La evidencia visible de los productores culturales

This review discusses anthropological research that analyzes the practices through which individuals and groups produce music, video, film, visual arts, and theater, and the ideological and institutional frameworks within which these processes occur. Viewing these media and popular culture forms as arenas in which social actors struggle over social meanings and as visible evidence of social processes and social relations, this research addresses the social, political, and aesthetic dimensions of these productions.

El texto revisa las investigaciones antropológicas recientes que se han centrado en el estudio de las prácticas a través de las cuales los individuos y los grupos humanos producen música, videos, películas, artes visuales y teatro, tomando en cuenta los marcos ideológicos e institucionales dentro de los cuales ocurre esta producción. Estas formas mediáticas y de cultura popular son presentadas como campos dentro de los cuales los actores sociales discuten acerca de los significados, y como evidencia observable de procesos y relaciones sociales. Desde este punto de vista, Mahon muestra cómo las distintas investigaciones antropológicas han abordado las dimensiones sociales, políticas y estéticas de estos productos culturales.

Origen del artículo
La reseña fue publicada originalmente en el Annual Review of Anthropology (2000). Su inclusión en este número monográfico sobre oralidades y sonoridades responde a que señala de forma clara los distintos debates conceptuales y metodológicos que se han dado dentro de la antropología en torno al estudio de la producción cultural, dentro de la cual la música y otras formas sonoras tienen enorme relevancia. Permite además identificar preguntas y temáticas de estudio que pueden ser relevantes para investigadores interesados en el tema. El texto se reimprime con autorización de la revista y de la autora.

Maureen Mahon*

The visible evidence of cultural producers

Introduction

In spite of the considerable political, economic, and cultural influence media and popular culture have on local, national, and global communities, in anthropology focused attention on the individuals and groups who produce these forms is still unconventional (Ginsburg 1994, Moeran 1996, Spitulnik 1993, Traube 1996b). The theoretical

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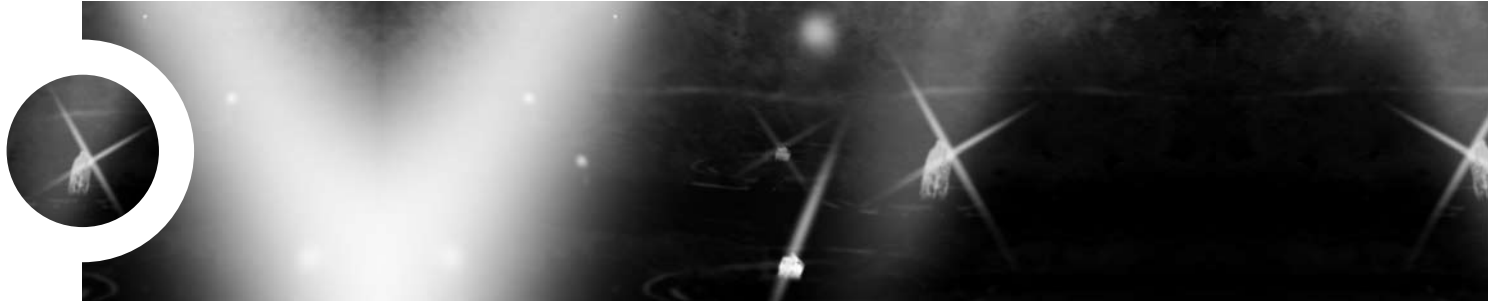
questions and methodological issues that the small but intellectually vibrant body of anthropological research on cultural producers addresses are central to contemporary anthropological theory and practice, providing visible evidence of the kinds of social issues and processes that concern the discipline. These include (a) understanding power as a productive and restrictive force that is at once open to contest and resistant to change (Bourdieu 1990; Foucault 1979, 1980; Gramsci 1997); (b) accounting for the agency of social actors and the institutional, historical, and sociological constraints in which they operate (Bourdieu 1984, 1990; Giddens 1990; Ortner 1984; Sahlins 1985); (c) analyzing the everyday practices through which social actors produce aesthetic values, ideological perspectives, and gender, race, class, national, and sexual identities (Dominguez 1986, Gregory 1998, Kondo 1990, Williams 1991); and (d) examining the social and cultural consequences of globalization and the transnational circulation of economies, cultural forms, ideas, and people on social practice and anthropological theory (Appadurai 1990, 1996; Glick Schiller et al 1992; Gupta & Ferguson 1992, 1997; Hannerz 1996; Lavie & Swedenburg 1996; Wolf 1982).

The studies discussed in this review situate the practices and productions of cultural producers in their social context. They view media and popular culture forms as both cultural product and social process and examine the ways in which individuals and groups negotiate the constraints of the particular material conditions, discursive frameworks, and ideological assumptions in which they work. To varying degrees, these studies also comment on the aesthetic qualities of the forms. This research on cultural producers reveals the struggles over social meanings that play out through media and popular culture forms, providing concrete and detailed examples of the processes through which individuals and groups negotiate, articulate, change, and disseminate these meanings, and indicating the impact of their activities on social relations. At the heart of these ethnographic studies of people who create music, video, film, visual arts, and theater is a concern with mapping and analyzing the processes through which, and the contexts within which, producers conceptualize, construct, and transmit meaningful cultural forms. They also address the relationship of these processes to social reproduction and social transformation.

I begin by outlining the ways in which anthropologists locate their analyses of cultural producers within both disciplinary concerns and the producers' social contexts, attending to questions of social process, cultural politics, and representation. Next, I discuss research on practitioners working within mainstream institutions and producers whose work challenges dominant ideologies. Anthropologists have approached these productions as sites of the reinscription of dominant ideologies and also as contestatory interventions with the potential of contributing to social transformation. I then consider some of the ways anthropologists analyze the cultural politics of aesthetics, authenticity, and appropriation that underpin these productions. I conclude by describing some of the methodological, analytical, and representational challenges faced by anthropologists researching contemporary cultural producers.

A situated analysis of **cultural producers**

As mass media and consumer popular culture forms continue to make incursions into the regions where they have traditionally worked, anthropologists have begun to study the ways in which consumers use these forms (Abu-Lughod 1993b, 1995, 1999; Appadurai 1986; Douglas & Isherwood 1979; Howes 1996; Kottak 1990; Mankekar 1993, 1998, 1999; Miller 1995; Spitulnik 1993). Much of the research on consumption, both by anthropologists and by other scholars, analyzes the creative ways in which social actors manipulate these products, often for purposes of resistance and political expression that their producers may not have intended (de Certeau 1984, Fiske 1989, Hall 1980, Hall & Jefferson 1975, Hebdige 1979, Lave et al 1992, Spitulnik 1993, Traube 1996b). Anthropologists have recognized that consumption is a form of cultural production, but have placed less sustained analytical emphasis on the activities and ideologies of those who produce the media and popular culture forms that others consume. In many cases, these cultural producers occupy a different social position than consumers and "are working within structures of power and organizations that are tied to and doing the work of national or commerical interests" (Abu-Lughod 1999:113-14). Consequently, anthropological research on these producers can contribute to a more textured understanding of the social, political, economic, and cultural import of these forms.
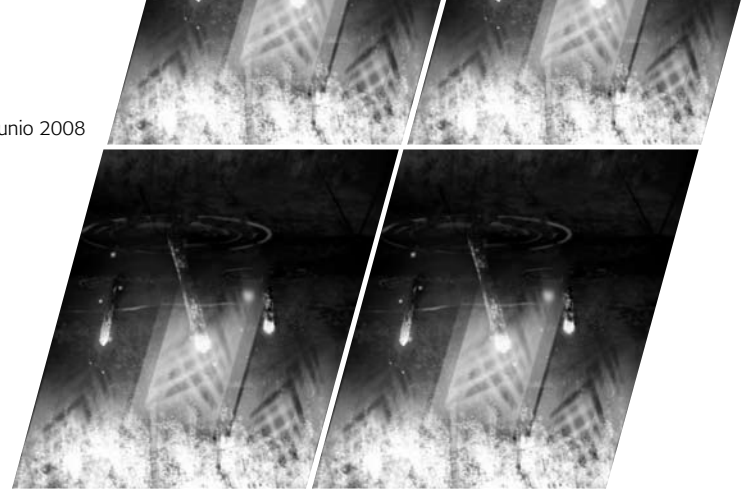
Those anthropologists who have focused on the work of cultural producers recognize that media and popular culture forms are anthropologically significant sites of the production and transformation of culture. Concerned with the discursive and material operations of these productions, they view them as "both cultural product and social process" (Ginsburg 1991:93) that contribute to the shape and character of social relations (Ginsburg 1993a). Although these scholars discuss the textual content and technological form of these productions, their chief concern is with social practice, i.e. the ways in which people use these forms and technologies to construct, articulate, and disseminate ideologies about identity, community, difference, nation, and politics, and with their impact on social relations, social formation, and social meanings (Aufderheide 1993; Bright 1995a; Caldarola 1994; Gell 1998; Ginsburg 1991, 1993a, 1994a, 1997; Marcus & Myers 1995a; Myers 1991, 1994b; Sullivan 1993; Turner 1979, 1991, 1992, 1995). Anthropologists have suggested that these forms are "instruments of indigenous ideologies" (Sullivan 1993:534), "a nexus of signifying practices grounded in the routines of contemporary life" (Caldarola 1994:67), enmeshed in transformations in consciousness (Ginsburg 1993a:563), "an integral, essential part" of struggles against colonialism and racism (MacClancy 1997:10), and "a form of social action in uncertain discursive spaces" (Myers 1994b:693) in which "discourses about cultural values are being produced" (Marcus & Myers 1995a: 11). These perspectives emphasize the processes of making the piece and defining meanings, highlighting "the cultural mediations that occur" through these productions (Ginsburg 1991:94, original emphasis). For example, anthropologists may consider the strengthening of group solidarity that results from documenting group events and the consolidation

of power and status connected to participating in these productions (Aufderheide 1993, Sullivan 1993, Turner 1990). Aware that aesthetic practices are embedded in specific historical and sociological locations, these researchers examine the local and global contexts, the relations of power, and the institutional and discursive frameworks within which the producers operate. They also connect their analyses of the social processes of cultural producers to disciplinary concerns with cultural politics and representation.
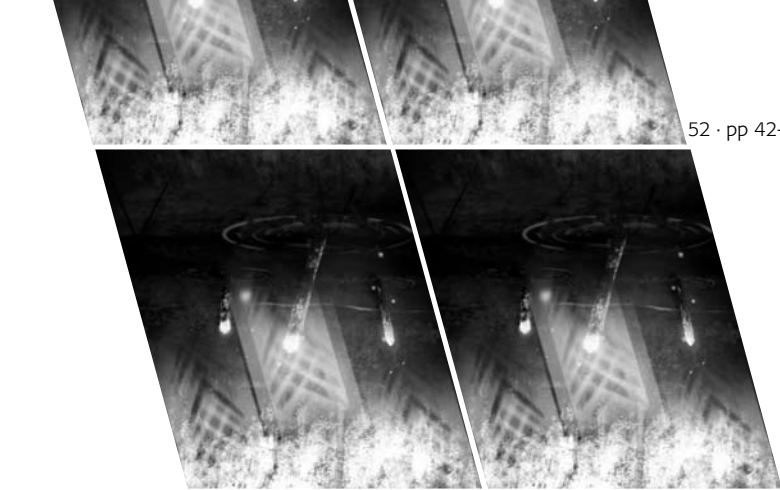
Much of this work on cultural producers draws on scholarship within and beyond anthropology that uses the term cultural politics to frame culture as a contested category and as a site of ideological and political struggle (Fox & Starn 1997a, Glick Schiller 1997, Gregory 1998, Hale 1997, Hall 1988, Hall & Jefferson 1977). Departing from the traditional view of culture as stable, coherent, and bounded, scholars working within the rubric of cultural politics recognize that the "reproduction of social divisions and social inequality" are "secured through culture, that is, through belief systems, social rituals, ideologies and other modes of intersubjective thinking and acting" (Jordan & Weedon 1995:4). Power struggles, relations of inequality, conflict, and difference emerge as central concerns for contemporary scholars. Commenting on this shift, Glick Schiller (1997) defines cultural politics as "the processes through which relations of power are asserted, accepted, contested, or subverted by means of ideas, values, symbols and daily practices" (p. 2). Anthropologists have examined cultural politics in a range of contexts, often connecting them to identity politics and the oppositional practices of activists and intellectuals associated with social movements (Alvarez et al 1998, Fox & Starn 1997a, Garcia Canclini 1993, Glick Schiller 1997, Gregory 1998, Hale 1997, McLagan 1996b, Melucci 1989, Thomas 1999, Warren 1998).

This research also analyzes the "use of cultural representation by differently located social actors to maintain or contest social relations of inequality" (Glick Schiller 1997:3). Observing that represen-

tation is "a formative, not merely an expressive place" (Hall 1988:27), anthropologists concerned with cultural production attend to the ways in which television, visual arts, music, film, museum exhibitions, and theatrical performances both reflect and construct consciousness, identities, social categories, and histories. They view representation as a historically situated process of construction that occurs within institutional and sociological parameters that can both limit and create possibilities (Ginsburg 1991, Handler & Gable 1997, Kondo 1997, Myers 1994, Turner 1990). Through their narratives and images, producers create new subjects and new subjectivities by articulating shared experiences and constructing social identities (Bright 1995a,b; Bright & Bakewell 1995; Kondo 1995, 1997; MacClancy 1997b; Marcus & Myers 1995b). Echoing contemporary reassessments of the concept of culture, these scholars recognize that "the world of representation and of aesthetics is a site of struggle, where identities are created, where subjects are interpellated, where hegemonies can be challenged" (Kondo 1997:4). Indeed, people who historically have been marginalized from
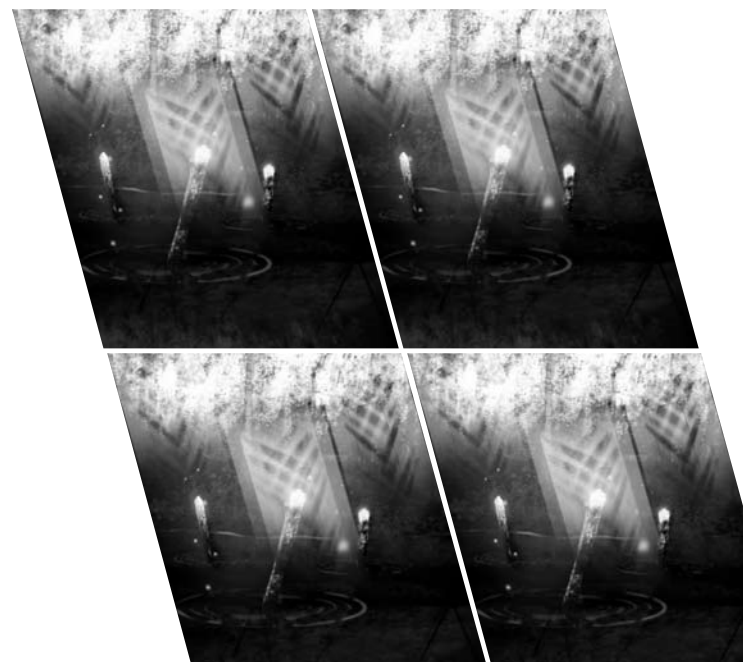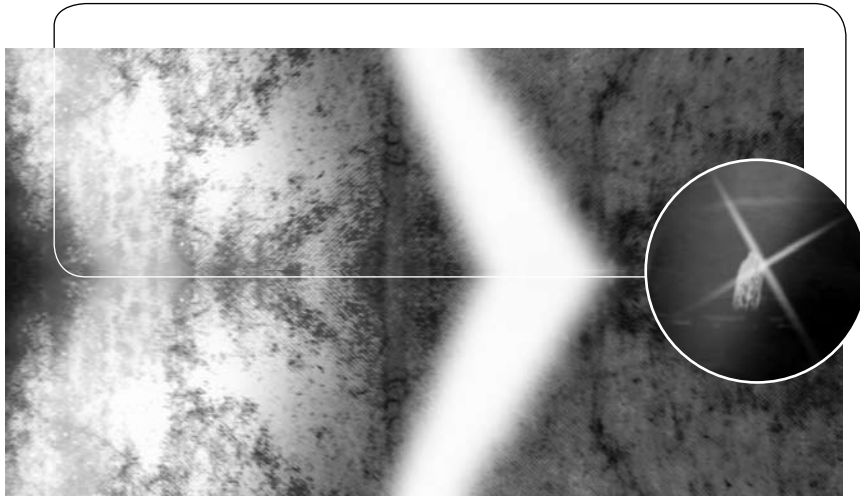
institutional power create self-representations of their groupsboth idealized and accurate-to counter widely disseminated negative images, the absence of images, and images produced by outsiders (including anthropologists) (Bright 1995b; Ginsburg 1991, 1993a; Karp & Lavine 1991; Kondo 1995, 1997; MacClancy 1997b; Mahon 2000; Spitulnik 1993; Sullivan 1993). Anthropologists suggest that this process of subverting and rewriting dominant images is "an important dimension of self-production" (Myers 1991:28), can be "a key means of proclaiming cultural difference" (MacClancy 1997:2), and may even play "a pivotal role in the formation and maintenance of social protest" (Fox & Starn 1997b:6). Of course, these productions are the work of specific members of the group, and scholars must take into account which members have control over the means of cultural production and how this relates to internal power relations (MacClancy 1997a, Myers 1994b:690, Sullivan 1993:546, Turner 1991). Here, we need to "write against" the generalizing tendencies of the traditional culture concept (Abu-Lughod 1991) and recognize the specificity of the producers and their

concerns (Abu-Lughod 1999, Mankekar 1993). Similarly, the celebration of the self-determination associated with media representation should also be tempered by analysis of the shifting and "unstable relations between intention, text, and effect by studying how producers make decisions and audiences interpret works in unpredictable and destablizing ways" (Ginsburg 1994:137). That view is echoed by Fox (1997), Fox & Starn (1997b), Hall (1980), and Monson (1997).

These representations are also sites of national identity production and dissemination (Abu-Lughod 1993b, 1995; Appadurai & Breckenridge 1988; Davila 1997a,b; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 1998; Kondo 1997; Mankekar 1993, 1998, 1999; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994; Thomas 1999). In many postcolonial contexts, professional cultural producers have the burden of creating images of the nation that address such potentially divisive issues as differences of class, gender, region, and ethnicity, that articulate which aspects of culture will "count" as representative of the nation, and that manage the tension between tradition and modernity. Such challenges speak to the larger struggles associated with nation building and more generally to the cultural politics of representation. In light of the public and political roles of these productions, some scholars have characterized the arena in which social actors produce and circulate these representations as the "public sphere," borrowing Habermas' (1989) term for the social space that is separate from the state and market economy in which citizens can debate political ideas and in which political processes occur (Calhoun 1992, Fraser 1992, Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994). Increasingly, these scholars argue, privatized zones of consumer popular culture and the media have become locations of public sphere debates (Appadurai et al 1994, Dornfeld 1998, Robbins 1993). In a related move, Appadurai & Breckenridge (1988) propose the term public culture to describe a similar "zone of cultural debate" (p. 6). This is "an arena where other types, forms and domains of culture are encountering,

tic and spiritual features that characterize high art works; they further argued that these productions are disseminated to a passive audience who, numbed and alienated by increasing industrialization and mass production, accept them without question (Horkheimer & Adorno 1972, Habermas 1989). The pessimistic vision of mass culture, the anti-popular view of the audience as "cultural dupes," and the bias toward high art characterize (and sometimes caricature) what has come to be called the Frankfurt school perspective. This work marked an important step in analyzing the connections between economics, art, ideology, and power. Subsequent media studies scholars have elaborated on Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1997) in order to contemplate these themes in a less deterministic way (Fiske 1989, Hall 1980, Hall & Jefferson 1975, Hebdige 1979). They stress that the dominance sustained in ideological spaces like the media and popular culture is never permanent but must be struggled for and that, consequently, resistance to power is possible. This perspective helped lay the groundwork for elaborating the theories of consumption discussed above and enables a more nuanced understanding of the complex processes in which cultural producers working in the culture industry are engaged.

interrogating and contesting each other in new and unexpected ways" (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1988:6). Reflecting the understanding of culture as a site of struggle, Appadurai & Breckenridge view "public culture" as "a contested terrain" in which cultural producers use media and popular cultural forms to influence public consciousness (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1988:7).

Because economic, artistic, and ideological considerations are interwoven and can shift according to social, political, and cultural currents, it is necessary to situate analyses of the work of cultural producers in a grounded context that acknowledges these trajectories. In the next sections, I discuss research on professionals in the mainstream "culture industry" and on practitioners working outside these institutions in order to describe the ways anthropologists consider the impact of different institutional structures and ideological commitments on the practices and discourses of cultural producers.

Producers in the "culture industry"

Scholars interested in mass media can build on and battle with the provocative ideas of the theory of mass culture developed by Horkheimer & Adorno (1972). Concerned with the commodification of culture, a process they understood as serving the interests of the ruling class, Horkheimer & Adorno contended that mass-produced forms developed in the "culture industry" lack the artis-

Among the first anthropological studies of the culture industry, Powdermaker's (1950) ethnography of movie-making in the Hollywood studio system identified power relations, economic concerns, and institutional constraints as critical structural factors that led Hollywood professionals to produce the films they did. This perspective and Powdermaker's awareness that movies are a uniquely influential institution in US society were prescient contributions that unfortunately did not yield further studies-until recently. Contemporary studies continue to stress the tensions between eco-

nomic forces and artistic goals and their influence on the cultural forms that producers working in these institutions choose, and are able, to make. Anthropological studies of cultural producers working in the culture industry consider social relations, the construction and dissemination of meaning, and the ways producers think about their work as a commodity and as an aesthetic product. Scholars have gained access to professionals in various cultural institutions, including television producers (Abu-Lughod 1995, Davila 1998, Dornfeld 1998, Ota 1997, Painter 1994), news media professionals (Laughlin & Monberg 1996; Pedelty 1993, 1995), musicians and music producers (Born 1995, 1997; Cameron 1990, 1996; Feld 1994, 1996, 2000; Meintjes 1997), advertising agency executives (Moeran 1996), museum professionals (Davila 1999; Handler & Gable 1997; Henderson & Kaeppler 1997; Karp & Lavine 1991; Karp et al 1992; KirshenblattGimblett 1998; Marcus 1990, 1995a; Price & Price 1994), and artists and cultural programmers working in government agencies and private institutions (Bikales 1997; Cohen 1993; Davila 1997a,b; Himpele 1996; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 1998; Ohmann 1996; Thomas 1999). Their studies demonstrate the ways in which decisions about form and content are influenced by a confluence of factors, including dominant political systems, economic interests, prevailing definitions of "good product," audience, distribution networks, marketing, sales, and aesthetic considerations.[1] That these wide-ranging concerns are often in conflict indicates that "industrial cultural production has never been a seamless process" through which ideology is easily encoded, and that "contestation and contradiction are becoming part of the routine" (Traube 1996a:xiv).

Research on television, for example, considers the relationships between the production of television programs and the dissemination of dominant ideologies, which can be both constructed and undermined through multiple and conflicting television images (Abu-Lughod 1995, Dornfeld 1998, Mankekar 1993, Ota 1997, Painter 1994). Assessing the range of social forces that shape documentary television production, Dornfeld (1998:19) suggests that a televisual text emerges

from the variety of social interactions that occur in its making, guided through all production stages by interpretative and evaluative acts, constrained and steered by the field of production within which the work is embedded, and articulated and interpreted through conventional codes .... [T]elevision production is a form of cultural mediation based on negotiations between powerful social agents that shape a text, presented in the context of a hybrid public culture.

Davila (1998) also sees the television production process "as a site where different interests compromise and interact with each other" (p. 453).

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1. Studies on the sociology of media production also address these professions (Crane 1992, Faulkner 1983, Gray 1990, Negus 1992, Silverstone 1985, Schlesinger 1978). This research on "the production of culture" has been criticized, however, for failing to "take culture seriously, regarding it as a subsidiary product, a particular type of commodity" rather than as a context for the production of meaning (Dornfeld 1998:15).
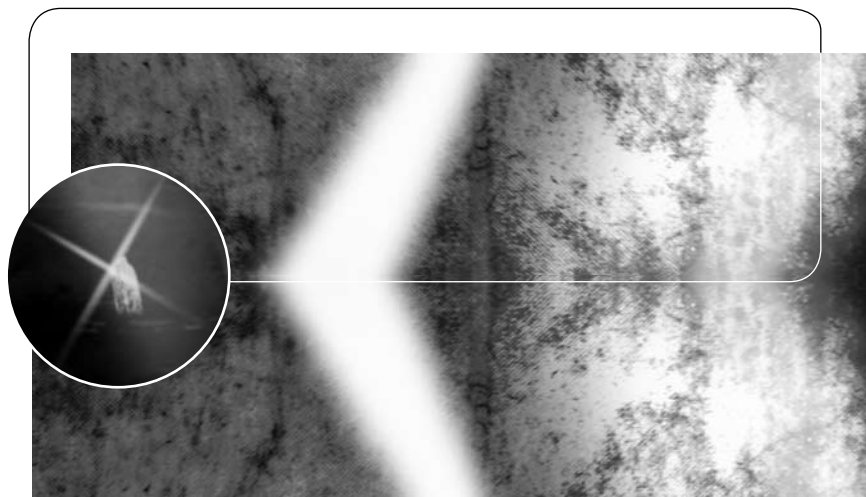
The Puerto Rican television show she writes about, El Kiosko Budweiser, is part of the beer manufacturers' marketing strategy, yet the producers and actors, in their own view, appropriate this corporate form for "conveying social messages through the simultaneous critical and comic presentations of 'Puerto Ricans' as 'we are... (Davila 1998:458). As a result, she argues, "the production process cannot be reduced to the reproduction of dominant discourses or messages of commercial manipulation" (p. 453). Instead, the program "is an amalgam of meaning that is as subversive of and compliant with cultural hierarchies as is the larger popular culture to which it speaks and as are the processes of identity formation deployed on the island" (p. 466).

Somewhat less optimistically, Pedelty (1995) traces the absence of subversion he witnessed in the professional culture and behavior of war correspondents working in El Salvador. Using Foucault's (1980) notion of the productive and restrictive operations of power, he analyzes the "disciplinary apparatuses, which, as a loose coalition of influences, have resulted in a description of the Salvadoran war that both legitimated and obfuscated U. S. foreign policy and the Salvadoran power structure" (Pedelty 1995:169). He demonstrates that the culture of the correspondents impedes their ability to recognize that such taken-for-granted factors as the hierarchical structure of the press corps and the commitment to objective reporting are part of an institutional framework that overwhelmingly influences their practice (Pedelty 1995:146). Investment in a "collective myth of independence" prevents them from understanding "how their very practices and philosophies are organized by and for institutional structures and ideologies" (p. 145). This analysis deploys social theory that has more abstractly conceptualized actors' often unwitting consent to power (Bourdieu 1990; Foucault 1979, 1980; Gramsci 1997).

These scholars differ in the extent to which they see the reproduction of dominant discourses occurring in institutionalized media productions, but they share an interest in using an ethnographic perspective to analyze the processes through which producers negotiate decisions and conflicts, to indicate how the producers interpret their involvement in profit-centered institutional structures, and to relate these productions to the social contexts from which they emerge and which they influence.

Cultural agendas and **social transformation**

Anthropologists also have devoted attention to the productions of artists who use expressive cultural forms to create interventions into public debates. Although these productions may be limited by the political economy, ideological factors, and institutional constraints that marginalize the producers (Abu-Lughod 1993a:467, Kondo 1997:18), they are public and visible processes through which people self-consciously use the media and artistic forms to critique the social terrain they inhabit and the social verities they inherit. This anthropological research on cultural producers is part of a growing body of scholarship that highlights the connections between the mobilization of marginalized interest groups and the use of media and popular culture to struggle over social meanings, to create and represent social identities, to introduce social and political perspectives, and to constitute a space for these representations (Ferguson et al 1990, Kahn & Neumaier 1985, O'Brien & Little 1990, Robbins 1993, Roman 1998, Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994). Attention to these productions avoids perpetuating images of politically marginalized people as being passive victims and instead reveals them to be
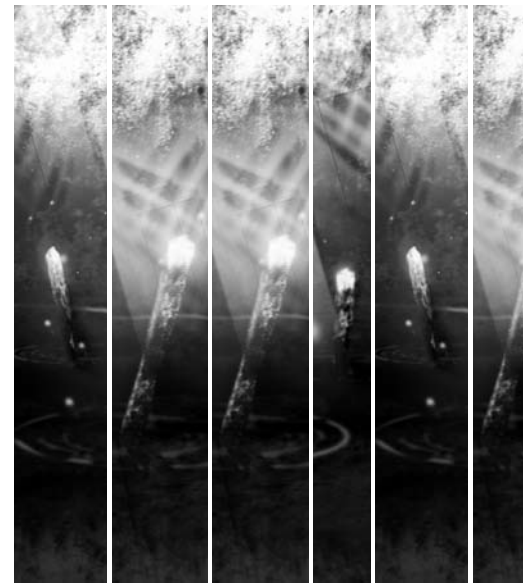
active agents (Ginsburg 1991; Kondo 1995, 1997; Myers 1991; Turner 1979). By grounding their research ethnographically, these anthropologists mediate between "extremes of romantic resistance and devastating domination" (Myers 1994b:681, cf Abu-Lughod 1990) and reveal the complex negotiations that accompany these productions.

Recognizing the political dimension of these representations, Ginsburg (1997) characterizes these cultural productions as "cultural activism," a distinct form of cultural politics marked by concerted actions that are underpinned by political and artistic agendas. These cultural producers self-consciously deploy artistic forms-music, film, video, visual arts-for purposes of creative expression as well as to mediate "historically produced social ruptures," to shift the terms of debates circulating in the dominant public sphere, to attack stereotypes and perceived prejudices, and to construct, reconfigure, and communicate meanings associated with their racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and national identities (Ginsburg 1991:96). Linking these practices of representation to larger anthropological 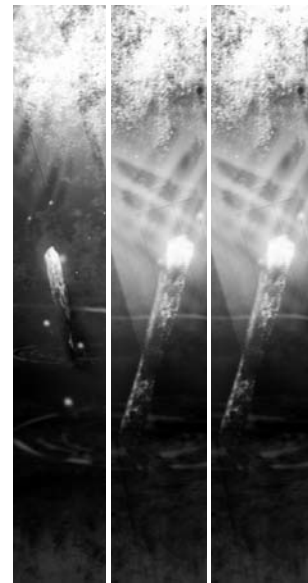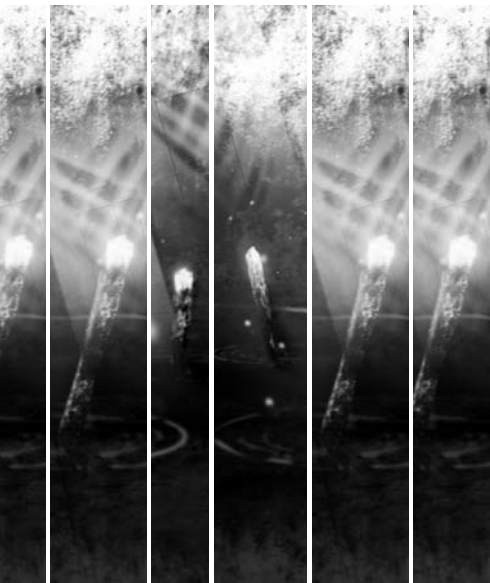questions about social process and social relations, Ginsburg argues that "focusing on people who engage themselves with new possibilities for their own collective self-production allows us to ask more general questions about the political possibilities inherent in self-conscious shifts in cultural practice" (Ginsburg 1997:122). She views these processes as "transformative action," a term she uses to direct attention

To understanding human agency in a grounded way, without a priori categorizing cultural practices as either dominant/hegemonic or alternative/resistant. Rather, this concept helps us see the emergence of new social and cultural possibilities on a continuum, from the activities of daily life out of which consciousness and intentionality are constructed, to more dramatic forms of expressive culture (such as media or social protests).

Ethnographic analysis situates these practices and productions, attending to institutional structures and power struggles and providing evidence of how discursive and material practices are changed and reproduced. These grounded studies also underscore the complexity that characterizes relationships between resistance and power, subordinate and dominant, typically perceived as dichotomous (Ginsburg 1997, Kondo 1997, Ota 1997, Traube 1996a,b). Kondo, for example, recognizes the simultaneously contestatory and complicit nature of cultural politics and cautions that although avant-gardes can provide meaningful subversions that may make "limited interventions that are at one level contestatory," they are developed within the "discourse, politics, and logic of late capitalism" (Kondo 1997:152). Their challenges, she asserts, "never really threaten the existence of a dominant class or subvert the rules of the game" (p. 113). Evaluating the political limitations and possibilities of these productions is one component of this research.

Recent studies of indigenous media production emphasize the agency of indigenous people living in colonized or recently decolonized nations and draw attention to "their own goals and capacity for struggle on their own behalf" (Turner 1979:2). Scholars who have conducted research on the cultural productions of Aboriginal Australians (Ginsburg 1991, 1993a,b, 1994a,b, 1995, 1997; Michaels 1985, 1994; Myers 1989, 1991, 1994a,b, 1998), Pacific Islanders (Hughes-Freeland 1992; Sullivan 1993, 1997), and North and South American Indians (Aufderheide 1993; Carelli 1988; Leuthold 1998; Saunders 1997; Townsend-Gault 1997; Turner 1979, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995; Worth

and meanings through which their cultures and histories are represented in local, national, and transnational locations (Turner 1990:11).

These forms are part of the social processes through which identities are produced and understandings of what it means to be a member of the community, particularly in a context of social change and political struggle, are constructed (Ginsburg 1991, 1993a, 1997; Michaels 1985, 1994; Turner 1990, 1991). Furthermore, as these productions enter the global economy of images, they contribute to the development of "new networks of indigenous cooperation locally, nationally, and internationally" (Ginsburg 1993a:575). These studies consider the material and ideological challenges associated with producing these cultural forms-limits on funding, scarcity of resources, lack of skilled producers, conflicts within the groups over which members have the right to represent the whole group to itself and to the world-and the "contradictory conditions" that shape the production and reception of indigenous media (Ginsburg 1993a:574). In the Australian context, for example, these media are "powerful means of (collective) self-expression that can have a culturally revitalizing effect," but they are also "a product of relations with the governments responsible for the dire political circumstances that motivated the mastery of new communication forms as a means of resistance and assertion of rights" (Ginsburg 1993a:559).
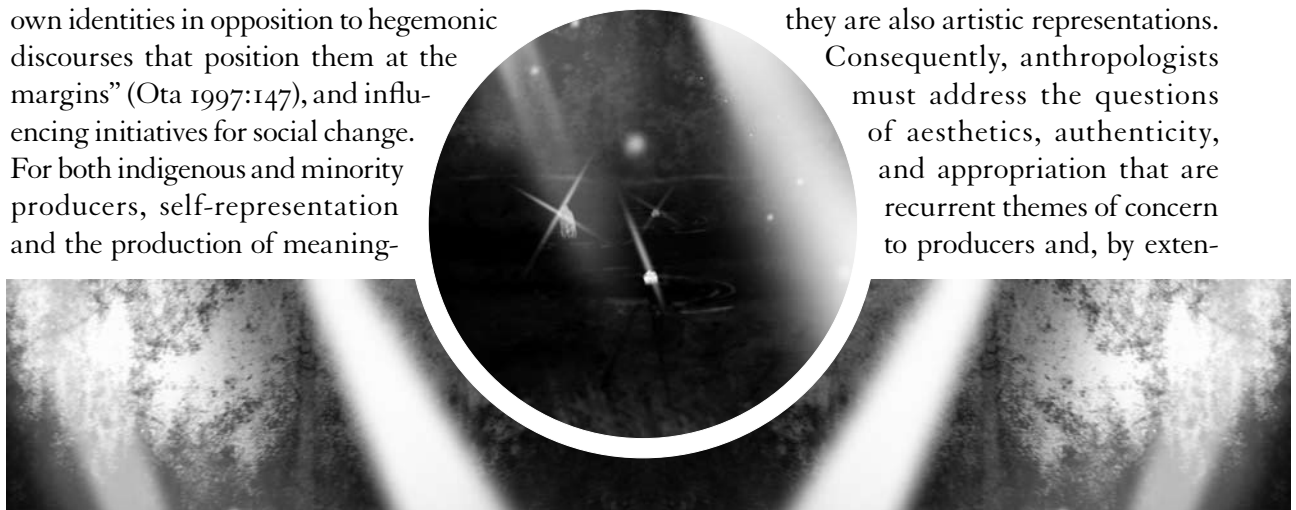
Anthropologists also have discussed the politicized productions of minority and third world musicians, film makers, and visual artists (Bikales 1997; Bright 1995b, 1998; Coplan 1993; Davila 1999; Kondo 1995, 1996, 1997; MacClancy 1997c; Mahon 2000; Monson 1997; Ota 1997; Svasek 1997), gay and lesbian activists (Juhasz 1995, Mohammed & Juhasz 1996, RomAn 1998), avant-garde artists (Born 1995, 1997; Cameron 1990, 1996; Marcus 1995b), and producers engaged in state-level political struggles (Aufderheide 1993; Marcus 1993, 1997; McLagan 1996a,b; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Mohammadi 1994). Many of these cultural productions critique dominant discourses

& Adair 1997) are acutely aware of the impact of colonialism, decolonization, and globalization on indigenous communities. Their findings reveal the extent to which native people "are in fact surviving, resisting, and adapting with some degree of success" in contact situations (Turner 1979:4). Although film and video in particular can be read as symbols of Westernization, these studies show how various groups use them for cultural preservation and survival and as a means for circulating "oppositional versions of history and culture" (Fox & Starn 1997:7). One well-documented example is of the Kayapo of the Brazilian Amazon, who use video to chronicle ceremonial performances, enabling the preservation of cultural knowledge; they also record transactions with Brazilian officials, helping to ensure that legal and business contracts are honored (Turner 1979, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995). As historically marginalized people assert control over the practice of representation, they engage in a visible and frequently influential form of cultural politics by defining "the meaning and value of acts and events in the arena of inter-ethnic interaction" and by taking control of the images

of ethnic and racial essentialism and the biased practices that limit their involvement in mainstream institutions. The images and discourses they introduce represent group concerns, express self-identities, and make political commentaries. This work expands and democratizes representations and information for communities that are typically left out of mainstream channels. Because these representations receive less far-reaching distribution than those produced in well-funded mainstream institutions, their producers work to build independent networks and outlets for disseminating their products (Aufderheide 1993, Bikales 1997, Juhasz 1995, Kondo 1997, Mahon 2000). Echoing the assumptions of Ginsburg's cultural activism, Kondo (1997) views these productions "as sites for political intervention and the articulation of new kinds of political identities" (p. 22). Although these productions will not directly change existing political and ideological structures, they do produce new "political subjectivities" that can "be mobilized in ways that enable us to work in alliance for social transformation" (p. 22). Their role in bringing identities into being (p. 7) and in creating a transformation in consciousness is crucial to developing the movements that struggle for transformation in social and political institutions (p. 257). These studies share an assumption that media forms can underwrite cultural mobilization and resistance by "articulating the voices of the marginalized," enabling them "to formulate their own identities in opposition to hegemonic discourses that position them at the margins" (Ota 1997:147), and influencing initiatives for social change. For both indigenous and minority producers, self-representation and the production of meaning-

ful identities are critical first steps toward political action (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1988; Fox & Starn 1997b; Hall 1988; Ginsburg 1993a, 1994; Kondo 1997).

Anthropologists have also examined the contradictory position of producers who start as outsider critics of dominant culture but find themselves and their art forms incorporated into the cultural mainstream (Born 1995, 1997; Cameron 1990, 1996; Marcus 1995b). This emphasis draws attention both to the transformative possibilities of cultural forms that succeed in producing a change in the social terrain (Cameron 1990, 1996), and to their susceptibility to appropriation and incorporation. Consequently, cultural producers must manage the complicit and contestatory dimensions of their work as they balance their desire for acceptance and cultural legitimacy against an interest in producing cultural critique. In most cases, the social and ideological importance of artistic creation and self-expression does not erase the material reality that these products are frequently the livelihood of the producers, a fact that may limit their engagement in explicit political critique (Born 1995, 1997; Kondo 1997; Marcus 1995b; Svasek 1997).

The cultural productions of self-consciously oppositional producers and of practitioners operating in the more limiting confines of mainstream institutions are not only embedded in social relations and social processes, they are also artistic representations. Consequently, anthropologists must address the questions of aesthetics, authenticity, and appropriation that are recurrent themes of concern to producers and, by exten-

sion, those who study their work. They also must develop ways to conduct ethnographic fieldwork and produce ethnographic writing that illuminate these unconventional but socially significant subjects. I address these issues in the remainder of the review.

The cultural politics of aesthetics, authenticity, and appropriation

In considering cultural productions as sites through which debates about identity, power, meaning, and resistance occur, anthropologists depart from traditional Western concepts of the aesthetic and the arts. The Kantian aesthetic is a mode of disinterested judgment of natural beauty and art separate from economic and moral concerns; over time, it has informed a view of artistic production as an autonomous realm with an intrinsic value of its own, independent from everyday life. Anthropologists concerned with the study of art and material culture in particular have problematized this universalizing and decontextualizing view of aesthetics by connecting artistic production to the social world in which it occurs, either to demonstrate the work's legitimacy as art or to relate it to larger social processes.[2] Some have focused on identifying and articulating the qualities of a range of socially and culturally specific aesthetic codes, explaining non-Western aesthetic systems and expanding perceptions of what counts as "art" (Anderson 1990, 1992; Coote & Shelton 1992; Morphy 1991, 1995; Price 1989), evaluating the expression of native points of view through native and non-native technologies (Ginsburg 1993a,b, 1994; Michaels 1985, 1994; Myers 1991, 1994a,b, 1998; Svasek 1997; Tamer 1991; Worth & Adair 1997), and considering the politics of naming a cultural form as "art," "folk art," "material culture," or "craft" (Bakewell 1995, Errington 1998, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, Leuthold 1998, Myers 1991, Price 1995).

Anthropologists also analyze "the social relations of which these symbolic systems are a more or less transformed expression" (Bourdieu 1993:32,

original emphasis) and relate these cultural forms to their social conditions of production (p. 33). Bourdieu's (1993) perspective on artistic production continues his commitment to understanding the role cultural practice plays in the discursive and material production, reproduction, and naturalization of social structures (Johnson 1993:2; Bourdieu 1984, 1990). His concept of the "field of cultural production" emphasizes the intersection of aesthetics, history, practice, and power, underscoring both the material production of these forms by the artists and the symbolic production "of the meaning and value of the work" by "critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such" (Bourdieu 1993:37; cf Becker 1982). Myers' research (1989, 1991, 1994a,b, 1998) on US and Western European markets for art by Aboriginal Australians examines these multiple levels of production. He analyzes the processes of self-representation through which the artists create the work and produce "Aboriginal identity" (Myers 1991, 1994b) while also mapping the ways in which art critics, museum professionals, and anthropologists (himself included) engage in processes of intercultural representation that

construct Aboriginal painting as art and produce discourses about the significance of these paintings that circulate in news media, in gallery catalogues, and at museum events (Myers 1991:28).

Resisting the apparent pressure to choose between an emphasis on aesthetics and one on social relationships, MacClancy (1997a) posits that "all aesthetics are socially grounded and, as such, are appropriate subjects for social analysis" (p. 3). This "embedded aesthetics" suggests a "system of evaluation that refuses a separation of textual production and circulation from broader arenas of social relations" (Ginsburg 1994a:368). Such consideration of the aesthetic choices of producers can illuminate the sociological and anthropological questions we ask and also direct us to new questions about, and more nuanced analyses of, these productions. Still, in our efforts to understand the social context of artistic production, we must take care to avoid collapsing art and politics or promoting a reductionist view of "art-as-ideology." This is especially important in the case of minority artists, whose productions tend to receive scholarly attention principally because of their political content. Certainly, as this research demonstrates, expressive culture has been a way for people with limited access to mainstream institutions to produce

political critique, but if we ignore the aesthetic dimension-the creative and artistic choices, preoccupations, and goals that inform their work-we risk producing a one-sided and mechanistic view of complex artistic productions. As Leuthold (1998) argues, aesthetic systems have important links to other social systems but are not reducible to them. Aesthetics cannot be understood only in political, economic, or religious terms; there are aspects of our aesthetic experience that must be explained in the terms of aesthetic theory rather than political or economic theory. But the relationship of aesthetics to these other social systems is important (p. 6, original emphasis).

Here, he maintains an important analytical connection between the content of a cultural form, the social relations and processes in which cultural producers are engaged, and the larger social context in which they operate.

Several scholars of music production who are concerned with both cultural politics and cultural content have provided this kind of more contextualized discussion of social processes and aesthetic qualities (Born 1995; Feld 1994, 1996, 2000; Finnegan 1989; Keil 1991; Keil & Feld 1994; Monson 1997; Turino 1993). Born, for example, develops a "sociological aesthetics," through which she examines "aesthetic theories, artistic practices, and their related social, institutional, and technological forms as constitutive of historical discursive formations" (1995:24). Attention to the aesthetic dimension demands a level of evaluation of the work that some anthropologists, perhaps adhering to the ideals of cultural relativism, prefer to defer (Marcus & Myers 1995a: 10, Myers 1991:43). It may, however, enable anthropologists to discuss the artistic contributions these cultural productions make and to consider the question of pleasure, a theme that is oddly absent from most

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2. Sociologists have also critiqued traditional aesthetics and developed more socially grounded analyses of artistic production (e.g. Becker 1982, Bourdieu 1984). See Footnote 1.

of these discussions even though it is the kind of unquantifiable experience that ethnographic research can help us understand. Arguably, it is the pleasure people take in producing and consuming the productions that contributes to their popularity and significance as cultural objects worthy of anthropological analysis (Bright 1995b; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 1998). Furthermore, it is the particular aesthetic qualities of certain cultural forms that make them (and not others) appealing to producers, audiences, and, presumably, anthropologists in the first place. Recognizing "the complexities of a cultural politics of pleasure," Kondo (1997) explains that she seeks "to reclaim pleasure as a site of potential contestation that might engage, and at times be coextensive with, the critical impulse" (p. 13). This type of assessment of the politics and pleasures associated with these forms can produce an analysis that more comprehensively addresses the aesthetic practices of politically and socially engaged artists.

A situated approach to aesthetics also draws attention to the conflicts that emerge as these productions become embroiled in debates about the politics of representation, authenticity, and appropriation. Such issues are particularly salient in the contemporary context in which people, ideologies, and products cross borders with relative ease and frequency, and intercultural contact and borrowing are increasingly common. The undeniable hybridity of the contemporary global scene is accompanied by anxiety about purity and authenticity, on the part of both the producers and the anthropologists who write about them (Feld 1994, 2000; Marcus & Myers 1995a). Often, in reference to third and fourth world populations, anthropologists encounter what Feld (1994) calls the homogenization-heterogenization debate, in which mixing, creolization, and hybridization are opposed to tradition, cultural authenticity, and integrity (p. 272). Is "indigenous" involvement with media, for example, a means through which "people add their voices to the cultural discourse of the world? Or is it more evidence of `cultural homogenization'?" (Myers 1991:29). There is an understandable concern that the introduction of new media technologies could be a final assault on language, on relationships between generations, and on respect for traditional knowledge (Ginsburg 1991:98). Ginsburg, however, suggests a perspective that highlights the "creativity, intelligence, and wherewithal to manipulate forms for their own purposes," which may include countering Western cultural imperialism (Ginsburg 1991:106).

Analyses of the politics of authenticity and representation also have led to instructive discussions of the ways in which such categories as indigenous media (versus media), "minority art" (versus art), and "world music" (versus music) contribute to a kind of ghettoization that treats "their" productions differently from "mainstream" ones even as these categories constitute a space for the creation and reception of these forms (Bakewell 1995, Feld 1994, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, MacClancy 1997a). These issues are complicated further by globalization, tourism, and the international expansion of media companies and the art market (Bakewell 1995; Errington 1994, 1998; Feld 1994, 1996, 2000; Garcia Canclini 1993; Jules-Rossette 1984, 1990; MacClancy 1997a,c; Marcus & Myers 1995a; Myers 1991; Price 1989; Saunders 1997; Steiner 1990, 1994, 1995; Sva"sek 1997;
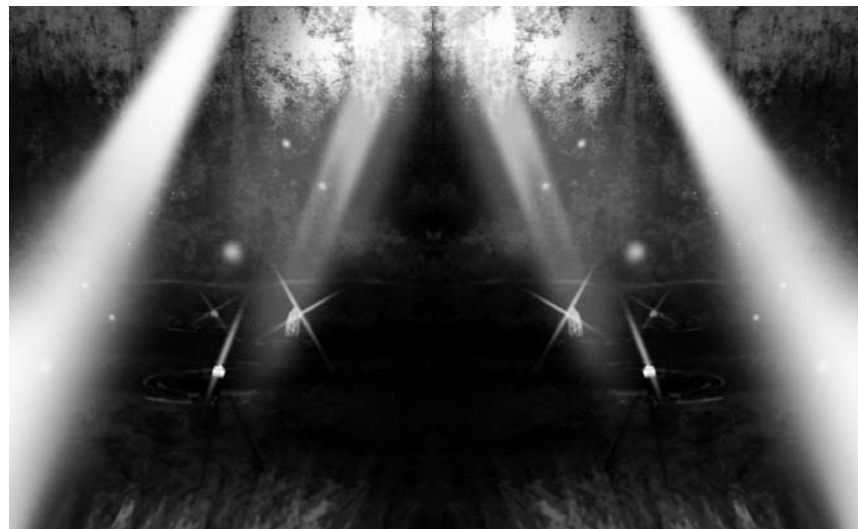
Tedlock 1995). In this context, determinations of what constitutes "good art," what art can represent "authentic" ethnic, racial, or national identity, and what it means for artists to appropriate "non-native" styles are debated by artists, curators, and anthropologists alike (Bakewell 1995; Davila 1997a,b, 1998, 1999; Kondo 1997; MacClancy 1997c; Mahon 2000; Monson 1997; Morphy 1995; Mullin 1995, Svasek 1997). These studies also consider the appropriation of locally produced forms by dominant groups who exploit them for political or economic purposes (Cohen 1993; Davila 1997a; Feld 1988, 1994, 1996, 2000). In all of these instances, anthropologists must contend with the social, political, and ideological dimensions of aesthetics, authenticity, and appropriation in order to analyze the possibilities and constraints associated with hybrid cultural production in the contemporary global context.

Ethnographic **innovations**

Anthropologists' anxiety about authenticity extends to a concern about their own legitimacy as anthropologists studying nontraditional sites-media and popular culture productions, frequently in the United States-and nontraditional subjectscultural producers and artists, many of whom could be categorized as educated elites or intellectuals. Working "at home" (Messerschmidt

1981) and "studying up" (Nader 1972) means expanding the kinds of locations, matters, and actors that typically "count" as appropriate subjects for anthropological inquiry (Kondo 1997; Traube 1990, 1996a,b).[3] Although this research on cultural producers is rooted in anthropological concerns, these studies are broadly interdisciplinary and draw on critical theory, ethnic studies, British cultural studies, film theory, queer theory, history, political theory, feminist theory, subaltern studies, and media studies. These changes in subject matter, research questions, and theoretical focus extend the anthropological project beyond its traditional confines and influence ethnographic method and representation.

Many anthropologists who study cultural production argue that careful ethnographic research avoids oversimplified generalizations about the meanings of these forms and reveals the contradictions and complexities with which people experience them (Abu-Lughod 1999, Born 1995:7, Bright 1995a:6, Ortner 1998, Sullivan 1993:551-52). By developing "fine-grained" ethnographic analyses of cultural producers, "anthropologists can think intelligently about, and imaginatively with, the megaconcepts of social science" and the humanities (Abu-Lughod 1999:114). Still, as the subjects that anthropologists study and the conditions under which they study them change, a serious reassessment of research methods must also take place (Marcus 1998:108). Marcus & Myers (1995a) comment on the productive difficulty they encountered "in constituting art worlds and their discursive fields as conventional, distanced objects of ethnographic study"

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3. Ross (1989) describes the uneasy relationship between post-World War II US intellectuals and popular culture that likely contributes to contemporary academics' suspicions about media and popular culture as legitimate intellectual pursuits. I like to think that as the generations of scholars who came of age in the "media-saturated" 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s come into intellectual maturity, some of these anxieties will subside.

(p. 3). Indeed, it may be that anthropologists conducting research on cultural producers, who are frequently mobile and educated artists, activists, and intellectuals, will be unable to represent their subject matter as "a proper mise-en-scene of fieldwork-a physically and symbolically enclosed world, a culture for the ethnographer to live within and figure out" (Marcus 1998:108, 109). Whether it is possible to conduct fieldwork in any recognizably traditional way is also at issue. The mobility of the producers and the multiple locations relevant to their social networks and their productions demands the mobility of the ethnographer, leading to what Marcus (1998) has called "multi-sited research" in which "the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography" (Marcus 1998:90). Ideally, this kind of "mobile ethnography" (Abu-Lughod 1999:122) will allow anthropologists to trace "the subtle inter-connections among global, national, local, and personal dimensions of experience" (Caldarola 1994:67).
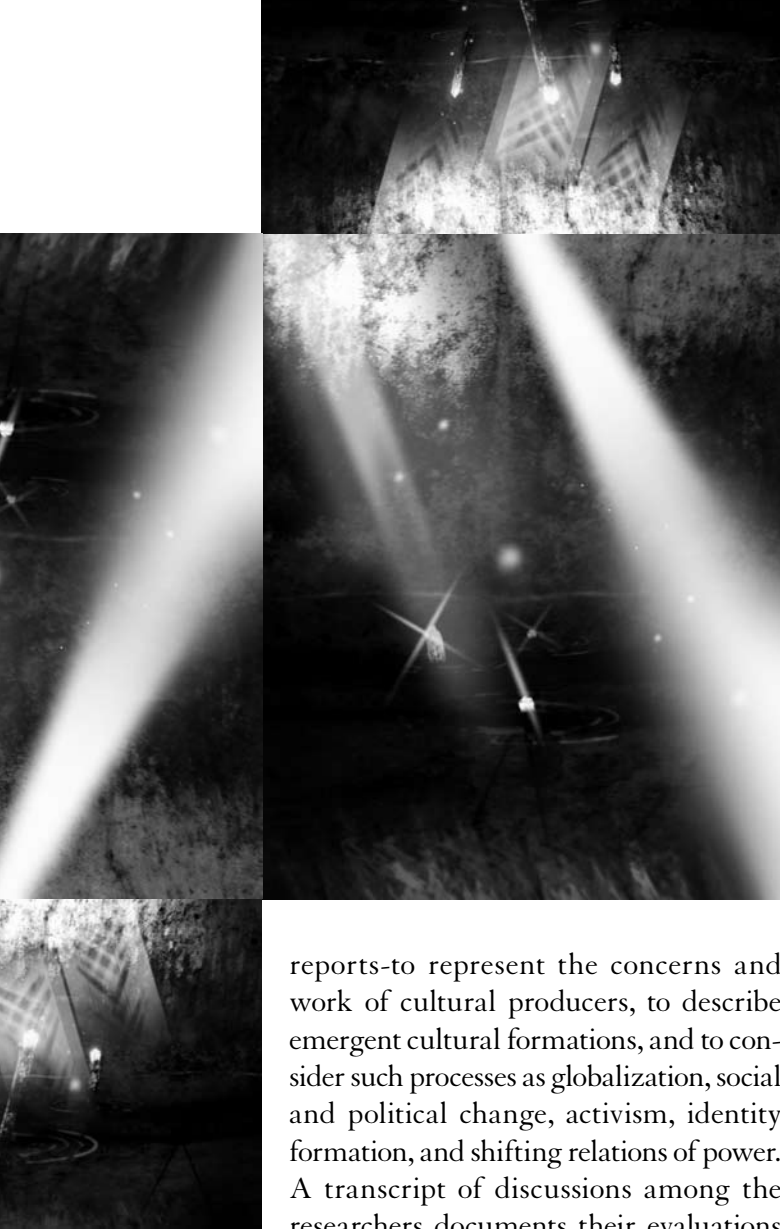
Some anthropologists have made visual and textual analysis a site of research, developing readings of cultural productions that relate the forms to discourses of class, gender, and racial and national identity and that consider the impact of national and global circulation of these products (Feld 1996, 2000; Kondo 1997; Mankekar 1998, 1999; Lutz & Collins 1993; Poole 1997; Traube 1992). Such approaches lead, necessarily, to a questioning of dominant disciplinary assumptions about fieldwork and field site. Kondo's (1997) essays, for example, are "informed by ethnographic methods and attention to historical and cultural specificity," but, she adds, "the juxtaposition of these multiple sites disrupts the premises of ethnographic writing defined by object of study and area, highlighting instead the theoretical frame, the political stakes, and the questions" about cultural politics and the performance of identity that animate her project (p. 5). Defending the research and analytical strategies of anthropologists whose subject matter
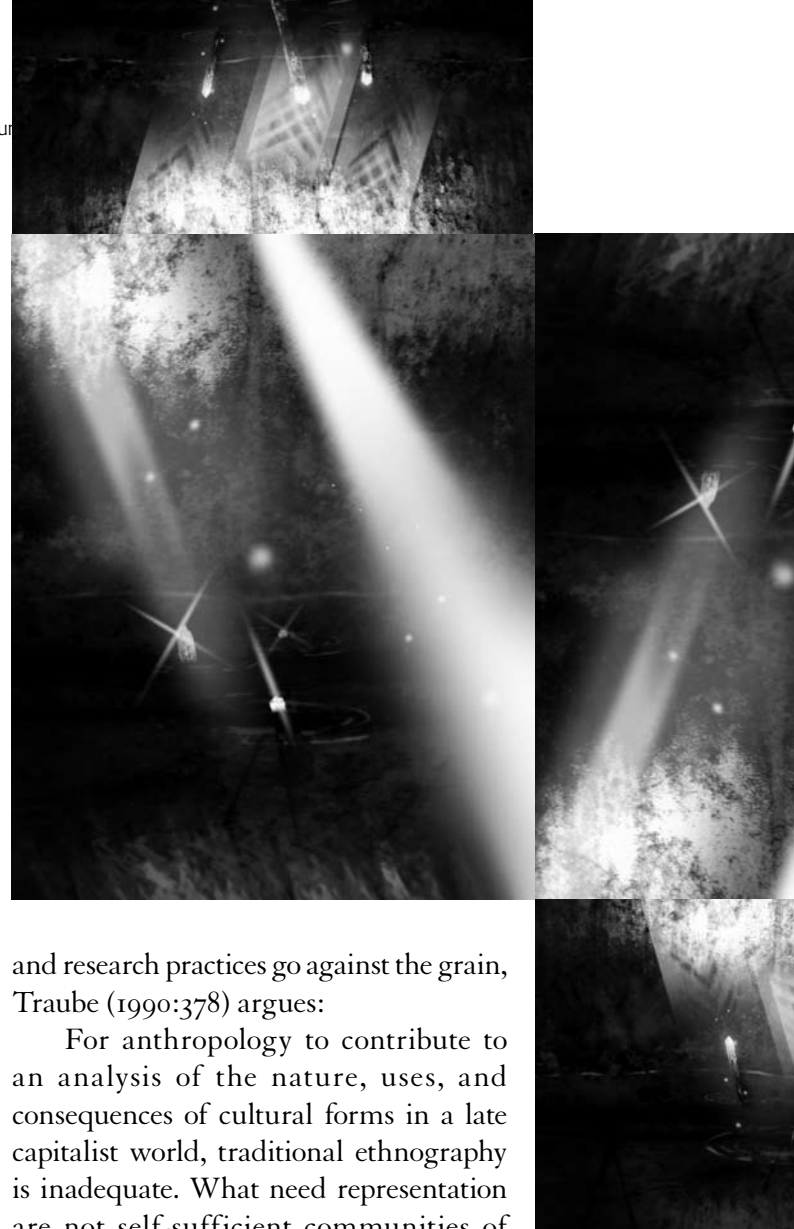
and research practices go against the grain, Traube (1990:378) argues:

For anthropology to contribute to an analysis of the nature, uses, and consequences of cultural forms in a late capitalist world, traditional ethnography is inadequate. What need representation are not self-sufficient communities of meaning-making subjects, but the complex relationships that tie local worlds into larger systems ... ethnographic representation, although essential, will have to be combined with other modes of analysis.

Writing almost 20 years earlier, Nader (1972) similarly warned that "a mystique about participant observation" severely limits anthropologists and that to successfully "reinvent" an anthropology able to study contemporary, complex societies, "we might have to shuffle around the value placed on participant observation" and consider that other methods may be "more useful for some of the problems and situations we might like to investigate" (p. 306-7). An example of this kind of experimentation, Marcus' (1993, 1996, 1997) work includes contributions from anthropologists who use less formal styles of writing-interviews, biographical portraits, personal essays, travel

ness (Dornfeld 1998, Kondo 1997, Powdermaker 1950).[4] Nevertheless, some anthropologists have succeeded in insinuating themselves into producers' networks (which may be a more accurate term than "communities"). Acting as film producer (Michaels 1985, 1994; Sullivan 1993; Turner 1991), camera operator (Dornfeld 1998), dramaturge (Kondo 1996), or music producer (Feld 1994) provided roles that enabled these anthropologists to gain access to their subjects, but also intensified and complicated the relationships: "[O]ne not only becomes part of the process one is trying to record, but directly affects it in numerous ways, some intended and some not" (Turner 1990:10). These scholars acknowledge the potential bias their positioning creates while also noting the considerable gains in insight it allows (Dornfeld 1998).

Observing that the rapport that anthropologists have learned to develop with informants is entangled with what he calls "complicity," Marcus (1998) argues the need to pay greater attention to the complexities of informant-anthropologist relationships (p. 106). Marcus (1998:22) sees anthropologists and informants as having an affinity that

arises from their mutual curiosity and anxiety about their relationship to a "third"-not so much the abstract contextualizing world system but the specific sites elsewhere that affect their interactions and make them complicit.

This complicity may lead anthropologists to develop activist or engaged practices that supplant "pure" research and raise ethical as well as intellectual challenges (Feld 1994; Michaels 1985,1994; Myers 1991, 1994a,b, 1998; Turner 1990,1991, 1992, 1995). Here, participant-observation shifts to a new level that Turner calls "observant participation" (1990:10). Some offer productive reflections

reports-to represent the concerns and work of cultural producers, to describe emergent cultural formations, and to consider such processes as globalization, social and political change, activism, identity formation, and shifting relations of power. A transcript of discussions among the researchers documents their evaluations of the strategies they are developing for theorizing these cultural productions (Marcus 1996:423-31).

This increased self-consciousness about the limitations and possibilities of conventional modes of ethnographic research, theory, and representation, as well as the efforts to innovate in the discipline, are part of the ongoing project of selfexamination that has followed the mid-1980s "crisis and critique" of the discipline (Clifford 1988, Clifford & Marcus 1986, Marcus & Fischer 1986, Rosaldo 1989). Studies of cultural producers have heightened attention to the ethnographer's position as researcher, analyst, and writer (Marcus 1998, Feld 1994, Kondo 1997, Myers 1994b). Anthropologists studying producers may face limitations on access: There are producers with whom they are unable to talk and decisionmaking and production processes they are unable to wit-

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4. Probably more than other scholars, anthropologists are dependent on the kindness of strangers, and difficulty of access can be a factor regardless of the status of the group or the occupation of the individual (Nader 1972:302).
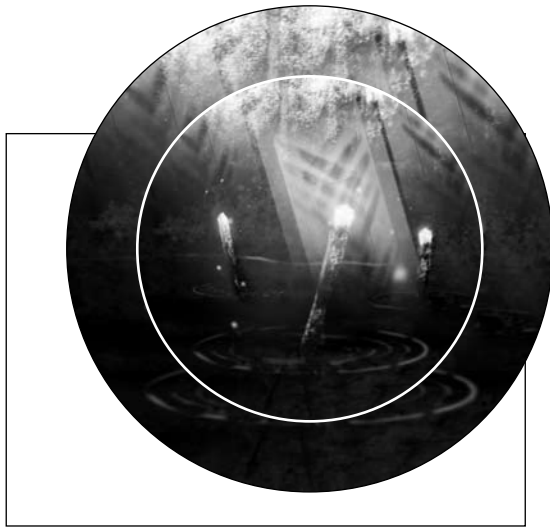
on how their own disciplinary practices contribute to producing the meanings of the forms they are studying (Dornfeld 1998, Feld 1994, Marcus 1998, Myers 1994b). Others indicate their inclination to use their analysis to develop a critique of the context they study (Marcus & Fisher 1986). Kondo (1997), for example, explains her interest in using "an activist mode of inquiry" in order to dismantle racist discourses and practices (p. 6). Having identified herself as a Japanese-American anthropologist, she observes that "as more of us anthropologists from the borderlands go 'home' to study our own communities, we will probably see increasing elisions of boundaries between ethnography and minority discourse, in which writing ethnography becomes another way of writing our own identities and communities" (p. 205).

In some cases the anthropologist and informant are familiar with the same theoretical literature and are engaged in exploring similar social problems and cultural issues. These range from authenticity and identity, to the politics of class, race, gender, and sexuality, to struggles for cultural preservation in a "homogenizing" world. Like anthropologists, cultural producers are cultural mediators who record, represent, translate, analyze, and-implicitly or explicitly-produce cultural critiques. Consequently, the work of cultural producers is a rich site for exploration by anthropologists who are interested in documenting and building on the practices of cultural criticism created by social actors. Research and

exchange with these artists and intellectuals also bear the potential for conflict (both productive and fractious) over interpretations of meanings and practices as anthropologists confront the challenge of representing people capable of, and accustomed to, representing themselves, particularly when they occupy positions of institutional power or cultural influence (Abu-Lughod 1999, Born 1995, Dornfeld 1998, Kondo 1997, Pedelty 1995, Traube 1996a:xvi).

Conclusion

In their studies of cultural producers, anthropologists have identified visible and concrete examples of the on-the-ground processes through which social reproduction and social transformation occur. Tracing and analyzing the projects and discourses of these producers, anthropologists examine the practices through which individuals and groups produce texts and performances, assign them meanings, use them to contest or redefine existing meanings, and incorporate them into their lives. Using a range of research methods and interdisciplinary resources, anthropologists examine the complexity of the institutions and the people who operate within them in order to develop a deeper understanding of how individuals and groups engage in cultural politics (Kondo 1997:144-52). Significantly, these studies analyze theoretical issues of resistance and hegemony, agency and structure, identity formation and nation building in the postcolonial, post-civil rights era through ethnographically textured studies that mediate such oppositions as self vs other, resistant vs compliant, art vs politics, and global vs local, demonstrating instead the contradictions and complexities of the lived realities of these abstract concepts.

Anthropological research on cultural producers reminds us that just as we examine the discourses and practices of social actors, we must continue to interrogate the discourses and practices of our discipline. In particular, we must challenge assumptions that constrain us from attending to the production of media and popular culture

forms that are so much a part of the contemporary social world we claim as our site of study. By continuing to develop and refine analysis of these highly visible, emergent forms, we will be better able to understand the ideologies and practices of a contingent of cultural producers and cultural mediators whose productions have a material and ideological impact, both on the communities with which they are associated and in the global public sphere.

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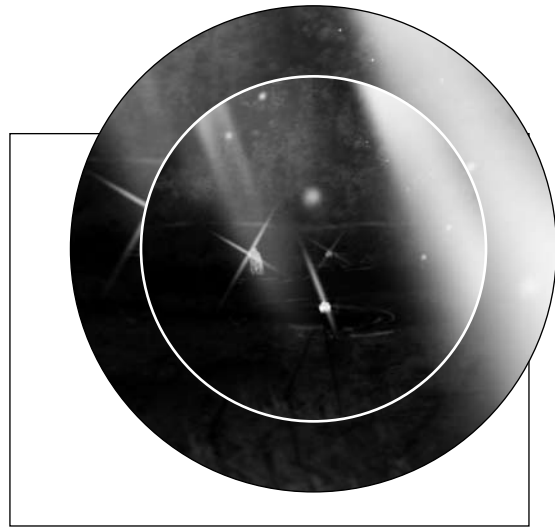
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