalizing acts.” On the one hand, a fictionalizing act makes inroads into the real, dissolving its rigid boundaries by selecting, recombining, and bracketing some of its constitutive elements. On the other hand, it crosses into the boundless world of the imaginary and gives it a certain direction or structure.

For Iser, then, literature, no less than art in general, is a privileged locus of interaction between the fictive, the real, and the imaginary. In the literary work, the fictive gains an added functional feature that distinguishes it from its uses in philosophy and science, namely, self-disclosure. Through self-disclosure or the act of pointing to itself as fiction, the fictive can best carry out its role as mediator between the real and the imaginary. It transgresses the limits of “what it organizes (external reality) and what it converts into gestalt (the diffusiveness of the imaginary).” Thereby, it leads “the real to the imaginary and the imaginary to the real.” (Iser 1992: 4) For Iser, then, the fictive in literature is a “halfway house” or a borderline phenomenon, always oscillating between the real and the imaginary.

Finally, Iser turns his attention to such anthropological categories as play, mimesis, performance, representation, and staging, which introduce the philosophical premise of his literary anthropology: the extraordinary plasticity of human beings that has its sources in our perpetual attempt—and perpetual failure—to become present to ourselves. Because humans seem to possess an indeterminate nature, they “can expand into an almost unlimited range of culture-bound patternings. The impossibility of being present to ourselves becomes our possibility to play ourselves out to a fullness that knows no bounds, because no matter how vast the range, none of the possibilities will ‘make us tick.’” (Iser 1992: 297) In turn, literature, through mimesis and staging as forms of play, becomes a vast panorama of human possibilities, “because it is not hedged in either by the limitations or by the considerations that determine the institutionalized organizations within which human life otherwise takes its course.” (297)

Because literature constantly monitors the ever-changing manifestations of human self-fashioning without ever completely coinciding with any of them, it “makes the interminable staging of ourselves appear as the postponement of the end.” (Iser 1992: 302) Literature thus addresses the “cardinal points of existence,” that is, birth and death. In Iser’s view, birth and death have always been “sources of disquiet” for human consciousness, because they are “ungraspable certainties,” defying cognition. (302) So humans attempt to make them as tangible as possible through literary staging or simulacrum. Literature “allows us—at least in our fantasy—to lead an ecstatic life by stepping out of what we are caught up in, in order to open up for ourselves what we are otherwise barred from.” (303)

One of Iser’s important insights, which he shares with the deconstructionists and the poststructuralists in general, is that any theoretical or critical per-

spective, no matter how comprehensive, inclusive, or pluralistic it aspires to be, will inevitably reduce the literary work to a semantic level. This also holds true for those new ethnographers, such as Clifford and Tyler, who use literature for anthropological ends, as we shall see immediately below. One may, however, add that even those theoretical approaches that are based on the deconstruction of meaning are forms of semantic reduction of the literary text, because deconstruction is a logical operation, depending on the communicative structure and/or function that it dismantles. In other words, deconstruction, no less than other semantic approaches, discounts the imaginary aspect of the literary text even as it reduces it to this aspect.

As Iser points out, the imaginary by itself always appears as indeterminate. For this reason, it essentially defies any meaning at the same time that it conditions all meaning. So, one could argue, deconstruction as an anti-semantic logical operation (un) covers the imaginary, but in the negative or destructive fashion that arrests the creation of further meaning. Therefore, it paradoxically denies further access to the imaginary as well. It is in this sense that deconstruction (especially as practiced in American academia in the wake of Paul de Man) can be seen as a nihilistic intellectual endeavor, in which the search for meaning enters a perpetual crisis or state of dissatisfaction.

For his part, Iser, once he has uncovered the imaginary as productive indeterminacy (or what certain Eastern schools of thought would call productive nothingness or emptiness), prefers a Nietzschean form of joyful forgetfulness. He relaunches the search for meaning by incorporating the imaginary itself into the equation and exploring the ways in which it contributes to the creation of meaning in the literary text. Thereby, however, he does not fall back into the old trap of semantic reduction: he defines literary reception not as a primarily semantic operation, but, rather, as “a process of experiencing the imaginary gestalt brought forth by the text.” (Iser 1989: 210) In this regard, Iser respects the alterity of the literary text as a perpetually new unfolding of the imaginary.

Although Iser attempts to turn away from the nihilistic tendencies of our contemporary culture—which often experiences the “emptiness” of the imaginary in a negative if not a tragic manner—and to open up the possibility of new ludic spaces for the human imagination, some of the implicit philosophical assumptions that underlie his literary anthropology still show certain nihilistic residues.<sup>3</sup> If one were to express the hermeneutical double nature of Iser’s literary anthropology in philosophical terms, one might say that there is a certain *décalage* between his constructivist epistemology and his residually neo-Kantian ontology. So the next step of literary anthropology might be to explore the concept of the real in the same thoroughgoing philosophical, historical, and anthropological fashion that it has explored the concepts of the fictive and the imaginary.

Without going into the long and complex history of the Western concepts of reality, here I would only like to note that these concepts seem nowadays to

have become so diffuse that they needlessly problematize the issues involved in Iser's literary anthropology. Incidentally, they also problematize the issues related to Marcus and Fischer's notion of paradigmatic shifts as pendulum swings between skeptical and confident modes of perceiving social reality. The two anthropologists do not theorize the notion of reality any more than Iser does, leaving the impression that there is a monolithic social reality out there, which can then be described more or less adequately either by grand theoretical systems or by the jeweler's-eye view of the ethnographer. Thus, they largely leave unexamined the reality-making capacities of any theory—grand or small—including their own ethnographic speculations. On the other hand, Rabinow, through his notion of “representations as social facts,” narrows down the role of these theories to helping create specific social realities. He thereby denies their relative independence in relation to a specific social reality, i.e., their imaginary aspect.

One can, for example, see the literary text, indeed the imaginary itself, as another form of reality, if by “reality” one understands, in neo-Kantian fashion, not only a (visible or invisible, accessible or inaccessible, knowable or unknowable, orderly or chaotic) succession of physical, psychological, and historical phenomena, objects, and events, but also human artifacts, including language, which are always a paradoxical mixture of ideal and material elements.<sup>4</sup> It is clear, moreover, that by “the real” Iser does not mean the opposite of the fictive, or even that of the imaginary, since he argues that these binary oppositions have lost their theoretical cogency. He is also well aware of the fact that the opposition between literature or “fiction” and reality gives rise to a familiar regressive, mirrorlike, effect that is often dramatized and played upon by literature itself.

In order to avoid such aporetic effects, one can replace the terms “reality” and “the real” with “the actual.” Iser's literary anthropological triad would then become the interplay of the imaginary, the fictive, and the actual. The latter term would neatly correspond to Iser's phenomenological notion of the literary work as a series of concretizations that arise in the interaction of this work with a recipient or a community of interpreters. The “actual” would thus underscore the decisive role human communities have in establishing or changing a specific—and specifiable—state of affairs. In this sense, a literary work does not react to or interpret either the real or Reality as such (the Kantian and neo-Kantian *Ding an sich*), but can play an active role in redefining or modifying a past or current state of affairs, or even in generating an entirely new one.

Ontologically, one could go even farther and joyfully affirm the unity between reality and the imaginary (instead of regarding it negatively as an aporia), positing it as a continuous unfolding of an infinitely diverse plurality of fictive, actual, and liminal worlds.<sup>5</sup> This would certainly not mean confusing “literature” with “reality” or, properly speaking, the literary with the actual

(and Iser seems to me justified in stressing once again the adverse ontological consequences of such Romantic confusions). On the contrary, it would further clarify the specific, *liminal* function of literature in ceaselessly reshaping the actual world through an interplay of the fictive and the imaginary. In fact, one of Iser's most important insights is this liminal function of literature. Although he will use this term, borrowed from anthropology, only in his next book on the range of interpretation, it would be methodologically advantageous to adopt it in this earlier context as well.

The concept of liminality would specifically describe the literary phenomenon, with its ceaseless crossing of boundaries between the fictive, the actual, and the imaginary. It would also properly distinguish between literature and fiction, or between literary-liminal and fictive worlds. As Iser points out, the fictive worlds of philosophy and science (including ethnography) are pragmatically oriented, that is, oriented toward the actual. Consequently, they are largely underplaying the liminal potential of the fictive. By contrast, literary worlds release precisely this liminal potential, by directing the fictive not only toward the actual but also toward the imaginary.

In his most recent book, *The Range of Interpretation*, Iser does introduce the term "liminality" in connection with his theory of interpretation or hermeneutics, which becomes another facet of his literary anthropology. He elaborates on the thesis, episodically present in Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960) as well, that any act of interpretation is in fact an act of translation, specifically, the translation of a particular subject matter into a different register. Furthermore, each act of interpretation opens up a gap between the subject matter and the register into which it is translated. Following Arnold Van Gennep (1960), Victor Turner (1982), and other anthropologists and literary theorists, Iser calls this gap a liminal space.

As each act of interpretation generates a liminal space, its intent will realize itself in the way in which it can negotiate this space. According to Iser, such a negotiation is indispensable as the liminal space is bound to contain a resistance to translation—a resistance, however, that energizes the drive to overcome it. Interpretation may thus be conceived as a paradoxical effort to cope with the liminal space it itself generates by narrowing it down as much as possible. Finally, if interpretation is a form of translatability, then it will always depend on what it attempts to translate, rather than on some infallible concept of truth or reality.

Starting from the idea of interpretation as a form of (cultural) translatability, Iser sketches four main types or models of interpretation according to the subject matter that is to be translated into a different register and the different ways in which each type negotiates the liminal space that it opens up. He also deploys these four main types historically, tracing their gradual emergence and fading as the necessary result of paradigmatic shifts in the value systems and beliefs operating in a certain community or culture within the Judeo-Christian world.

According to Iser, the first interpretive type is the exegetic model of the Torah in the Judaic tradition, where the texts to be interpreted form a sealed, or open, sacred canon, based on divine authority. This model is also borrowed by literary criticism in the Neoclassical Age, resulting in the creation of a literary canon. In this interpretive mode or genre, undisputed authority is of paramount concern when sacred texts need to be translated into the life of the community or when canonized authors become guidelines for both the production and reception of literature. (Iser 2000: 13-28) In turn, when the canonic authority becomes eroded and subject to critical disputes, the interpretive community finds ways of coping with this loss through new strategies of interpretation, e.g., the hermeneutical circle, with such variables of it as Schleiermacher's "self-reflective circularity," Droysen's "nesting of circles," and Ricoeur's "transactional loops." (41-69)

These variables of the hermeneutical circle remain operative as long as the interpretive community still believes in some kind of center that holds reality together. Once this center loses its hold and becomes replaced by a void, or vortex, or entropy, a different mode of interpretation comes into being: the "recursive loop." Iser analyzes various types of recursive loop, ranging from the interpretive strategies of cybernetics, in the work of Norbert Wiener (1948) as an attempt to control entropy and reconstitute the center; to those of "ethnographic recursion," in the work of Clifford Geertz (1973) and André Leroi-Gourhan (1993), as an attempt to negotiate between the familiar and the alien in the encounters between cultures or levels of culture; to those of "systemic recursion," in the work of the Santiago School of systems theory (Maturana and Varela 1980), as an attempt to deal with a reality conceived as open-endedness in terms of autonomous systems, or composite systems, emerging out of a structural coupling of systems. (Iser 2000: 83-112)

The last type of interpretation Iser describes is the "travelling differential," a term he borrows from Franz Rosenzweig's book *The Star of Redemption* (1921). This interpretive type attempts to deal with a situation where holistic conceptualizations of the divine or the transcendental as advanced by philosophy and theology have lost their ability to translate incommensurabilities into cognition. (113-44) Iser sums up his argument by showing how the last three types of interpretation that he has described are interconnected and how "the hermeneutic circle, the recursive loop, and the travelling differential actually shade into each other whenever interpretation occurs." (Iser 2000: 141) Thus, the difference between various interpretations is mostly one of emphasis, with one of the interpretive modes being "dominant" and the others "subservient" to it.

Iser also raises the question of the nature of the liminal space created by any interpretation, which according to him is that which "marks off the subject matter from the register and therefore does not belong to either." (142) This liminal space is "basically empty, yet something seems to arise out of it," due

to the interplay of the circle, loop, and differential that lends it structure. Iser further describes the liminal space as a “vortex” in which these three operational modes “struggle with each other.” (143) The liminal space, while not autopoietic by nature, can nevertheless assume this quality “by drawing its virulence from what is inserted into it from outside itself.” (144) In the final analysis, Iser concludes, the very uncontrollability of the liminal system allows it to become a nonlinear “self-organizing system” or a “source of emergent phenomena.” (145)

Most of Iser’s recent work, no less than that of the new ethnographers, reveals that not only literary studies, but also Western practices of interpretation in general, including those implicitly or explicitly employed by the social, physical and life sciences, might fruitfully be viewed in cultural anthropological terms, that is, not as universal givens, but as culture-specific, historical phenomena. Furthermore, Iser considers these questions from the standpoint of recent developments in the theoretical sciences, such as chaos, complexity, and emergence theory, based on earlier insights of general systems theory, thus demonstrating their wide applicability not only to natural but also to cultural phenomena.<sup>6</sup> Iser’s theory of reading and communication could also be productively employed in the context of contemporary cultural studies, of which ethnography, as we have seen, is an integral part. But Iser elects not to pursue this option, limiting himself to what one might call a “philosophical anthropology in a pragmatic sense”—Kant’s term and title of one of his early and, in my view, most seminal works.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Iser does not directly engage cultural studies in his work is precisely because this field, as currently constituted in Western academia, all too often enlists literature in the service of some specific ideological or political agenda. Experimentalist ethnography itself is a good example of this opportunistic use of literature. As we can see in several essays included in *Writing Culture*, ethnography co-opts literature in order to reinvent and legitimate its own disciplinary and rhetorical strategies. There would be nothing prejudicial in this use of literature, if some ethnographers did not, at the same time and in the same movement, abuse it.

For instance, Clifford, in his introduction to *Writing Culture*, remarks after he makes his case for the semiliterary nature of ethnography: “As will soon become apparent, the range of issues raised is not literary in any traditional sense. Most of the essays, while focusing on textual practices, reach beyond texts to contexts of power, resistance, institutional constraint, and innovation.” (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 2) Literary texts can obviously point to these contexts as well. Here Clifford adopts a charge, often leveled at postmodernist literature (but not at all literature) by certain traditional literary critics, that it is too self-reflexive and self-referential, and therefore self-indulgent. (Ironically, we recall that Rabinow, in his own contribution to *Writing Culture*, levels the very same charge at the new ethnographic writing, includ-

ing that of Clifford.) But, then, later on in the same introduction, Clifford, as if to discount his first statement, reduces literature, just like Rabinow, to ideological discourse and, as such, to a “transient” category: “The ideological formations of art and culture have no essential or eternal status. They are changing and contestable.” (6) Again, Clifford borrows this judgment from a certain sociological, perhaps Marxist, type of critical discourse on literature, which says less about literature itself than about its interpretive community, as Iser also points out in a different context.

In turn, Stephen A. Tyler, in his essay on “Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document,” goes to great lengths in describing the new ethnography as a form of archaic poetry—an idea he borrows from Werner Jaeger’s *Paideia* (1945), which he appropriately cites in his text. At the end of his argument, however, undoubtedly mindful of “empiricist heckles” from his more conventional colleagues that also seemed to worry Clifford, Tyler falls back on the same argument of self-indulgence and self-reference as a distinguishing criterion between his experimentalist ethnographic discourse and the literary one: “No origin outside the text—just literature then, or an odd kind of lit. crit.? Yes, literature, but not in the sense of total self-reflexivity, of literature about itself and nothing else.” Unlike literature, ethnography is not self-referential, but evokes what “can never be put into a text by any writer,” namely the commonsense understanding of the reader. In this regard, the incompleteness of the ethnographic text “implicates the work of the reader.” In turn, the reader’s work “derives as much, if not more, from the oral world of everyday expression and commonsense understanding as it does from the world of the text.” (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 138)

Literary critics such as Iser, who have developed sophisticated reader-response theories in dealing with literary texts, would obviously argue that engaging the reader in a thoughtful dialogue about intra- and extra-textual worlds is precisely what most literature does. That experimentalist ethnography uses literary and aesthetic strategies in order to gain disciplinary authority is not objectionable per se. After all, Marcus and Fischer acknowledge the theoretically opportunistic nature of ethnography that is “creatively parasitic” on ideas borrowed from other fields, which it puts to the test of ethnological practice. Their observation applies equally well to literature, which in turn uses a wide range of nonliterary discourses in its imaginary constructions. This kind of borrowing back and forth is part of the healthy circulation of ideas that fertilizes and enriches the intellectual climate of any transdisciplinary effort.

Problems arise, however, when the new ethnographers attempt to distinguish their ethnographies from literature by reenacting the old scapegoat ritual that Socrates performed on poetry, for example, in Plato’s *Republic*, where he attempted to substitute poetry for philosophy as the authoritative discourse in the polis. This scapegoat ritual has been enacted, again and again, at the scene of the birth of many a new discipline or the rejuvenation of an old one. And,

incidentally, the sacrificial victim of such rituals has not always been poetry or literature alone. Cultural anthropology itself should, therefore, study this widely practiced sacrificial ritual as an integral element of the disciplinary scientific mentality or culture. In turn, a reconstructed field of transdisciplinary and intercultural studies, oriented toward global intelligence, will hopefully avoid such power moves, deeply engrained in our cultural histories.

Indeed, what is at stake in any disciplinary enterprise is power as a founding principle of all that is, including representation. In this sense, Marcus and Fischer's "crisis of representation" is in fact a crisis of old power systems of authority, which are at first challenged and undermined, but eventually manage to be reborn and to reconstitute themselves on different epistemological grounds. These crises can simply be seen as strategies of reconfiguring power structures so that they can regain their authority in the communities that have temporarily lost faith in them. Modernity itself thrives on all kinds of crises as power-enhancing strategies, as we can discern, for example, in the insatiable modern appetite for natural and manmade disasters that the New Media feed on and feed back to their public.

If literature can be reduced to its semantic or representational level, then it loses its imaginary or liminal features. Thereby, it loses its capacity for pointing to values outside its immediate cultural context, such as "unrepresentable," cultural otherness and alternative worlds. These are not representable precisely because their grounding principles are incommensurable with those of power. In this manner, literature can be contained and controlled within power-staged representations.

Rabinow, for example, implies the ubiquity and inevitability of power in all representation, when he declares in a typical postmodernist, Foucaultian fashion: "Thought is nothing more and nothing less than a historically locatable set of practices." (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 239) In turn, we recall Clifford's assumption that "the poetic and the political are inseparable." (2) Through these statements, both Clifford and Rabinow effectively deny, in the wake of Foucault, that thought can have an imaginary history, or histories, locatable outside actual public and social practices. And most such public and social practices known to humankind have been based on power relations and representations. So this is a way for such poststructuralist writers as Foucault, Rabinow, and Clifford to equate thought with power. For them, thought cannot exist in a "vacuum," that is, in a liminal space and cannot function outside a concrete set of social relations and practices. (We might recall, in this context, Aristotle's famous aphorism that "power abhors vacuum.")

But how does a particular set of social practices and relations change? Must it always be power that drives such change? Whereas the poststructuralist answer would be a definite "yes," human thought could imagine, and has imagined, other possible answers. Like many other poststructuralists, Foucault, Rabinow, and Clifford discount the creative role of the human imagina-

tion—an important component of thought that is not always and inevitably based on a binary opposition of truth versus falsehood, or an either/or logic, or some other such mechanism of power. Although thought, individual and collective, may be “local” in terms of the range of choices open to specific members of a human community or culture at a given time and place, it can also conceive of social choices and structures outside those currently available, and is thus capable of producing new social “facts.” Therefore, Iser seems to shy away from the current versions of North American and other cultural studies also because most of them discount the imaginary or liminal aspects of literature and thought in general.

And yet, by not considering literature in a wider intercultural context, Iser’s literary anthropology misses the opportunity to confront its own partial blindness to cultural alterity, in the restricted sense that it occasionally presents its assumptions (just as Kant presented his) not as specifically Western, but as universally human. It also misses the opportunity to confront contemporary cultural studies itself, including experimentalist ethnography, with its blindness to literature as a liminal phenomenon and to the possibilities of world making outside the realm of power politics. It is perhaps for these reasons that Gabriele Schwab, Iser’s former student at the University of Konstanz and current colleague at UC Irvine, takes the next logical step from literary anthropology to an “imaginary ethnography,” which she situates squarely in the field of cultural studies. A brief consideration of her recent work might be useful in understanding how literary anthropology can be creatively employed in this field.

In *The Mirror and the Killer-Queen: Otherness in Literary Language* (1996), Schwab develops a theory of literature as cultural contact. By “cultural contact,” following Gregory Bateson, she means both the interactions between culturally different communities and those within a single community, such as the “processes whereby a child is molded and trained to fit the culture into which he was born.” (Schwab 1996: 9) She contends that literary texts establish a “highly specialized” form of cultural contact with their readers. This cultural contact involves both the imaginary worlds these texts propose and the reading practices into which readers of literature are socialized, including traditional and experimental literary techniques. Ultimately, literary texts confront their readers with an experience of otherness, whether this otherness is internal (psychological, sexual, social, and cultural) or external (intercultural).

Schwab notes that there are two major forms of alterity that earlier theories of reading, including those of the Konstanz School to which Iser equally belongs, have not dealt with: sexual otherness and intercultural otherness. Moreover, these types of alterity have always engendered forms of cultural and intercultural contact based on asymmetrical relations of power. Schwab supports the feminist thesis that although anyone may in principle occupy the

position of the Other, the symbolic order of language, based as it is on binary oppositions, represents “Woman as the primary Other—which, in turn ‘feminizes’ all other agencies or orders that occupy the position of otherness, be it the racial other, the child, the primitive, the insane, the irrational, the poetic, the unconscious, or simply chaos.” (37) One might disagree with Schwab’s essentialist privileging of “Woman as the primary Other,” which can be regarded as part of the compensatory mechanism inherent in the reversal of any asymmetrical binary opposition—in this case that of male versus female. But one can hardly deny that women, together with the so-called “sexual deviants,” have often occupied the position of the Other in Western cultural polarities based on gender.

In turn, Schwab notes that contemporary cultural studies foreground intercultural otherness largely in the form of extensive critiques of Western capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism with their largely “ethnocentric,” destructive forms of cultural contact. According to her, cultural criticism has also attempted to develop an “ethic of otherness” based on decolonization, whether the “decolonization of other cultures, ethnic minorities, women, or the unconscious.” (37) The assumption of this criticism is that colonialism has marked intercultural contact to such a degree that its dynamic also applies to attitudes toward cultural otherness as a whole. One might, again, disagree with Schwab’s and other postcolonial critics’ privileging of the colonial Other, for the same reasons that one might disagree with the privileging of the sexual Other. Yet, one can hardly deny that colonialism has produced a severe trauma in the collective psyches of both the colonizers and the colonized, which will take a long time and a great amount of intercultural reconciliation to heal.

For Schwab, cultural criticism is a “border operation,” as evidenced, for example, in Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of “criticism in the contact zone.” Pratt defines “contact zones” as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.” (Pratt 1992: 4) But, temperamentally, Schwab seems to feel closer to Arnold Krupat’s notion of ethnocriticism, developed mostly in his book, *Ethnocriticism* (1992), which attempts, at least in principle, to avoid a violent concept of cultural difference, while acknowledging the difficulty of such a project. For Krupat, as for Schwab, literary texts display qualities of betweenness, being on the frontiers of fields such as history, ethnography, philosophy, and social science, and often crossing these frontiers with impunity. In turn, ethnocriticism partakes of this “frontier condition of liminality or betweenness.” (Krupat 1992: 27) It seeks to position itself “somewhere between objectivism and relativism” (27) and to employ a Bakhtinian, dialogical approach to otherness. We recall that dialogism and polyphony are among the most important methodologies of the new ethnography as well, and should be a grounding principle for any intercultural studies project, oriented toward global intelligence.

But Schwab, unlike her colleagues in ethnography and as if in answer to Iser's apparent reservations toward what he seems to perceive as the ideological biases of cultural studies, does attempt to define the specificity of literary texts in relation to that of other cultural texts, without scapegoating any of them. In this sense, she brings an important contribution to literary anthropology. She argues that the cultural function of literature is largely to shape "literary figurations of otherness—be it an internal otherness or that of other cultures—and thereby determining its mediation to readers. Because they work at a subliminal level, style, formal structures, and literary moods may, in fact, shape experiences of otherness even more deeply than the historical or cultural remoteness of texts." (Schwab 1996: 43)

Working especially with experimental literary texts such as *Alice in Wonderland*, *Finnegans Wake*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Nightwood*, etc., Schwab argues that these texts bear in a fundamental way on the cultural relevance of literature. Unlike philosophical and other systematic forms of discourse, experimental literature at its best provides "a heteronomous experience that achieves a movement to the other that never returns to the same." (45) Experimental literature also stimulates a way of thinking characteristic of open, rather than closed, systems and thus "tends to increase sensitivity and tolerance for otherness and to decrease cultural paranoia." (44)

Here, again, Schwab opportunely invokes Gregory Bateson to the effect that "systems of thought or forms of cultural contact that rigidify boundaries in order to maintain internal coherence lead to an increase of outside pressure or, in relation to other cultures, external conflict and hostility, which is ultimately destructive for all agents involved." (45) By contrast, experimental literary texts point toward "a dynamic, nondestructive or balancing relationship between cultures in contact" that requires a "permanent renegotiation of their mutual boundaries." (45) This process results in a different form of inner coherence based not on domination, but on flexibility and openness to change.

Schwab further argues that literary forms of language as modes of cultural contact generate an aesthetic experience that "may well form a countersocialization—as long as literature retains its subversive potential." (46) In turn, a theory of reading such as hers should enhance the resistance to destructive forms of cultural contact and increase the capacity for nondestructive ones. According to her, as well as to many other contemporary cultural theorists, today's radical question is survival, "not only in the ecology of the earth but also in the ecology of encounters with other cultures, the ecology of mind, speech, and voice, or the increasingly marginalized space of reading." (46)<sup>7</sup>

Through her theory of reading as cultural contact Schwab goes a long way toward restoring the rightful place of literary studies among contemporary cultural studies, without disregarding its specific cultural role. One of her important contributions is to introduce the questions of sexual and cultural otherness in traditional Western hermeneutics, thereby revising and expanding

it, instead of rejecting it out of hand as “paternalist” and “sexist.” Yet, her cultural-ethnographic approach to literature could have benefited from Iser’s literary anthropology even more than it has so far. Schwab does not explore the notion of liminality, at least not in this particular study, nor does she explicitly use Iser’s theses on the fictive and the imaginary, although they might have enriched her “imaginary ethnographies.”

For example, Schwab could have shown that not only literary texts, but also ethnographic studies in general may be called “imaginary” or “constructed” as some ethnographers themselves, e.g., James Clifford, point out. She could have further noted that the chief difference between the two types of discourse resides in the fact that the fictive worlds of philosophy and science, including anthropology and ethnography, are primarily oriented toward the actual, and as such they are necessarily underplaying the liminal potential of the fictive. By contrast, literary worlds release precisely this liminal potential, by directing the fictive not only toward the actual but also toward the imaginary.

In her theory of literature as cultural contact, Schwab focuses mainly on the notion of otherness, often equating cultural contact with the experience of alterity and thus unwittingly adopting an ethnographic bias: cultural otherness has been at the center of Western ethnographic studies from their very inception, in Herodotus, Plutarch, and others. But the experimentalist ethnographers themselves, for instance Paul Rabinow, George Marcus, and Michael Fischer, point out that otherness as a traditional disciplinary staple of ethnography should equally be submitted to a careful cultural critique, so as to avoid the pitfalls of its all-too-frequent theologization (Edward Said’s term).

## **2. Globalization, the Concept of Culture, and Intercultural Studies**

My discussion so far has revealed that crossfertilization between ethnography and literary anthropology is only in its initial phases and that further comparative analysis must be carried out for both fields to gain full insight into each other’s potentiality as partners in a reconstructed field of intercultural studies, within a global reference frame. To this purpose, we can now return to Fischer and Marcus’s second Introduction, significantly entitled “The Project of Anthropology as Cultural Critique: Past and Future,” which will further help us sketch the guiding principles of intercultural studies, oriented toward global intelligence. In this second Introduction, Fischer and Marcus set out to attain two objectives: On the one hand, they propose to revisit and reevaluate some of the issues that concerned ethnography in the 1980s, but remain relevant today. On the other hand, they put forth new research topics to be developed in the field of anthropology in the context of the global changes that have intervened since the publication of their book.

According to Fischer and Marcus, today's ethnography must change its strategies in the face of new global challenges, such as the ongoing reconfigurations of the culturally homogeneous nation-states under the pressure of great demographic shifts; the rise of the technosciences and transnational finance, communication, and media; and the emergence of new metaphors for our lifestyles or ways of being and acting in the world. Notably, collective research and collaborative, interdisciplinary projects should replace the practice of ethnography as a cluster of individual projects carried out by a single researcher—the conventional model of ethnographer or anthropologist as hero, popularized, one might add, by such Hollywood films as the “Indiana Jones” cycle. One should also take into consideration that, in a globalized environment, the relationship between ethnographer and his informants in the field has changed profoundly. The fields themselves have now become entirely unfamiliar to informants, experts, ethnographers, and cultural translators alike.

Therefore, the authors contend, the objective of anthropology is no longer to discover new worlds—“new” to its own culture, that is—translating the exotic into the familiar, or defamiliarizing the exotic. Rather, it is “increasingly the discovery of worlds that are familiar [to] or fully understood by no one, and that all are in search of puzzling out.” (Fischer and Marcus 1999: xvii) Anthropologists should furthermore give up the assumption that the local effects of globalization are the same in all places. Instead, they should assume that “powerful alternative modernities” have been emerging in various parts of the world. Such alternative modernities will require “the sort of exploration that little-known ‘peoples’ once were subject to in anthropology.” (xviii)

The call to “repatriation” that the authors advocated in the 1980s, according to which ethnographers should return from exotic overseas locations and do fieldwork in their own communities, has proven “a bit too simple and binary” under the impact of globalization. In the new global circumstance, “many of the most interesting processes of social and cultural formations are translocal, operating across any distinct local boundaries.” (xviii) This also makes it more difficult for ethnographers to take sides or to “extricate moral action from negative results, as in one’s relation (no matter where one is located in the system) to ecological issues where it is impossible for one to avoid contributing to the problem unless one could improbably sever all ties with the monetary economy.” (xviii)

As to the research programs that anthropologists should develop in the new global circumstance, Fischer and Marcus distinguish three areas, rich in objects and subjects for anthropological fieldwork: (1) the New Media with their fast developing computer-mediated communication and visual technologies that have already given them global ubiquity; (2) social reorganization after collective trauma, such as that inflicted by communism, colonialism, civil war, and so forth; and (3) the continuing transformation of modernity by science and technology. These new subjects and objects of anthropological

research will require new methodologies capable of dealing adequately with the issues that now shape discourses about society in a global context, such as cultural hybridization and multiple identities, flexible and shifting social and economic integration, as well as “new forms of stratification, inequalities, and power relationships.” (xxvi)

In addition to the methods of interpretive anthropology already mentioned, such as collaborative and interdisciplinary endeavors, the “jeweler’s-eye gaze,” and cultural critique with its changed moral stances, the authors discuss comparative analysis that needs, in turn, to be much refined and attuned to a global reference frame. One must develop “new practices of comparative analysis not among self-contained cultures but across hybrids, borders, diasporas, and incommensurable sites spanning institutions, domiciles, towns, cities, and now even cyberspace,” including “techniques of dynamic, nonreductive juxtapositions” or “orchestrated engagements of [cultural] ‘horizons.’” (xxix) One should further develop forms of experimentation, not only experimental ethnographic writing, but also scientific and anthropological experimentation as a “mode of intervening in the world, and changing it.” (xxxii)

Finally, the authors come back, appropriately, to the issue of ethics that should inform cultural critique in a reformed ethnography and, for that matter, in all other fields. They emphasize again that the nineteenth-century schematic formulations to which the new and old ethnographies have resorted, such as “the much overused and overly abstract Hegelian politics of recognition and its descendants in contemporary political philosophy” (xxxii), have largely lost their relevance in today’s global environment. Fischer and Marcus conclude by observing that the accounts they gave “of the ethical milieu of projects of cultural critique in the 1980s is largely consistent with the narratives derived from the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scripts critical of recent forms of domination.” (xxxiii) With a changed global circumstance, however, cultural critique faces and should address new challenges of ethical formulation, such as “complicities of [ethical and political] positioning in environmental dilemmas with the accompanying medical, legal, economic, political, and psychological implications and concomitants.” (xxxiii)

Perhaps we are finally in a position, with the help of the scholars whom I have engaged in dialogue so far, to outline some of the principles, methods, and research programs that would lead to a reconstructed field of intercultural studies, oriented toward global intelligence. We have already identified several important issues that should be taken into consideration when developing this intercultural project in a global environment. Such issues include: (1) a need for new or revised principles and objectives for learning and research within a global reference frame; (2) a need to develop corresponding institutional frameworks; (3) a need to reform the notions of cultural and disciplinary authority; (4) a revised role for cultural critique; (5) new or revised sites, topics, and methods of research; (6) new ethical standards of evaluation in an

intercultural environment. In the next subsection, I shall briefly reexamine these questions from a local-global perspective, that is, from the perspective of a globally oriented Western scholar and practitioner, and shall suggest some of the ways in which they might best be approached within a reconstructed field of intercultural studies. First, however, it might be useful briefly to explore the current meanings and uses of the term “culture” and then define my own use of it. Indeed, the nature, objectives, and methodology of cultural and intercultural studies may vary widely according to the different meanings ascribed to this term.

One may roughly discern two main concepts of culture in contemporary anthropology and Western-style social science in general: The first one is an essentialist and substantialist view, tied, no less than the notion of globalism and localism, to a dialectic of the universal and the particular. In this view, culture is a durable, substantial and, ultimately, universal entity that determines the identity, coherence, and solidarity of a larger or a smaller social group. In turn, cultural identity creates cultural differences, which are, as a rule, contingent, insubstantial, and nonessential and can eventually be resolved or reconciled in a universal culture.

The second view of culture is the symmetrical opposite of the first one. It raises cultural difference to an essential status and sees cultural identity as a fluid, unstable, and insubstantial state in the ceaseless play of cultural differences. Above all, it invariably regards this play of differences as a conflictive or agonistic one. Postmodernist schools generally prefer the second view, whereas modernist and other traditional cultural approaches, such as Marxism, prefer the first one. More often than not, the two concepts of culture engage, in turn, in a contest for cultural authority and thus generate amplifying feedback loops, according to the principle of mutual causality. Of course, one can also find Western theorists who attempt to mediate between the two positions, or subject them to a Hegelian sublation (*Aufhebung*). This third approach has so far met with little success, however, being usually relegated to the first, universalist position. A good example of an essentialist, but flexible and conciliatory, postmarxist view is that of Terry Eagleton (2000). Arjun Appadurai (1996), on the other hand, represents an intransigent, postmodernist version of the second view.

Eagleton, in an essay on “Culture Wars,” included in *The Idea of Culture* (2000), rightly deplores the clash between what he calls “Culture” and “culture,” which is no longer merely a “battle of definitions,” but has turned into “a global conflict.” (Eagleton 2000: 51) Eagleton’s two terms are the equivalent of the traditional and the postmodernist concepts of culture I have just mentioned (although, unlike me, he calls only commercial culture “postmodern” and considers it apart from the other two categories). He shows not only how each of these terms functions separately, but also how the polarity itself frames and controls the entire discourse of Western-style cultural and global studies.

In my terminology (borrowed from general systems theory), he analyzes in detail the destructive and constructive feedback loops that “Culture” and “culture” generate in their contest for global authority. He stages the dialectical play of these polarities, with all of their paradoxical effects and contradictions.

According to Eagleton, the paradoxical point about Culture is that it is “cultureless,” because its values do not belong to any particular form of life, but “simply to human life as such.” (Eagleton 2000: 53) Yet, according to the dialectic of the universal and the particular, the “values of Culture are universal, but not *abstract*” so that they can thrive only within “some kind of local habitation.” (53, emphasis in the text) Therefore, Culture is the product of both a particular civilization and of universal spirit, functioning as a link between this civilization and “universal humanity.” (54) By contrast, cultures are “blatantly particular, resonant of nothing but themselves, and without these differences they would disappear.” (Eagleton 2000: 54)

But Eagleton equally notes that the distinction between universal Culture and particular cultures is “ultimately deceptive, since pure difference would be indistinguishable from pure identity.” (Eagleton 2000: 54) It is for this reason that my own description of the two concepts of culture has emphasized the purely functional, rather than essential difference between them: “Culture” subsumes difference to identity, whereas “culture” does just the opposite. Eagleton implicitly acknowledges the functionality of this distinction when he points out that the two polarities are interchangeable, leading to paradoxical effects in terms of local cultural politics: “What may seem the last word in epistemological radicalism in Paris can end up justifying autocracy elsewhere. In a curious reversal, cultural relativism can come to ratify the most virulent forms of cultural absolutism. In its charitable view that all cultural worlds are as good as each other, it provides a rationale by which any one of them may be absolutized.” (76-77)

By what Eagleton calls a “curious dialectic,” fundamentalism and anti-fundamentalism are far from being the polar opposites that they claim to be: one may unwittingly end up in the service of the other. In this respect, the “final triumph of capitalism—to see its own culture penetrate to the most conspicuous corners of the globe—may also prove exceptionally dangerous for it.” (82) One can, however, point out that, despite what Eagleton might think, such reversals are not at all “curious.” On the contrary, they are quite common in societies organized around the power principle, where essentialist concepts are often loosened from their firm ontological moorings and impressed to do battle for opposing social or cultural forces.

Eagleton usefully notes that whereas culture functions in terms of a dialectics of the universal and the particular, Culture functions in terms of a dialectics of the universal and the individual. From the standpoint of Culture, culture “perversely seizes upon the accidental particulars of existence—gender, ethnicity, nationality, social origin, sexual tendency and the like—and converts

them into bearers of necessity.” (55) By contrast, Culture favors not the particular, but the individual, because individuality “is the medium of the universal, while particulars are purely random.” (55) Consequently, Culture regards itself as “the spirit of humanity individuating itself in specific works; and its discourse links the individual and the universal, the quick of the self and the truth of humanity, without the mediation of the historically particular.” (55)

Eagleton’s distinction between Culture as the expression of the individual and culture as the expression of the particular clarifies the Romantic relationship between the nation and the state, which in the modern period has become the hyphenated concept of nation-state. Whereas nationalism involves an organic relationship between individuals and their nation, the state simply appeals to this organic relationship in order to give it a political structure. In turn, contemporary identity politics should be distinguished from nationalism, because it refers to the particular, rather than to the individual, and therefore does not operate on an organismic, but a mimetic principle. According to this principle, group cohesion is formed around conflictive difference (“us against them”), rather than around an identity of cultural affinities. Hence identity politics is inimical to the nation-state and, paradoxically, but not unpredictably, prefers postmodern forms of “cosmopolitanism” to nationalism.

Although Eagleton’s general rhetorical strategy is to speak from the interior of each perspective, constantly switching sides, he does eventually settle in favor of a reformed concept of Culture. He also draws a distinction between a “postmodern” or commercial culture and a culture of identity/ difference. In my view, however, commercial or “popular” culture is not a separate phenomenon, but an opportunistic use of both Culture and culture for material profit (which is certainly not a “bourgeois,” nor even an exclusively Western invention). Nor is commercial culture an exclusively postmodern phenomenon, as Eagleton implies, even though its current explosive expansion might be without precedent: the Western distinction between high culture and low or popular culture goes at least as far back as the fifth and the fourth centuries BC, as we can glean from Plato’s and Aristotle’s complaints about the dramatic poets who “pander” to the Athenian rabble for material profit.

In marked contrast to Eagleton’s complex and reflexive analyses that deftly move in and out of the various cultural positions he brings under consideration, Appadurai deliberately remains within cultural particularism and rejects the universalist presuppositions of Culture out of hand. For instance, he objects to the substantialist and essentialist ways in which the term “culture” has been employed in various disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, history, and philosophy. To him, “culture” as a noun predictably implies some kind of physical or metaphysical object or substance. As a metaphysical substance, the noun culture “seems to privilege the sort of sharing, agreeing, and bounding that fly in the face of the facts of unequal knowledge and the differential prestige of lifestyles, and to discourage attention to the worldviews and

agencies of those who are marginalized and dominated.” (Appadurai 1996: 12) As a physical substance, on the other hand, culture smacks of “any variety of biologisms, including race, which we have certainly outgrown as scientific theories.” (12)

Appadurai further contends that whereas the noun “culture” invokes some type of essentialism, the adjective “cultural” is purely relational. Substantive ideas of culture encourage us to think of actual social groups as cultures, while the relational character of “cultural” as an adjective “stresses its contextual, heuristic and comparative dimensions and orients us to the idea of culture as difference, especially difference in the realm of group identity.” (Appadurai 1996: 13) Culture therefore is “a pervasive dimension of human discourse that exploits difference to generate diverse conceptions of group identity.” (13) For Appadurai, moreover, culture is not only group identity based on difference, but also “the process of naturalizing a subset of differences that have been mobilized to articulate group identity.”(15) In his view, the term can best be applied to the nation-state, which has used it as an effective instrument of rallying the ethnic majority of a country or a region around it, in order to create a national identity.

Appadurai also introduces the term “culturalism” to mean the “conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national or transnational politics.” (Appadurai 1996: 15) Culturalist movements are self-conscious about identity, culture, and heritage, which they use as instruments in their struggle with nation-states and other culturalist groups. In the age of globalization, under conditions of mass mediation and massive migration, these culturalist movements, such as those of African-Americans in the United States, Algerians in France, Pakistanis in Great Britain, or French speakers in Canada tend to be “counter-national and metacultural” (16); in other words, according to Appadurai, they tend to contribute to the dissolution of the nation-state and a reconfiguration of cultural identities.

Even from this brief account, it is obvious that Appadurai, unlike Eagleton and in typical postmodernist fashion, reduces culture to an agonistic play of differences that creates various identities associated with specific social groups. Despite his disclaimers, he seems in effect to reduce culture to a function of identity politics based on class, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. To employ his own terminology, Appadurai’s approach to culture seems “culturalist” rather than cultural. Putting it crudely, it would seem that for him a Croat is a Croat because he is not a Serb, and vice versa. Furthermore, a Croat can prove his identity only by fighting a Serb, and the other way around. Here, we have a mimetic approach to world cultures, in which one culture defines itself not as what it is, but as what it is not, namely, against other cultures. This approach is precisely what Eagleton refers to as a form of “barbarism,” although this term also needs to undergo thorough critical and historical reflection. Binary oppositions such as Civilization and Barbarism are emotionally charged terms,

with a long and troubled world history, and will only further fuel the current global “culture wars.”

One should hope, to the credit and benefit of humankind, that there is more to culture than agonistic identity and difference, whether social or individual. Of course, identity politics may play an important role in cultures based primarily on a mentality of power, and in that limited context Appadurai’s definitions are certainly valuable. But, if we reduce all culture(s) to culturalism, i.e., to an agonistic play of identity and difference, as many postmodern theorists in the field of cultural studies tend to do (including Foucault, Rabinow, and Clifford), we exclude the possibility of cultures in which identity politics may hardly play a role. In other words, we exclude the possibility of cultures in which the Will to Power does not determine everything else. This reduction would be an impoverishment of the collective imagination that Appadurai refers to elsewhere in his book and that Rabinow and Clifford largely ignore when considering thought as a pragmatic function of (power) politics. In fact, Appadurai’s collective imagination is of the mimetic type, in René Girard’s sense (Girard 1977; 1986; 1987), restricted as it is to the media-stimulated, mass-culture imaginary, circumscribed by consumption and a double-binding desire for social mobility and group identity.

In defining culture, in order to negotiate the pitfalls of both essentialism and culturalism, we can again turn to the notion of globality as an infinitely diverse expression of the global aspiration, which I mention in the Introduction and develop at some length in *Global Intelligence and Human Development*. In this light, various cultures can be seen as primary modes in which the human desire for world making and self-fashioning, i.e., the creative imagination, manifests itself. Specific mentalities or modes of thought and behavior generate, at the same time that they (according to the principle of causal reciprocity) are being generated by, specific ways of life, language, sound and image patterns, knowledge, art, architecture, institutions, and interactions with other human beings and with the physical environment—a complex and fluid web of interdependence that can be called culture. Indeed, keeping in mind Appadurai’s essentialist caveat, it would be more appropriate to speak of “cultures,” rather than Culture (pace Eagleton).

Every culture has the inner potential to renew or transform itself primarily through the imagination and its creative forms, including myths, narratives, folklore, artistic productions, ritual, etc. In this respect, it is counterproductive, if not misleading, to draw a distinction, as Appadurai does, between traditional and modern imagination as one doing less social work and being less collective or less emancipatory than the other. (Appadurai 1996: 5) There are many local collective imaginations that devise ever-fresh ways of doing social work, based on the traditional and nontraditional creative resources of a specific culture, which moreover may fruitfully interact with similar resources from other, nearby or remote cultures. And there are many human factors other than power

that motivate the various collective imaginations, such as playfulness, curiosity, generosity, love and care for others, aspiration toward personal development, spiritual transcendence and self-transformation, to mention only a few.

Such factors, however, have little or no place in Appadurai's and other postmodernists' mass-cultural or civilizational models, involved as they are with the Will to Power and its hegemonic obsessions.<sup>8</sup> Even an enlightened postmarxist like Eagleton seems unable to imagine a culture or Culture that is not based on power. For him, culture, at least in the modern state, "is more the product of politics than politics is the dutiful handmaiden of culture." (Eagleton 2000: 60) He does seem, as is his wont, to reverse this judgment later on, by counterarguing that "culture is in some sense more primordial than politics," albeit less "pliable." (61) Yet, the fact remains that for Eagleton "there is more to the world than culture" (107), namely "nature," interpreted as play of physical forces. For example, he writes that the "wager of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud is that at the root of meaning lies a certain force." Presumably, for these thinkers "all the most significant events move at the uneasy conjuncture of meaning and power, of the semiotic and (in the broadest sense) economic." (107)

Here, Eagleton is still operating with an essentialist and substantialist distinction between nature and culture, which conceives of their interaction in linear causal terms, rather than in terms of mutual causality. Like Appadurai, Eagleton posits force as the "first cause" of both nature and culture. He then assumes that force splits itself into two realms: a physical and a symbolic one. In the physical realm, or nature, force remains ineffable, as force, whereas in the symbolic realm, or culture, it becomes representable, as power. This assumption is a dualistic philosophical belief, typical of the Will to Power in its modern guise, which continues to be shared, without exception, by postmodernists and postmarxists alike.

Once we realize that the two antagonistic concepts of culture are direct expressions of a mentality of power, we can also begin to see that they are Janus-like faces of two other pet concepts of this mentality: discipline or "order" and anarchy or "disorder." What Eagleton describes as Culture is in fact disciplinary culture, in all the senses of that term, including the rigid ordering and compartmentalization of knowledge. In turn, Appadurai's culturalism is "anarchical" culture, where the hierarchical, disciplinary principle is replaced by a ceaseless contest of social forces.<sup>9</sup>

Intercultural studies, therefore, should move away from all of these antagonistic concepts that prevail in current Western cultural studies. Instead, they should adopt an irenic view of cultures as interdependent, self-organizing social systems that form an integral part of the symbiotic web of life. (Capra 1997) Because various cultures engage in mutually causal interactions or amplifying positive and negative feedback loops within a global reference frame, the field of intercultural studies would be well advised, in order to play

a constructive role in the world arena, to adopt the emergent ethics of global intelligence, grounded in a mentality of peace.

### **3. Toward a Transdisciplinary Field of Intercultural Studies**

Transdisciplinarity would therefore mean, in the first place, moving away from both disciplinary and anarchic models of culture. Disciplinary principles and practices are counterproductive for intercultural studies, because they will simply continue amplifying intercultural miscommunication, distrust, and violent conflict prevalent in today's global arena. Neither will interdisciplinary principles be more effective, as the case of cultural studies in the United States shows, because these principles are entirely codependent with disciplinary ones. As a field of study and practice, therefore, intercultural studies would be crosscultural and transdisciplinary and will employ a local-global approach to knowledge. Its goal will be to remap traditional knowledge, as it is acquired and transmitted by various branches of learning, be they scientific or humanistic, as well as to generate new kinds of knowledge within an intercultural and global reference frame.

A transdisciplinary approach to knowledge requires philosophical and scientific presuppositions and practices that are entirely different from their disciplinary counterparts. It does not presuppose that knowledge is power, but only that power produces certain forms of knowledge that may become irrelevant or transfigured in other reference frames. It also presupposes a mutually enriching interplay of what various cultures perceive as global or universal and what they perceive as local. This interplay finds its academic equivalent in the interplay of transdisciplinary or holistic knowledge and specialized knowledge. It presupposes an integrative mode of thinking and practice that looks beyond constituted academic fields and their fragmentation of knowledge, although it does not deny their usefulness.

Yet, a global mode of thinking and acting takes into consideration the fact that knowledge is local not only in terms of field boundaries or confines, but also in terms of its historicity. As both Iser and the experimentalist ethnographers point out, knowledge is always bound to a specific time and place, to a specific culture or system of values and beliefs or, indeed, to a specific lifestyle. It is for this reason that I suggested, in the Introduction, that theories of globality cannot properly be regarded as global, but only as local-global. In turn, a local-global approach, while it may have its own notion of globality, attempts to identify the cultural specificities, or the locality, of knowledge, and to explore commonalities and differences among such localities and among various local viewpoints.

A local-global approach presupposes that in the process of exploration of cultural commonalities and differences in the way in which we acquire, trans-

mit, and utilize knowledge, new kinds of crosscultural knowledge emerge through intercultural dialogue and cooperation, and new kinds of integrative cognitive processes become possible. It finally presupposes that even these kinds of crosscultural knowledge will be valid only within their new reference frames, and may be restructured within larger frames, in other words, that even “global” knowledge is local in relation to such frames. At its broadest theoretical level, intercultural studies will concern itself with and explore such questions as: What are the conditions of the possibility of the emergence of crosscultural and/or transdisciplinary knowledge? How does such knowledge differ from, but also involve, cultural or disciplinary knowledge? How can it be communicated or taught? What uses can this kind of knowledge be put to and whom does it serve? What organizational and institutional forms might it take?

The principal objective of intercultural studies will be to seek and practice global intelligence. I have already defined global intelligence as the ability to understand, respond to and work toward what is in the best interest of and will benefit all humankind and all other life on the planet. This kind of global, responsive understanding and action can only emerge from continuing intercultural research, dialogue, and cooperation, and no single national or supranational instance or authority can predetermine its outcome. So, global intelligence is an emergent phenomenon and involves a lifelong learning process.

Orientation toward global intelligence or intercultural responsive understanding and action is what will distinguish the intercultural studies project from many international and interdisciplinary programs, including cultural studies, at some of the top universities in the United States and other parts of the world. For the most part, the main objective of such interdisciplinary, international programs is to develop global competence and expertise, which their students will, in turn, place in the service of individual private or public organizations, irrespective of the mission and goals of these organizations. Global competence and expertise are what Fischer and Marcus implicitly see as the objectives of their new discipline of ethnography/anthropology as well. These are very important and useful skills, but, for a genuine global practitioner, they cannot be separated from the mission, goals, and methods of an emergent ethics of global intelligence, from which they derive their true meaning.

#### *A) Institutional Framework(s) for Intercultural Studies*

A field of theory and practice such as intercultural studies, oriented toward global intelligence, will need alternative institutional frameworks. Consequently, this field cannot be founded on the presupposition that a cluster of disciplines organized as academic departments will band together to create another administrative unit, called a Center or Institute for Intercultural Studies, at this or that progressive university. It would need much more dynamic and flexible institutional frameworks in order to be able to attain its research

and learning objectives. It will take sustained effort and a good deal of community involvement to reform our universities in that direction. Meanwhile, a good first step in at least getting this reform process underway would be to propose and implement crosscultural and crossdisciplinary pilot programs that involve the cooperation of several academic and nonacademic learning and research institutions from various parts of the world. These pilot programs would respond to Fischer and Marcus's call for genuine experimentation both in a scientific and in a practical sense, as a "mode of intervening in the world, and changing it," but they would obviously not limit themselves to the (disciplinary) field of ethnography.

In the present context, I can only specify the basic organizational principles of a globally oriented field of intercultural studies within which pilot programs might be launched. In the last chapter of this study, however, I shall actually describe one of these pilot programs in some detail. The transdisciplinary field of intercultural studies would be created with the assistance of international academic consortia, but would be given enough autonomy to develop its own institutional frameworks and operate on its own. The advantage of such an experiment is that while it will not restructure the current academic organizational paradigm, it will allow reform-minded faculty members and university administrators to see what might or might not work, should a similar model be introduced into an academic disciplinary environment, with the long-term objective of replacing such an environment altogether.

One institutional arrangement under which a globally oriented field of intercultural studies could prosper would consist of loose "federations" (Rabinow's term) or networks of crossdisciplinary and intercultural research teams, whose members would be selected from participating academic and nonacademic research institutions, located in various parts of the world. These teams would continuously change their disciplinary composition and research focus and would constitute themselves not according to academic fields of study, but according to concrete, complex problems of a social, political, cultural, economic, medical, environmental, legal, military, or other nature that need to be solved at the local-global level in various parts of the world. Their overall mission would be to study, produce, and apply local-global knowledge in a globally intelligent way. They would require worldwide, crossdisciplinary and crosscultural, cooperation among scholars, researchers, and practitioners in any field of human endeavor.

These intercultural research teams would obviously not involve entire academic disciplines and would not depend administratively and financially on any specific department or any specific university or research institute. They would recruit only a few volunteers from such departments and institutes, who would go on temporary "research leave" for the duration of their projects. At first, these volunteers might well turn out to be those disciplinary "odd ducks" who do not seem to fit anywhere and are poor "academic citizens," at least by

the standards of bureaucratic academia. At the same time, however, such “odd ducks” are, more often than not, reflection-prone or theoretically minded. They are generally dissatisfied with the state of knowledge and its modes of production in their own fields and think the grass is greener on the other side or, shall we say, in-between. By joining an intercultural research team they might find out that there is nothing wrong with them, but that they may have been in the wrong research environment all along.

The research teams should also include nonacademic global practitioners, because many of these practitioners are trying to puzzle out the same problems, and their practical experience will be an important resource in finding the appropriate solutions. As Fischer and Marcus note, “software and hardware developers, users and clients, patent and copyright lawyers, financiers are among those who regularly say that the concepts by which they traditionally operated [and which, one may add, they undoubtedly learned in school] have been overtaken by the world in which they now operate, that new concepts and methods need to be formulated. Such people talking about their own worlds of expertise might be thought of as ‘organic intellectuals’ who together with anthropologists [and, one should add, researchers from all other disciplines] are exploring the emergent new worlds about which they share a mutual curiosity.” (Marcus and Fischer 1999: xxv)

One should nevertheless keep in mind that, despite the mutual curiosity as well as adventurous spirit that academic researchers and “real-world” practitioners may have in common, they may also have widely different professional goals and life objectives, depending on their various fields of activity, cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and ethical motivations. On the other hand, there is no good reason why this human diversity should create anxiety, mistrust, and conflict among the members of the intercultural research teams. On the contrary, it should create rich and fertile working environments, conducive to extensive intercultural dialogue and negotiations, during which the team members will learn how to work with each other and out of which a new kind of crosscultural and crossdisciplinary consensus or cooperative spirit should emerge. What will finally matter in choosing the right members for a research team in intercultural studies is not whether an individual researcher is a specialist or a generalist, an academic or a nonacademic, but whether she is open to ways of knowing and doing things beyond those she has been trained in and accustomed to.

### *B) Disciplinary and Cultural Authority in Intercultural Studies*

I should like to emphasize, again, that the field of intercultural studies should turn away from both disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity. It should by no means avoid studying questions of power and exploring creative, nonconfrontational ways of approaching these questions. Yet, it should distance itself not only from violence, symbolical or otherwise, but also from power as a fun-

damental principle of organizing human relations and institutions, including academic disciplines. A good preliminary step toward this intellectual and emotional detachment might be to engage in an extensive cultural anthropological (self-) study of disciplinary authority and power relations within academia itself, with concrete and practical suggestions of how one might organize research and learning processes on different principles. One may also study the relationship between what Foucault calls disciplinary structures of power, which he situates in the past centuries, and controlling structures, which are more sophisticated and manipulative and which he associates with contemporary times. But even a cursory look at Western cultural history will show that both power structures have recurred in various historical periods and have never ceased to coexist, engaging in complex feedback loops inside and outside contemporary academic and research cultures.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, many academic studies, including those of Foucault, are concerned with power and its discursive strategies. Unfortunately, however, none of them has been oriented toward global intelligence. Nor has any of them come up with viable local and global solutions. As a rule, such studies point out the asymmetrical power relations among various academic fields and disciplines and within the academic tenure and bureaucratic systems, or, more generally, the inextricable link between knowledge and power. But their authors content themselves either with “exposing” and “opposing” these dominant power structures (see, e.g., the essays by Asad, Clifford, and Rabinow in *Writing Culture*) or with getting a “share of the pie.” Most often they do both. They have never seriously raised the possibility of turning away from power itself as an organizing principle of human affairs. The majority of our academics regard power as both fate and ultimate goal. Of course, this is no less true of most of the nonacademic inhabitants of the so-called real world—“real” because, if you know how to play the game to your advantage, you can get a much bigger slice of the power pie than in academia.

The “postmodern” university has not abandoned the traditional academic disciplinary paradigm in any way. Disciplinary authority remains one of the ultimate academic goals of both administrators and regular faculty members, being tied up, as it is, for instance, in the United States, with tenured academic positions, “competitive” salaries and research grants, expert consultant’s fees, as well as symbolic rewards, such as professional honors and prizes. In their second Introduction, Fischer and Marcus mention several times the fact that anthropologists are worried, no less than their academic colleagues in other fields, that their (disciplinary) authority as experts might be dwindling, because of their shifting role in a global environment. Whereas in the past anthropologists were largely the sole experts or custodians of “cultural difference,” now their authority is being threatened by a plethora of diffuse sources of information on this topic, “purveyed through television and popular media.” (Marcus and Fischer 1999: xx)

Instead of hailing this development as a good opportunity to question the nature of disciplinary authority itself and to call for different ways of organizing academic and other forms of knowledge production, Fischer and Marcus repeatedly attempt to reassure their colleagues by suggesting new ways in which ethnography may regain some of its lost disciplinary authority. For example, they write: “So the fact that ongoing ethnographic research has lost a traditional, prominent function—if not a monopoly—within the official knowledge domain of the West of discovering and speaking authoritatively for cultural difference among the world’s peoples is not as alarming or as devastating an event for anthropology as long predicted or feared.” (xxii)

In turn, they note that new opportunities present themselves in a global environment, and whether they will be explored or not will depend on “the courage, ingenuity and openness of anthropologists in establishing fresh forms of authority for themselves that certainly seem to be in line with the way other related disciplines and fields of knowledge are being reconfigured.” (xxii) For the authors, however, these new forms will depend, ironically, on “the articulation of new norms and regulative ideas of ethnographic practice, in which collaboration and dialogue are no longer just theories and sentiments of ethnographic writing nor the revealed essence of what anthropologists have been doing all along, but become the starting points for novel research landscapes, agendas, and relationships stimulated by the equally new objects of study that anthropologists pose for themselves and for the general public.” (xxii)

The preceding citations should make it obvious that Fischer and Marcus have some difficulty in leaving behind the assumptions of disciplinary thinking and practice. Although they make a most eloquent case for collaboration and dialogue as the starting points for novel research agendas and human relationships, they do not seem ready to discard disciplinary concepts and frameworks, such as the model of knowledge as expertise, which in turn grounds the knower’s authority in his or her scholarly community and community at large. Despite their best intentions, they exhibit automatic disciplinary behavior, for example, when they attempt to distinguish their *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* from its companion volume, *Writing Culture*, in terms of their different objectives. Notably, they state that in their first book, “there was a clear linkage between textual critiques of ethnographies and the implications of these for changes in research strategies, programs, and persona in anthropology that was lacking or unmarked in *Writing Culture*.” (Fischer and Marcus 1999: xxviii) For them, the authors add, “the decline of a certain construction of ethnographic authority never augured the end of anthropology, but rather the opportunity to reorient its core practices and rethink its regulative ideals, which indeed is what has happened over the past decade and is still occurring.” (xxviii)

One may concede that the authors’ attempt, in the first part of the preceding citation, to delimit the scope and objectives of the two projects is method-

ologically sound and useful, in line with their idea of comparative analysis. The second part of the citation, however, reveals the scapegoating mechanism that I have already pointed out in relation to establishing disciplinary authority vis-à-vis other fields, or other trends within one's own. It is highly unlikely that the seasoned anthropologists who contributed to the volume—ironically, George Marcus co-edited that volume as well—really had the implicit or explicit objective of auguring “the end of anthropology” through their contributions, as the authors of the second Introduction imply.

The irony deepens if we notice that it is Fischer who has mostly written this second Introduction and who appears listed first as its author. Thus, the scapegoating mechanism seems to be directed against the third member of this authorial triumvirate, that is, James Clifford, the other coeditor of *Writing Culture*. This point may certainly seem trivial, if not petty, but it illustrates Rabinow's contention that anthropology, as well as any other disciplinary enterprise, is often also carried out in the coulisses of academia and that concrete human and institutional relations cannot be ignored when examining the development of a certain discipline. More importantly, it shows that all of us, disciplinary academics, need to reflect on and perhaps even abandon our scholarly strategies of power, including the hermeneutics of suspicion that I have deliberately employed in this paragraph, if only for “didactic” purposes. These strategies have turned into automatic habit even with those of us who attempt to find new, cooperative ways of doing scholarship in a transdisciplinary and intercultural, global reference frame.

On the other hand, the “scapegoated” Clifford himself exhibits the same kind of automatic disciplinary habits when he attempts, in his introduction to *Writing Culture*, to establish the disciplinary authority of the new ethnography—thus, ironically, preempting any accusations of sabotage against his discipline. He does this not only by scapegoating literature in his turn, but also by establishing the ancient credentials of ethnography as a science of sciences that is now steadily moving to the center of all fields of knowledge, presumably replacing philosophy's queenly status.

As we recall, Clifford begins by arguing that the new ethnography is a liminal field that is “actively situated *between* powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders.” (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 2; italics in the text) But, in the next few sentences, he unexpectedly moves his new ethnography from this liminal, nonauthoritative position on the margins of discourse, or between powerful systems of meaning, right into the center of such systems. He now argues that ethnography's “authority and rhetoric have spread to many fields where ‘culture’ is a newly problematic object of description and critique.” (2) Experimentalist ethnography is steadily “moving into areas long occupied by sociology, the novel, or avantgarde cultural critique, rediscovering otherness and difference within the cultures of the West.” (23)

Furthermore, according to Clifford, ethnography's "traditional vocation of cultural criticism," as exemplified in Montaigne's "On Cannibals" or in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, has now reemerged, e.g., in the Chicago School of urban sociology (through the work of Lloyd Warner, William F. Whyte, and Robert Park); in historical ethnography (in the work of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Natalie Davis, and Carlo Ginzbur); in ethnomethodology (through the work of Harold Garfinkel, Harvey Sacks, and Aaron Cicourel); in cultural studies (through the work of Edward Said and others); in cultural history (through the work of Hayden White and others); in Marxist cultural theory (in the work of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Paul Willis, and Fredric Jameson); and in sociology (especially in Pierre Bourdieu's and Michel de Certeau's analyses of implicit knowledge and everyday practices).

While at it, Clifford could also have added to his list of ethnographic trophies, say, Richard Brown's "poetics of sociology," Thomas Kuhn's work in the history and philosophy of science, and Stephen Greenblatt's cultural poetics. His arguments display three of the most common strategies of disciplinary and nondisciplinary power: 1) scapegoating; 2) moving from the margin to the center; and 3) establishing ascendancy based on primogeniture. Any of the disciplines just mentioned could undoubtedly make the same imperial claims that Clifford makes for ethnography, and some have not hesitated to do so, for example, much of contemporary literary theory. One can thus see that interdisciplinarity itself, as Clifford and other academics understand and practice it, is nothing more than a special form of disciplinary macrototalitarianism. But hegemonic claims, including academic macrototalitarianism, are part of the "old" disciplinary mentality. As such it undermines and invalidates Clifford's crossdisciplinary project that requires cooperation among all fields of knowledge without attempting to establish hierarchies among them.

A more reasonable, although still (inter) disciplinary position is that of Fischer and Marcus who, in their retrospective look on the ethnography of the 1980s, note that this was "a period of florescence for sophisticated interpretive methods as well as inquiries into the nature of interpretation itself across a variety of mutually informing currents ranging from feminism to postcolonial studies, media studies, cultural studies, and science studies. Anthropology's position among these has been as a partner, borrower and teacher." (Fischer and Marcus 1999: xxi)

But, we should perhaps regard some of the current globalizing trends on our planet as a great opportunity to abandon our old authoritative, disciplinary practices altogether and to transform entirely the way in which we acquire, transmit, and use knowledge in general. Certainly, cooperation and dialogue may profitably be used in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary frameworks. But, in those instances they will remain mere strategies of (re) gaining disciplinary authority, as we could see from the interdisciplinary program of experimentalist ethnography. Within the framework of this program, interdisciplinary alliances

may be formed and broken according to the specific disciplinary interests of ethnography, which in effect treats cooperation and dialogue not as fundamental principles and values, but only as means of attaining its disciplinary goals.

Yet, crossdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue and cooperation can also be used to change the disciplinary frameworks themselves. To the latter purpose, we would need to turn them into fundamental guiding principles for all scholarly efforts (both within and outside a specific field of knowledge or a specific culture), as well as for all human relationships and institutional arrangements on our planet. In turn, authority itself should be based on those principles, rather than on expertise in any field of knowledge or in any social or cultural domain. Rabinow is illuminating on this point, when he refers, in *Writing Culture*, to the changing role of philosophy in the contemporary age: “As with Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and, in a different way, Dewey, Rorty is faced with the fact, troubling or amusing, that once the historical or logical deconstruction of Western philosophy has been accomplished, there is really nothing special left for philosophers to do. Once it is seen that philosophy does not found or legitimate the claims to knowledge of other disciplines, its task becomes one of commenting on their works and engaging them in conversation.” (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 236)

Rabinow’s observation, however, should apply not only to philosophy, but also to anthropology, history, literary studies, sociology, political science, economics, biology, physics, and any other academic field of knowledge that may wish to participate in the worldwide, transdisciplinary project of intercultural studies. Troubling and unamusing as it might be for philosophy, who at one time was the undisputed queen of all sciences, to be unseated from her lofty throne, no science, including ethnography, should attempt to usurp her place. Instead, all sciences, old and young, hard and soft, human and physical, should joyfully enter Rabinow’s reconstructed federation of equal partners, commenting graciously on each other’s works and engaging in delightful and productive conversation. In turn, this conversation should result in collective, worldwide action inspired by global intelligence.

### *C) Cultural Critique and Intercultural Learning and Research Environments*

“Cultural critique” is one of the most cherished notions of modern Western thought and a methodological cornerstone of cultural studies. Therefore, it should be submitted, within the Western scholarly community, to both an extensive cultural anthropological study and a thorough self-analysis from a local-global perspective. Other kindred notions such as ethnocriticism, critical cosmopolitanism, critical thinking and all the other “critic-isms” and “critique-isms” should also be reevaluated from the same local-global viewpoint. We particularly need to explore the ways in which the idea of criticism has, throughout its history, contributed to a perpetuation of various disciplinary mentalities not only in the Western world, but in other worlds as well. In this

sense, even notions of cultural resistance, opposition, subversion, and survival are part of the arsenal of power that perpetuates politics as usual, be it in a “colonized” or “decolonized,” local or global reference frame.<sup>11</sup>

Viewed from a global perspective, it would be wise to refrain from practicing cultural critique or critical thinking (a pet learning objective for any “progressive,” Western-style academic curriculum), or ethnocriticism, within an intercultural framework. At the same time, one should propose these critical methodologies as topics for an extensive intercultural dialogue and comparative analysis, rather than simply using them automatically, as if they were obviously shared, universal values. It might be of interest to note that, in their second Introduction, Fischer and Marcus are not quite sure where to go with their notion of cultural critique, although they try to make the best of it, not least because it was featured in the title of their book’s first edition. There they used the term unreflectively, but now they feel the need to explain it and call for a revision of its meanings and purposes in a globalized environment. In this environment, they argue, new forms of cultural critique “must emerge in the spaces of negotiation among increasing numbers of detailed spheres of expertise and interests.” (Fischer and Marcus 1999: xvii) They never spell out, however, what these new forms of critique might be or look like.

Yet, “cultural critique” does come with a heavy ideological and political baggage, as Fischer and Marcus themselves indicate when identifying their theoretical predecessors: the Frankfurt School, French “surrealist” anthropology, and the American “documentary realists” of the Great Depression. These schools are of either Marxist or Nietzschean descent, so that the resulting form of cultural critique, no matter how refined and revisionist it might be, will necessarily have mixed critical standards and objectives, deriving from two conflicting ideologies of power. In Nietzsche’s case, the ideology is that of the “master,” in which the will to power is harnessed to the benefit of “superior,” predatory individuals. In Marx’s case, the ideology is that of the “victim,” in which the will to power is harnessed to the benefit of a victimized, but in the end historically privileged, social class, namely the proletariat. Another problem is that cultural critiques have proliferated to such an extent in contemporary Western academia that they have become ritualistic, if not empty gestures (we have seen that Fischer and Marcus make a similar point about the Hegelian dialectic of recognition and other, overused, Western theoretical abstractions).

We should finally recall, as Fischer and Marcus are equally aware, that cultural critique and critical thinking are Western notions that might do well in certain Western intellectual circles, but not so well in other local circles. In these latter circles, they are often perceived as needlessly and counterproductively confrontational and aggressive, if not as “soft power” instruments of furthering Western imperialist designs on other cultures.<sup>12</sup> Although the notion of critique is probably too deeply ingrained in our current mentality to be easily

abandoned, we should at the very least become aware of and use it only in its proper “local,” Western intellectual and cultural reference frames.

We should also consider other candidates to replace criticism or critique as a conceptual tool in a global learning environment. Such candidates in English might be *global awareness* and *self-awareness*, *global attentiveness*, or possibly even *global consciousness*, although the term “consciousness” has also accumulated a rather heavy philosophical and ideological baggage in Western intellectual history. All of these terms, however, should preserve the connotations of reflection and self-reflection that are necessary for any creative thinking and action that seek human (self-) development. On the other hand, they should be free of the oppositional or agonistic connotations of “critique,” as well as of its etymological link to “crisis,” another pet concept of Western modernity. They would thus become less easily co-opted as instruments of power by warring Western or other ideological factions in an intercultural environment.

#### *D) Sites, Topics, and Methodologies of Intercultural Studies*

The sites of intercultural studies are those pointed out by Clifford, Fischer, Marcus, and Schwab. One should, again, emphasize that what is different about these sites is not their physical-geographical or virtual position (e.g., cyberspace or imaginary landscapes), but their interdependencies. In principle, intercultural studies could be carried out in any location, from cosmopolitan global cities to remote mountain villages to cyberspace, precisely because the local and the global are in a relationship of reciprocal causality. This means that any individual or collective action at the local level may eventually have worldwide resonance, just as any global-scale action might eventually affect all localities. A program of intercultural studies oriented toward global intelligence will focus on researching these emergent phenomena of reciprocal causality and will suggest ways in which one could engage in positive action to achieve mutually enriching human relations and world conditions.

In turn, the topics of research for intercultural studies can also include those listed by Fischer and Marcus in their second Introduction and by Schwab in her book. More comprehensively, they can be organized and conducted within six large areas that are and will remain crucial for intercultural research and knowledge production in the foreseeable future:

- Globalization and Local Strategies for Human Development
- Food, Nutrition and Healthcare in a Global Environment
- Energy World Watch for Sustainable Development
- World Population Movement and Growth
- New Media, Information Technology, and Intercultural Communication
- World Traditions of Wisdom and their Contemporary Relevance

This list makes it clear that intercultural studies would not be based solely on anthropological or literary theoretical assumptions and methodologies, but also on a wide variety of other principles and practices, oriented toward global intelligence. Cultural anthropology/ ethnography, literary studies, and many other fields of knowledge would be called upon to participate in developing concrete transdisciplinary and crosscultural projects in these six general areas.

Each project would require different intercultural research teams and would select, on an ongoing basis, researchers and practitioners from those fields that would be of most assistance in attaining its particular research objectives. In this regard, one should again stress that one should hardly have only generalists involved in intercultural studies, even though they might well turn out to be those who are most willing and able to lead various research groups. On the contrary, specialists (but not “experts”) are equally important in this kind of intercultural research. What is central to the present project, then, is that specialists and generalists will work together in a crosscultural and crossdisciplinary environment to resolve concrete human problems. Again, the relationship between specialized and general fields of knowledge ought to be the same as that between locality and globality, that is, one of reciprocal causality. Consequently, the principles of intercultural and crossdisciplinary dialogue and cooperation to the benefit of the entire planet will necessarily be the ground rules for all research projects in intercultural studies.

Although there are many other intercultural topics worth pursuing—and some of them I have already discussed in *Global Intelligence and Human Development* or shall list in Chapter 4 of the present book—here I would like to focus on three important issues that may also constitute an object of intercultural research and dialogue: 1) cultural contact and liminality; 2) cultural and intercultural translation/ interpretation; and 3) intercultural and transdisciplinary comparative analysis. All of these issues are mentioned in the work of the ethnographers and literary theorists whom I have engaged in conversation and should be considered as basic methodological tools of intercultural studies from a Western, local-global perspective.

Intercultural studies may productively employ the notions of cultural contact and liminality as conceptual tools, but would first need to submit them to the same process of self-scrutiny and intercultural comparative analysis and dialogue that is appropriate for other notions that cultural studies has so far employed largely in (Western) disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts. For instance, we will need to distance the notion of cultural contact—as Bateson, Schwab, and Krupat begin to do—from the idea of opposition and contest. One of the typical examples of this agonistic, confrontational approach, which has been extensively employed in the North American cultural wars, but also in the “freedom” movements of Latin America, Africa, and other parts of the world, is Pratt’s notion of “criticism in the contact zone,” also mentioned by Schwab. We recall that Pratt defines contact zones as “social spaces where

disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.” (Pratt 1992: 4)

Pratt’s notion might have been appropriate for past colonial and postcolonial contexts with their disciplinary discourse of struggle, opposition, domination, liberation, emancipation, etc. that in this last century have been repeated ad nauseam throughout the world. These discourses are all part of the arsenal of a power-oriented mentality. They are counterproductive in the present global circumstance, in which antiglobalization movements are proving to be as ineffective, and as co-optable, as their earlier avatars and in which genuine intercultural dialogue and cooperation, oriented toward global intelligence, are slowly emerging as the only viable ways of moving forward (despite the fact that, for the time being, they are seldom utilized outside a power-oriented reference frame).

Whereas intercultural research projects should certainly seek to resolve tensions in the troubled zones of contact, they should also study those intercultural contact zones in which people from various cultures are currently living or used to live side by side, in peace and harmony. These studies, if conducted in a thoroughly transdisciplinary and crosscultural fashion and within their proper historical contexts may help reveal unexpected causes of conflict as well as models of peaceful coexistence that might also be useful in other parts of the world. Indeed, it might well turn out to be the case that the no-man’s-land between cultures, the empty spaces between borders, or the amphibolous grey areas in which nothing is quite settled one way or another and in which new patterns can gradually or suddenly emerge may constitute privileged sites for intercultural negotiations and dialogue, rather than privileged sites of conflict, as they have been considered by an interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. In this regard, intercultural studies may also redefine the notion of (inter) cultural contact itself by linking it with the notion of the liminal, understood in its etymological sense of “threshold” between various margins, boundaries, and frontiers. Among the scholars that begin to do so is Arnold Krupat, who situates his “ethnocriticism,” as we have seen, at the border between ethnography, history, and literary studies.

If we place liminality as a Western anthropological and literary concept, but also as a site of intercultural negotiation, within a global reference frame, we will also discern the historical and cultural (i.e., “local”) boundaries of Iser’s literary anthropology. His definition of humans as beings who can infinitely fashion and refashion themselves—and it is by no means clear that such a definition might ultimately prevail, through intercultural dialogue and negotiations, in most cultures—would always exceed any specific psychological or any other kind of explanation that one might provide for the human need for such perpetual self-fashioning. Specific explanations will evidently remain valid within the actual world or reference frame produced through a specific liminal process, but not outside that frame.

Iser's explanation of literature in terms of the human need to postpone death by interminable self-staging, as well as his description of humans as beings who can never be present to themselves and who must therefore employ fantasy in order to lead an ecstatic life by stepping out of what they are caught up in—is certainly valid within the actual world(s) produced by a Western, modern and postmodern mentality. This mentality, particularly as articulated by philosophers such as Heidegger and his followers, perceives and experiences Being in terms of a perilous game of (self-) revelation and (self-) withdrawal, in which human existence perpetually plays itself out between the “cardinal points” of birth and death. The question arises, however, whether such a concept—and corresponding experience—of Being is the be-all and end-all of human potentialities, or only one onto-epistemological path out of many, leading to a specific type of actual world. Or, to rephrase this question in terms of the present study: is this local (Western) manifestation of the global impulse, whether proper or improper, the only possible kind of such manifestation, or is it just one among many?

The very idea of infinite human self-fashioning through the triadic interplay of the fictive, the actual, and the imaginary within the liminal space of literature requires, as Iser himself is aware, that we allow for other perceptions and even other experiences of Being (or of the global). For example, certain Eastern modes of thought and behavior, which have resulted in various Buddhist practices, are operating with different “cardinal points” for humans and for Being in general. For them—as for certain forms of Western Christianity, as well as for other, non-Western, religions—birth and death are not absolute limits but, rather, liminal experiences through which humans gain access to other actual worlds. In turn, Being and, for that matter, the global is not a hide-and-seek power game either with *Dasein* or with God (and here arguably certain forms of Buddhism part ways with other religions, including Christianity). Rather, it is a groundless ground of infinite generosity that continuously unfolds itself as “suchness” or “thusness.”<sup>13</sup> A fruitful intercultural project could then be to study the various ways in which humans have conceived and experienced being in the world and the global, the different epistemological and ontological consequences of these conceptions, and the specific mechanisms through which they have acted upon their global impulses in order to produce actual worlds.

Concomitantly, one could develop an intercultural *peratology* or science of limits, which would explore how a specific human mentality establishes its own psychophysical and sociocultural boundaries (e.g., through a liminal interplay of the fictive, the imaginary, and the actual) that will in turn generate its specific space-time continuum or actual world. Intercultural peratology would also explore the ways in which the liminal process opens up the possibility of accessing or constructing other worlds through redefining and refashioning one's own psychophysical and sociocultural boundaries. Viewed in this

light, literary anthropology and imaginary ethnography appear as significant steps in developing intercultural studies in the coming decades.

Another major issue that a field of intercultural studies can research extensively is the theory and practice of cultural interpretation/ translation. Iser points out that the concept of liminality can play a substantial role in this context as well. As we recall, he argues that any act of interpretation is in fact an act of translation of a specific subject matter into a different register. As such, it opens up a liminal space between the subject matter and the register into which it is translated. This liminal space is always perceived as a resistance that must be overcome in order for an interpretation or translation to emerge, although it can never be overcome entirely. In this regard, for Iser an act of interpretation/ translation is a powerful, if not violent, act that attempts to fill a liminal void, thus generating meaning literally out of nothingness.

Yet, Iser's notion of the liminal as an empty space or black hole leading to self-organization of meaning is only one possible "use" of liminality and it may point to the limits of the current scientific formulations of chaos, complexity, and emergence theory. Instead, one may wish to develop Iser's promising idea that the liminal draws its qualities "from what is inserted into it from outside itself." So, if humans insert into it "struggle" and "virulence," then that is what they will get out of it as well. One could then point out the intimate, reciprocal relationship, creating amplifying feedback cycles not only among the last three interpretive genres described by Iser, namely the circle, the loop, and the traveling differential, but also between these three and the first interpretive genre, the exegetic or canonical one, which is explicitly authoritarian. This would be relatively easy to do, especially since Rosenzweig's traveling differential is brought to bear precisely on that sacred, canonical tradition of interpretation. Perhaps all of the interpretive strategies Iser describes are mere attempts to create new variables of cultural or other types of authority that a mentality of power can never give up once and for all. By contrast, one can imagine developing entirely nonviolent forms of interpretation, based not on a dynamics of conflict, but on a mentality of peace and cooperation, which would be of great use in approaching other cultures and mindsets within a global reference frame.

Intercultural translation/interpretation should then conceive of liminal space not as a vortex or a black hole that must continually (and hopelessly) be filled—a sort of Sisyphean project, impelled by a Nietzschean *amor fati*, which is also proposed by Albert Camus. Rather, it should see it as a meeting place of alterities on "neutral ground" as it were, in which mutual exploration and learning can take place and out of which all participants emerge entirely transformed. In this respect, we may profit from Asad's comments on cultural translation. He invokes Rudolf Pannwitz, as cited by Walter Benjamin in his essay on Translation, in order to convey the idea of translation as a coming together and transfiguration of alterities: "Our translations, even the best ones,

proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works. ... The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be, instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue. Particularly when translating from a language very remote from his own he must go back to the primal elements of language itself and penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge. He must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign language.” (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 157)

As both Asad and Schwab point out, intercultural translation should always be a matter of dialogue and mediation through which all participating cultures become affected and transformed. But Asad does not consider the possibility that intercultural translation might also challenge and transform the very “fact” of the “inequality of languages.”<sup>14</sup> Deleuze and Guattari’s view of what is a “strong” and a “weak” language in their book on Kafka and the concept of a minor literature (Deleuze and Guattari 1984) might be productively employed in this context as well. Whereas Asad sees English as a strong and dominant language, one could in fact see it, in the manner in which Deleuze and Guattari see Kafka’s German, as a weak language, precisely because of its plasticity, flexibility, and adaptability that has made it a “prey” for nonnative speakers throughout the world. It is the weak languages, not the strong ones that survive and flourish, albeit in metamorphosed guises. Strong languages are “strong” precisely because of their inflexibility and imperviousness to change, that is, because of their inability to adapt to new global circumstances. Thus, they are much more likely to become endangered or extinct than their weak counterparts.

English as the official language of “Empire” (Hardt and Negri 2000) is in the same position today that Latin was two thousand years ago. Latin is now a dead language that was “cannibalized” and “bastardized” by the various “barbarians” of the Roman Empire. But, during the long hiatus between its decadence and final extinction (in early modernity), it gave birth to a number of major European languages and dialects and it greatly modified English itself, which was also born from the hybridization of two “barbarian” tongues: the Norman (Romance) and the Anglo-Saxon (Germanic). Therefore, one can plausibly argue that Latin continues to “live” today through all of these other tongues. In this respect, it is ironical to see that the Academies of Sciences of various former colonial countries, such as the French Academy, issue “standard language” usage decrees in an attempt to rescue the purity and the integrity of their languages and to protect them from “hybridization” and “bastardization.” In fact all they do is fight a rearguard action and, therefore, contribute to the cultural weakening and possible extinction of these languages.

Thus, Asad and other postcolonial scholars may wish to take into consideration the Nietzschean, or indeed any other power dialectics of weak and

strong, in which the two poles are highly unstable and reversible. They may also wish to consider that interlinguistic and intercultural relationships in general may often turn out to be asymmetrical and asynchronous with respect to their political and economic counterparts. In this respect, a dominant political and economic power might not always be able to impose its language and culture on the dominated one. On the contrary, both cultures may oftentimes emerge entirely transformed from their contact. We are currently experiencing this process in contemporary Europe, where hosts of immigrants from former colonial countries have “invaded” their former metropolis and are literally transforming its physiognomy, in all of its socioeconomic, political, cultural, and even biological aspects. The same process is underfoot in North America, where African, Hispanic, and East Asian populations have increased at a much more rapid rate than their Anglo-Saxon or European counterparts and are beginning to change the face of the continent.

A third theme that would profitably concern the field of intercultural studies is comparative analysis in an intercultural and crossdisciplinary reference frame. As we recall, Fischer and Marcus call for new practices of comparative analysis not only “among self-contained cultures,” but also across “hybrids, borders, diasporas, and incommensurable sites spanning institutions, domiciles, towns, cities, and now even cyberspace.” (Marcus and Fischer 1999: xxix) Obviously, within the field of intercultural studies such comparative analyses must transcend their disciplinary and interdisciplinary reference frames, so that these frames themselves might in turn become objects of intercultural comparative analysis, dialogue, and mediation.

One may, however, note that, despite such new important sites for comparative analysis as cultural hybrids, borders, liminal spaces, cyberspace, etc., intercultural comparative analysis of “self-contained” cultures will remain crucial. It is not inconceivable that a complex global society based on the principles of global intelligence might eventually emerge, with the help of all local-global cultures and as a result of extensive intercultural dialogue and cooperation among them. Its advent, however, is certainly not around the historical corner, because the principles of global intelligence, let alone genuine intercultural communication, are in their initial, developing stages at best. Thus, one should first focus on the development of these principles in the context of a continuous and genuine intercultural research and dialogue.

One step toward such dialogue would be to engage in extensive comparative research of large and small world cultures or societies. In this sense, any intercultural comparative analysis should start from a secure sense of cultural identity, rather than an insecure one. But, a globally intelligent approach would also require that researchers engaged in an intercultural project, and then gradually other members of the cultures involved in intercultural learning experiments, view their cultural position and identity through the others’ perspectives, as well as their own.<sup>15</sup> One might thus begin by thoroughly explor-

ing, in a dialogical, nonconflictive manner, the actual and imagined differences that may exist among the diverse human languages, cultures, value systems, and beliefs, which in turn determine the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting of various people. It might very well turn out that many of the clichés that various members of one culture circulate, automatically or intentionally, about other cultures and their members are based on incomplete knowledge or received opinion.

In intercultural comparative analysis, one may also employ such dramatic, rhetorical, and anthropological techniques as “dynamic, nonreductive juxtapositions,” or “orchestrated engagements” of cultural horizons (Fischer and Marcus 1999) but, again, outside a disciplinary or interdisciplinary context. I hope that the present chapter will also be seen as such an attempt at dynamic, nonreductive juxtaposition, in this particular case, an orchestrated engagement between ethnographic and literary perspectives. But we should also distinguish between reductive approaches in intercultural comparative analysis and their symmetrical opposites, pluralistic or relativistic approaches. Both types can be equally counterproductive in an intercultural environment, the first because it may amplify cultural conflict and violence, the second because it may stall and eventually cause the breakdown of any intercultural dialogue and cooperation.

### *E) Ethical Standards of Evaluation in Intercultural Studies*

Intercultural comparative analysis, with its technique of staging nonreductive juxtapositions and engagements, brings us to a crucial point, that of the diversity of ethical standards and values in a global environment and their likelihood of clashing against each other. This issue is very much on the minds of Fischer and Marcus, who return to it several times in their second Introduction. They argue that globalization makes it more difficult for ethnographers to take a clear ethical position in conducting their fieldwork and in writing up the findings of their research. They invoke ecological issues as a good example of this ethical dilemma in a global environment. They claim that it is impossible for anyone to avoid contributing to the environmental problems that plague our planet, “unless one could improbably sever all ties with the monetary economy.” They also claim that “complicities of all sorts are integral to the positioning of any ethnographic project.” (Marcus and Fischer 1999: xviii)

As I suggest throughout this book, however, intercultural studies should have an unambiguous ethical position with regard to the human and natural environment, as well as to other issues of global concern, whether they are related or not to the “monetary economy.” It should certainly not neglect the fact that new complicities of all sorts are integral to the new global circumstance and should study such complicities in relation to their older counterparts. But the position of the ethnographer, or any other specialist or generalist involved in the field of intercultural studies, should be unambiguously

grounded in the emergent ethics of global intelligence. Thus, the urgent question is changing not only the underlying, disciplinary assumptions of our scientific enterprises such as anthropology or literary studies, but also the prevailing, utilitarian assumptions of our “monetary economies.” Instead of contenting themselves with the role of mere “objective” or “neutral” scientific observers, anthropologists and other scientists should actively contribute to transforming such economies into sustainable human activities, serving the intrinsic interests of all life on Earth, not just those of a privileged, small section of the world communities.

At the same time, I should again emphasize that the notion of global intelligence and its ethics are emergent phenomena and cannot be predefined from any local-global perspective, including my own. On the contrary, they will be the result of extensive intercultural dialogue and negotiation that can be initiated by the members of the intercultural teams themselves and then submitted to general public debate in academic and nonacademic circles from various countries and regions throughout the world. Meanwhile, our comparative analyses and other interpretive acts should be informed by intercultural responsive understanding, which entails an ongoing, peaceful dialogue and cooperation with other human beings.

Responsive understanding, just like dialogism and polyvocality, is a concept that Mikhail Bakhtin originally used in his literary criticism. Obviously, however, it can be profitably employed in a much larger, intercultural context as well. We recall that Bakhtin defines the term “responsive understanding” as an infinitely open conversation with other humans in the presence of the Other. For him, the term also implies watchful listening that carefully and lovingly preserves the integrity of the Other. In turn, Bakhtin conceives this Other as a “super-receiver,” or a present yet invisible entity, hovering above all the participants in the dialogue. In many Western and other traditions, the super-receiver has variously been conceived as collective Humanity, the People, History, Absolute Truth, God, the Transcendent, the Universe, and so on. So, not surprisingly, the Other bears the marks of Rosenzweig’s traveling differential.

The “super-receiver,” however, might not be the happiest choice for initiating an intercultural dialogue among human beings, because most misunderstandings and conflicts in human history have arisen over—and many atrocities have been committed in the name of—this third Other. And yet, given its seemingly overriding importance in all cultures, would not its removal leave us with a void or nothingness that would preclude all dialogue? This would be the case only if nothingness were interpreted as a negative and frightening condition, as any power-oriented mindset does in fact interpret it. As I have noted, though, some of the most significant and productive dialogues among human beings may take place precisely in the interstices between cultures, in the liminal no-man’s-land where differences begin to lose their contours and become malleable and negotiable. So the shortest path

to responsive understanding might be to posit an indefinable locus, such as the luminous void or creative emptiness, as the proper place of human encounters, where one builds alternative human relations by starting literally from nothing (ness).

This kind of counterintuitive, imaginative leap would suffice to carry us over the threshold of local-global, intercultural communities. But, if turning away from traditional super-receivers and thereby leaping into nothingness may seem too frightening or impracticable, then we may at least proceed, in our intercultural encounters, as if *any* human being engaged in peaceful dialogue is a manifestation of such super-receivers or traveling differentials and therefore warrants responsive understanding, that is, watchful listening, as well as loving and careful preservation.

Finally, I should like to emphasize, again, that the principles and methodologies of intercultural studies that I have discussed here belong to a local-global perspective, which is that of a Western scholar who has obviously not renounced cultural critique and is only slowly working his way through the main assumptions and practices of what he perceives to have been his *Lebenswelt*, while groping toward other kinds of worlds and ways of life. Hereby I would like to invite colleagues not only from the Western world but also from other cultural worlds, who may feel, as I do, like “odd ducks” in their own learning environments, to come together in an extensive intercultural dialogue in which this and other programs of intercultural studies may be discussed, refined, modified and, hopefully, implemented.

By way of a very modest beginning for this intercultural dialogue, I would like to bring a voice from another wonderfully rich world culture into the present conversation, which has so far remained largely intracultural. The ancient Taoist texts contain some of the most illuminating comments that I know on the liminal nature of “nothingness,” the relationship of reciprocal causality between power, authority, and knowledge, and on the kind of authority to be sought by scholars, as well as by all other intellectual, spiritual, political, and business leaders of our world communities. These texts include the *Tao Te Ching*, attributed to Lao Tzu, a legendary Chinese poet who presumably lived in the sixth century BC and thus was an older contemporary of both Confucius and Socrates; and the *Chuang Tzu*, a collection of sayings attributed to another Taoist sage, Chuang Tzu (365-290 BC), a younger contemporary of Plato. I shall therefore choose two excerpts from this ancient tradition of wisdom and shall allow them to speak for themselves, without scholarly commentary.<sup>16</sup> I shall simply note that, at least to me, these excerpts harmoniously resonate, across the ages and widely different cultures, with the idea and practice of global intelligence, based on a mentality of peace, for which I have been pleading in my work.

The first excerpt concerns the liminal “void” or “emptiness” as a source of all values for the Tao (pathway):

I do my utmost to attain emptiness;  
 I hold firmly to stillness.  
 The myriad creatures all rise together  
 And I watch their return.  
 The teeming creatures  
 All return to their separate roots.  
 Returning to one's roots is known as stillness.  
 This is what is meant by returning to one's destiny [or nature].  
 Returning to one's destiny is known as the constant.  
 Knowledge of the constant is known as discernment.  
 Woe to him who willfully innovates  
 While ignorant of the constant,  
 But should one act from knowledge of the constant  
 One's action will lead to impartiality,  
 Impartiality to kingliness,  
 Kingliness to heaven,  
 Heaven to the way [or Tao],  
 The way to perpetuity,  
 And to the end of one's days one will meet with no danger. (*Tao Te Ching* I.XVI)

The second excerpt, also attributed to Lao Tzu, but included in the form of an edifying story in the "Inner Chapters" of the *Chung Tzu*, concerns the nature of governance according to the Tao, which can never be described directly, but only through its salutary effects on the social and moral being of the community for whose benefit it is being practiced:

When he governs, the sage emperor  
 fills all beneath heaven with bounty,  
 and yet he's nowhere to be found.

He transforms the ten thousand things,  
 and yet no one thinks to rely on him:

people never even mention his name,  
 for he lets things find their own joy.

He stands firm in the immeasurable  
 And wanders free in realms  
 Where there's nothing at all. (*Chuang Tzu, Inner Chapters* VII.4)

## Notes

1. Of course, the term “literature” has over time been extended to include, on the one hand, oral, “preliterate” productions of traditional cultures and, on the other hand, everything that is printed. We speak, e.g., of “scientific literature.” These meanings testify to our literate mentality that is not likely to disappear any time soon and certainly not under the impact of computers, which are its direct offspring. For a useful history of the concept of literature, see Adrian Marino, *The Biography of the “Idea of Literature.” From Antiquity to the Baroque* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996).
2. For a full discussion of the issue of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, see below, in this chapter, as well as my *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, especially Part III.
3. For a wide-ranging analysis of the nihilistic tendencies in contemporary Western thought, as well as their deep-seated, cultural historical roots, see Arran Gare, *Nihilism Incorporated: European Civilization and Environmental Destruction* (Bungadore, Australia: Eco-Logical Press, 1993). Gare’s postmarxist remedies for these tendencies, such as “creative rationality” and new forms of Gramscian “hegemony,” are less interesting from a global standpoint. In my view, they will continue enhancing the present mentality of power that thrives on oppositional, critical discourse, as I have argued throughout the present volume, as well as in *Global Intelligence and Human Development*.
4. Iser seems largely to share this type of Neo-Kantian view, also expressed by some American constructivists such as Nelson Goodman (1978). Of course, over the ages “reality” has also meant the permanent, immovable realm of the ideas, God, spirit and so forth, versus the “unreality” of transitory, perishable matter. This opposition (in Parmenides, Plato, and others) has spawned other binary oppositions, such as essence and appearance, truth and illusion/delusion, and the like. It reappears in Kant as the opposition between the unknowable, transcendent *Ding an sich* and the transcendental world of ideas, concepts, emotions, perceptions, etc. A similar opposition is preserved in semiotic theories of language in which the signifier and the signified (for Saussure), and then the added “metasign” (for Peirce), point to an ideal linguistic reality. This is the famous “linguistic turn” in modern Western thought, in which language is declared to be the only reality, and the world, a Text or a Book. My own view of reality is perhaps more “interactive” than either the neo-Kantian constructivist view or the semiotic one. For me, reality is not divided into subject and object, mind and body, language and world, signified and signifier, conscious and unconscious, knowable and unknowable, inside and outside, order and chaos, and so on; rather, it is an infinite unfolding of constructed and self-generated worlds or ontoepistemological reference frames, which are neither “pregiven,” nor part of an absolute totality, but always in process. In this respect, Werner Heisenberg’s view that the “universe” (or, indeed, the pluriverse) will respond to us in the way we approach it makes a great deal of sense to me. Transitions between worlds may be effected through liminal interstices where limits and differences can be renegotiated and reset. In turn, language—and the noun should always be used in the plural in order to avoid essentialization—does not “cover” or “represent” reality (in the manner of a map), but is an important way of world-making and communication, although not the only one. For some of the consequences of this position, see my discussion below.
5. For an extensive analysis of this ontoepistemological model, see Mihai I. Spărișu, *The Wreath of Wild Olive: Play, Liminality, and the Study of Literature* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1997), especially pp. 31-72. There I also explore the concept of literature as a ludic-liminal activity, with some references to Iser’s work. Those references have constituted the point of departure for the present discussion as well.
6. For a full discussion of these theories, see my *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, particularly Parts I and II.
7. In *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, however, I challenge the almost unanimous belief in environmental studies that today’s radical question is that of human survival.

Rather, the radical question is to change the mentality that makes “survival” an overriding value in human communities and to put this value in its proper place within the reference frame of a mentality of peace. For a full argument, see *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, especially Chapter 5, “Toward an Ecology of Ecology.”

8. In this respect, also see my extensive analysis of Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* (1996), in *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, Chapter 1, “Globalization and Contemporary Social Science.” Huntington’s book is almost a parodic elaboration of Appadurai’s mimetic approach to culture. A more complex view appears in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), which Huntington coedits with Lawrence E. Harrison. The volume is a collection of essays based on an interdisciplinary symposium at Harvard University, in which participants included scholars, journalists, and nonacademic practitioners. They all agree to define culture as the “values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society.” They also define human progress as “movement toward economic development and material well-being, social-economic equity, and political democracy.” Beyond those definitions, however, the views expressed range from the cultural developmentalist position of Harrison and his research group, according to whom certain cultural values determine economic and social success (measured by Western standards), to the cultural relativist and pluralist position of Richard A. Shweder, according to whom the developmentalist position shows moral arrogance, being just another form of Western (cultural) imperialism, and should be replaced by a two-tiered world system of “global cosmopolitan liberalism” and “local non-liberalism.” A cogent, non-Western view is that of Tu Wei-Ming, who speaks of “multiple modernities” and urges scholars from all over the world to embark upon a comparative study of “modernization” from multiple civilizational perspectives.

The problem with most of the positions articulated in the volume is that they subscribe, in various degrees, to the notion of human “progress,” largely conceived as material and economic development. Of course, I have suggested that human development, rather than human progress, is a more appropriate term to use in a local-global framework, implying as it does not only economic or social development, but also moral and spiritual. In this respect, all human societies and/or cultures are currently in a “developing” phase and should work together toward an alternative world system, based on global intelligence and an irenic mentality. For the political implications of the “culture wars” in the United States, see John Fonte, “Why There Is A Culture War: Gramsci and Tocqueville in America,” in *Policy Review*, No. 104 (December 2000 and January 2001).

9. In this context, then, the word “anarchy” does not mean absence of power, but only absence of a central ordering principle, or of a so-called “order of rank,” which results in the war of all against all. For further elaboration on these power concepts, see my discussion of Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* and Hardt and Negri’s *Empire* in Chapter 2 below.
10. For a detailed argument, see *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, especially Chapter 6, “A Paradigmatic History of the University: Past, Present, and Future.”
11. Nowadays it is fashionable, in North American and other cultural studies, to assert the primacy of the political over all other human activities. To me this simply means that the power principle has always been most visible (if not necessarily most effective) in its political manifestations. One often hears, largely in ideological circles, that a most effective political move is to deny or to ignore the existence of the political. We have seen that Pierre Bourdieu and, in his wake, Rabinow make a similar argument regarding politically aloof academia or culture in general. This argument reminds me somewhat of my native Romania’s erstwhile communist party, which never allowed for the possibility of genuine political neutrality and which always acted on the principle that “you are either with us, or against us,” typical of the either/or logic of any disciplinary mentality. The same totalitarian spirit of partisanship, which obviously leaves little room for liminal perspectives, is often evinced by political parties in the “pluralistic” Western democracies as well. Matthew Arnold, among many others, had already pointed out this phenomenon in Victorian Eng-

land, notably in his *Culture and Anarchy*. In any case, the question is not to deny the existence of the political, but to put it in its proper reference frame, as one among many other human activities. Finally, one needs to explore the nature of politics itself, which in the Western tradition (but in other traditions as well) has often been identified with ways of wielding power, rather than with ways of organizing communal life. A power-oriented mentality will create a power-oriented politics, but one should also be able to envisage politics that are not primarily guided by power, regardless of how “utopian” or “naive” this might appear (to a disciplinary mentality, that is).

12. This term belongs to Joseph Nye (2002), who makes a distinction between “soft power,” involving cultural authority, and “hard power,” involving political, economic, and military force. For a detailed discussion of these concepts, see *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, especially Part I. There I also examine the related issues of cultural imitation and cultural resonance and suggest that “resonance,” not “imitation,” would be a better term to describe mutual interactions and relations among various world communities, within a global reference frame.
13. For further discussion of these issues in relation to early Buddhism and later, Zen Buddhism, see *The Wreath of Wild Olive*, Chapter 3 and, most recently, *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, Chapter 4, “Buddhist, Taoist, and Sufi Views of the Web of Life.”
14. Asad’s view of translation as an act of power has become quite common in postcolonial studies and in the contemporary theory of translation in general. See among others, Tejaswini Niranjana, *Sitting Translation. History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial Context* (1992); Roman Alvarez and Carmen M. Vidal, *Translation, Power and Subversion* (1996); and the essays collected and edited by Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler in *Translation and Power* (2001).
15. Since we already have many Western readings of other cultures, it would be useful to initiate an intercultural research and publication program that would identify and support anthropological studies of Western societies by members of various other cultures. Such studies should then be widely disseminated in Western circles as well. In other words, we should begin, as Rabinow suggests, to “anthropologize” the West, although not from our viewpoint, on the model of Montesquieu’s Persian letters, but from that of scholarly and intellectual communities in other cultures. Of course, some of these studies may already and necessarily imply a Western “anthropological” component, as in the case of studies by non-Westerners, such as Edward Said and many others, who live and work in the West and “critique” Western mentalities largely on the latter’s own terms. Other studies may not imply Western notions of “critique” at all and might, for example, be “neutral” reflections about Western values and ways of life in relation to those in their own cultures. All of these intercultural studies, however, with their mutual mirroring of cultural assumptions and topoi, may be of great use in creating fertile global learning environments.
16. For a detailed discussion of early Taoism and early Buddhism as an appropriate foundation for a contemporary ecology of science, oriented toward global intelligence, see *Global Intelligence and Human Development*, especially Chapter 5.