Televisualist Anthropology

Representation, Aesthetics, Politics[1]

by James F. Weiner

The appropriation of Western visual media technology by indigenous peoples around the world, particularly in Australia, North America, and the Amazon Basin, has drawn the attention of anthropologists impressed with how such people have utilized visual self-representation as a mode of empowerment, political assertion, and cultural revival in the face of Western cultural and economic imperialism. In this paper I maintain, however, that there are different relationships between signs, concepts, and sociality in different cultures and that visual media have embedded within them their own Western ontology of these semiotic relations. Anthropologists have by and large not sufficiently problematized their own participation in this modern ontology of representation, and they assume that it is the same framework as that operating in the representational practices of the indigenous peoples on which they focus their attention. I situate a critique of Western visual representation within the progress of marxist theory in the 20th century. I go on to suggest that a dialectical approach to this phenomenon preserves the anthropological perspective on non-Western ritual, art, and representation that was bequeathed to us by Victor Turner and is still an essential component of the "anthropological lens."

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The effacement of memory is more the achievement of an all-too-wakeful consciousness than it is the result of its weakness in the face of the superiority of unconscious processes. In this forgetting of what is scarcely past, one senses the fury of the one who has to talk himself out of what everyone else knows, before he can talk them out of it.

T. ADORNO

In a paper entitled "Culture/Media: A Mild Polemic" presented in England and Australia in 1994 (and see 1994a), Faye Ginsburg argued for anthropological interest in the videos that indigenous and minority people are currently producing themselves. On the face of it, one could not possibly dispute the importance of such an interest. I share with Ginsburg an interest in exploring the ways in which media technology is altering the terms of cultural articulation in general in the world today. But after viewing the clips from various indigenous productions that she showed us on those two occasions, in particular, the segment from the Inuit production *Qaggiq*, I was unable to provide answers to the following questions: To what extent were the clips effectively telling us about or portraying something critical about indigenous social relations, and, further, in what way was the presence of the camera responsible for its portrayal in the form in which we saw it? Is the camera passively recording these relationships or more actively creating them through its particular mediatory capacities? Is there something I need to know about the tenor and shape of Inuit or Aboriginal or Native American social engagement that would allow me to see this portrayed interaction differently or perhaps from my point of view more effectively? And how would that be conveyed to me, apart from an explanatory passage beforehand?

That explanatory passage I refer to is no more nor less than the critical ethnographic background to the film, and in such a case we would desire that the anthropologist perform the same role that we expect of the successful film critic: We want him/her to tell us something about the film that we cannot see for ourselves. We confront at the outset the phenomenological/critical understanding that film, like all of our other art works, never stands alone—it is always constituted in a relation to the verbal, the narrative and the textual, which gives it its hermeneutical contours and which in dialectical fashion provides the limits of its interpretational ambience. In short, our textual or critical constitution of the film is not something external to the film itself. As Pinney reminds us in a Heideggerian vein, "To raise the possibility of the 'picture' is to presuppose a frame" (1992a:45), and the frame in this case is the "ethnography," generally speaking.

To position ethnography in this way is already to situate it as a theoretical enterprise—our textual account of the film is not a mere rendering of it in verbal terms but a far more critical, dynamic counterpoint, given that it seeks to account for the film's effects in an entirely different *medium*. But Ginsburg asserts to the

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contrary that "the variety and particularity revealed by [ethnographic] research is a necessary corrective to grand theorising that loses touch with the specific, embedded and diverse ways that people use media to make sense of their worlds and, most importantly, to construct new ones" (1994*a*:14).

This world which indigenous and Third World people are trying to make sense of has been well described by Homi Bhabha: No longer are social and cultural differences guaranteed by an appeal to an authentic cultural tradition; instead, such differences "are the signs of the emergence of *community envisaged as a project—at once a vision and a construction*—that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political *conditions* of the present" (1994:3, emphasis added). In Bhabha's formulation I find a curious appeal to history in the very act of denying it any purchase on one's theorizing. I therefore find it not coincidental that one of the many contentious comments Fredric Jameson has made about video is that it "blocks its own theorisation becoming a theory in its own right" (1991:71). According to Jameson (p. 70),

> in a situation of total flow, the contents of the screen streaming before us all day long without interruption . . . what used to be called "critical distance" seems to have become obsolete. Turning the television off has little in common either with the intermission of a play or an opera or with the grand finale of a feature film, when the lights slowly come back on and memory begins its mysterious work. Indeed, if anything like critical distance is still possible in film, it is surely bound up with memory itself. But memory seems to play no role in television. . . .

Perhaps memory itself is a function of juxtaposing two different forms of language, two different interpretive modalities, two different forms of mediation itself—at least this is what psychoanalysis has always maintained, confronted with its task of memoriation (see Ricoeur 1970, Weiner 1995*a*). But it would seem that Ginsburg is here appealing to "ethnography" as a means of diverting our attention from the historicity of her particular mode of questioning.

Perhaps "theory," then, is the label we give to the effect of this historical positioning, given that it simultaneously reframes the mode of interpretation and the thing being interpreted and does so in a way that preserves the temporal and historical situatedness of our mode of questioning. It could be that the constructionist underpinning of Ginsburg's approach to indigenous representation is left unquestioned by virtue of the apparent resistance of film and video to theory. And so, at the risk of losing touch with Ginsburg's world, I am going to refer to what she would label grand theory in order to establish contact with the world of non-Western camera users. I reject the notion that ethnographic research stands outside grand theory. Every social science methodology has a grand or total theory inscribed

within it, and it is the peculiar nature of social science's reflexive effect that it must constantly make this theory visible. In fact, it is this realisation which is the theme of this paper: that if, as Ginsburg asserts, we cannot consider the formal properties of a film apart from the social relations which constituted its formation, no less can we consider visual representation apart from (*a*) the theory embedded in the textual narrative which accompanies and explains the film and (*b*) the particular metaphysic that is reposited in our image-producing technology, a metaphysic that is just as much a part of our culture and the social relations through which we live it and just as accurately descriptive of it as the *djukurba,* or "Law" or "Dreaming," is a theory of Walbiri culture. A recognition of the theoretical lineaments of one's mode of questioning is what allows a social analysis to be properly dialectical and hence provides the possibility of some real social and historical insight.

As Ginsburg herself notes, the camera provides not merely a "'window' on reality, a simple expansion of our powers of observation," but "a creative tool in the service of a new signifying practice" (1991:93). But although as technology it is "present to us only as the phenomenal form of a relation with other people" (Cubitt 1991:15)—and here we might again point to the necessity of dialectical thinking right at the outset—we as Westerners mask or repress this relational constitution of such technology. And if this is true, the same goes for our other art forms as well. By this reasoning we must then conclude that film is no more—or less—genuine, and hence *stylised,* a depiction of "real social relations" than the combination of *secco* recitative and *da capo* aria was of emotions and their relational constitution in the Cartesian world of George Frederic Handel.

From this vantage point, I want to speculate on the effects of media such as film or video on cultures that have a very different relation to the whole question of representation than ours does. If it is insisted that we see new identities—interstitial, hybrid, subaltern, embedded—as emerging from a deliberate effort at construction, signing and visioning, then it is still anthropology's task to remind us of those traditions for which such processes are not a matter of human action and intention but immanent in the world itself and not under direct human control. I am therefore interested at first in Martin Heidegger, in whose existential phenomenology I locate a serious exploration of the Western foundations of representation, visualism, and subjectivity. I argue that these foundations are integral to the filmic media themselves—as we must agree they are if we are to accept that they are cultural products through and through—and that they could be opposed to and even subversive of non-Western modes of knowledge and its acquisition, revelation, and articulation.

I would like to explore these questions by examining the role of filmic media in anthropology both as a tool of our ethnographic craft and as an object of our ethnographic inspection. I consider a nexus of politics, culture, and self-identity within which, anthropologists such as Ginsburg maintain, the media of film and video

play an integral role. I argue that special issues pertaining to representation and self-representation emerge in the consideration of the role of film in cultural articulation and in our anthropological constitution of it. I want also to raise questions concerning the relationship between different modes of representation and the objects created by representational practices and technologies. And finally, I want to address again the question Eric Michaels has asked with respect to the non-Western world of Australian Aborigines: "What is the cost of failing to describe the signifying practices of our cultural subjects in explicit comparison to our own signifying practices?" (1994:133).

The Work of Revelation and Elicitation

In many parts of Papua New Guinea, the strategy of public discourse is precisely *not* to reveal things—secret or non-public names, magic spells, origin myths, etc. This is found in a most highly developed form in the East Sepik River region and has been described by Simon Harrison in *Stealing People's Names* (1990). The Avatip engage in formal debates of which the object is for a subclan to demonstrate that it possesses the secret names of a disputed ancestor. "By doing so it proves, by implication, that it alone is capable of performing the associated magic" (1990:153). But since to reveal the names is the very act of demonstrating that one possesses the knowledge and its power, the debate is conducted in a series of whispers between the most senior men of the two disputing groups. This phenomenon of making something secret in the midst of the most public, communal instances of discourse is very common in Papua New Guinea. The Foi and other interior New Guinea people employ the use of metaphorical, allusive language known by men of high status and renown but not by others. Through knowing what the allusions are, through knowing the restricted code, these men of status can converse amongst themselves in public without other men's knowing what they are talking about.

The Avatip thus seek to *not* reveal names and knowledge. Their reasoning seems to be that if others know what they know, the precise identification of ownership may become the opportunity for raids, thefts, and the preemption of knowledge itself, all of which may be used tactically against others. The object of discursive strategies then becomes to force others to reveal these names or other items of restricted knowledge. Such an approach to talk and to the act of "saying" or revealing does not, then, support any simple constructionist or mediational approach to knowledge or one in which public representation and mediation is a central constitutive mechanism. It is my contention that it is precisely this non-constructionist approach to saying, revealing, and knowing that is hardest to convey to Westerners dazzled by the realism, immediacy, and power of filmic representation.

These approaches to revelation underscore the enormous importance attached to the very act of making something visible, whether visually or discursively, and the social restrictions that surround such practices.[2] But we late-20th-century Westerners inhabit a thoroughly specularized as well as spectacularized society, a world in which the "tendency *to make one see* the world by means of various specialized mediations . . . naturally finds vision to be the privileged human sense" (Debord 1983:§18). In such a world, we are very much unaware of restrictions placed on seeing itself (see Jay 1992).[3]

In general, when I think about what is embodied in certain features of the landscape in Aboriginal and New Guinea society and the relationship between this act of territorial embodiment and the discursive practice of myth which constitutes it, I feel that we are confronting something more akin to the medieval phenomenon of *epiphany*—the making visible of a manifestation of divine power or, in general, the unseen, the invisible, the unrepresentable. Van Baal said of the Marind-anim of southern New Guinea that their myths are the form that their ancestral creator beings (the *dema*) take in human language (van Baal 1966). Strategies for epiphanic manifestation—strategies to make such power reveal itself in certain ways—are what social life and ritual are about in these settings, and, again, such strategies are not easily glossed by our conventional social constructionist idioms. The whole act of *signing* and of encountering signs must be seen less in strict communicative terms than as the result of social *strategies of elicitation.*

When I speak of elicitation, I refer not just to a specific, non-representational approach to communication. I also appeal to the more general question of the way in which form is revealed in any given world of communicative convention. How would we describe the constitution of the effects of filmic communication in such terms?

2. Walter Benjamin, in his seminal article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1968), argues that the ritual "use-value" of art works was their most important feature before the advent of techniques of mass reproduction. "By the absolute emphasis on its cult value," he writes, the work of art "was first and foremost an instrument of magic" (p. 225). He goes on: "One may assume that what mattered was their existence, not their being on view. The elk portrayed by the man of the Stone Age on the walls of his cave was an instrument of magic. He did expose it to his fellow men, but in the main it was meant for the spirits. Today the cult value would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden. Certain statues of gods are accessible only to the priest in the cella; certain Madonnas remain covered nearly all year round; certain sculptures on medieval cathedrals are invisible to the spectator on ground level."

3. Elsewhere (Weiner 1991) I have described the Foi word *mitina-*, which means "to show" and which I literally translate as "to cause to be released." Not only is the act of seeing tantamount to possession in Papua New Guinea but the act of showing someone an item of property—a piece of land, a shell valuable, a pig, for example— is also tantamount to relinquishment. A Foi man who wishes passersby to know that a garden is his property will leave a piece of leaf, usually from his totemic tree species, prominently displayed for all to see. This is not simply a communicative act, or if it is one it does not function in a simple way. A Foi person coming across such a mark deduces from it the presence of certain beings and certain activities and intentions.

The Medium and the Message

In examining the films produced by indigenous, non-Western film-makers about themselves, one of Ginsburg's main points is that there is a relation between the social conditions of production of these filmic texts and their subject matter (1994*a:* 6, emphasis added):

> If we recognise the cinematic or video text as a mediating object—as we might look at a ritual or a commodity—then its formal qualities cannot be considered apart from the complex contexts of production and interpretation that shape its construction. Films embody in their own internal structure and meaning the forms and values of the social relations they *mediate,* making texts and context interdependent.

In response to this, I offer the following comments: First, the video text and the ritual are composed of and take place in completely different "times." Although it could be said in some cases that a ritual invokes and tries to make visible certain dimensions of "mythic" time, in its practical constitution it is coterminous with the temporal life of the community whose members engage in it. The scenes in a video or cinematic text, in contrast, are "never coterminous with the length of such moments in real life" (Jameson 1991:74). Nor can we solve the problem by comparing the practices of *viewing* or *producing* the video text with the ritual, because it is precisely the gap between video/cinematic text, production, and viewing that we do not find in ritual: The production and viewing of the ritual *are* the ritual. (Inasmuch as, in the case of many rituals, everyone in a community participates in some form or another, its status as mediating "object" cannot be accepted prima facie.)[4]

The recognition of this gap leads to the second problem. To which social relations is Ginsburg referring? Those at large in a social system which are now mediated by film? Or specifically the relations between producer and viewer, or consumer, that is, the social relations of production of the film? It is a foundation of anthropology's approach to the issue of social representation that a ritual models, or stands in some relation to, the social world in which it is embedded. If we are to employ this analogy in its strict sense, then the social relations the films portray, even if not of these productive relations themselves, must of necessity be imaged in their terms.

I think it is important to point out that Ginsburg employs an essentially marxist framework to describe these productive relations, for it indicates where this debate is anchored within the current characterization of postmodernity and anthropology's place in and relation to it. What differentiates a social-constructionist

from a dialectical analysis is precisely the manner in which totality is appealed to. Georg Lukács, in his critical treatment of early-20th-century Expressionism (quoted in Adorno et al. 1977:32), remarked that

> the underlying unity, the totality, all of whose parts are objectively interrelated, manifests itself most strikingly in the fact of crisis. Marx gives the following analysis of the process in which the constituent elements necessarily achieve independence: "Since they do in fact belong together, the process by means of which the complementary parts become independent must inevitably appear violent and destructive . . ." [Marx 1976:209].
> . . . In periods when capitalism functions in a so-called normal manner, and its various processes appear autonomous, people living within capitalist society think and experience it as unitary, whereas in periods of crisis, when the autonomous elements are drawn together into unity, they experience it as disintegration.

If we wished to characterize what have been called dialectical societies (see Wagner 1981, Maybury-Lewis 1979, Bateson 1968), such as the Gê and Bororo or the East Sepik River Avatip, Chambri, and Iatmul, we would have to consider a world in which it was not the totality of a culture or society that was the form of social objectification but rather the relations between its unarticulated components. From Lukács's point of view, the conventional articulation of such a social totality would resemble what he describes above as the unity through disintegration that characterizes capitalist society in its periods of crisis. We would then have to say that constructionist and dialectical views of social process draw forth totality through opposed means. Therefore, behind the marxist metonymy by which Ginsburg sees the relations of film production standing for the entirety of a social world[5] lies that particular constructionist appeal to totality which is not inscribed in dialectical analysis: the lure of the self-evident wholeness of the experiential and the phenomenal and the superior powers of film to capture this wholeness. The anthropological film-maker David MacDougall likewise says, "The film image impresses us with its completeness. . . . It is possible that the sense of completeness created by a film also lies in the richness of ambiguity of the photographic image. . . . unlike words or even pictographs, [photographic images] share in the physical identity of the objects" (1992:117).

But the whole of social life also includes the concealments, the gaps in knowledge, and the turnings-away that make nescience a positive component of social

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4. Eric Michaels's account of the producing and viewing of *Coniston Story* at Yuendumu, Northern Territory, Australia, is the most successful attempt so far to show that filmic production is coeval with social and community life in a non-Western setting.

5. "It is not just the objective conditions of the process of production that appear as its result. The same thing is true of its *specific social* character. The social relations and therefore the social position of the agents of production in relation to each other, i.e. the relations of production, are themselves produced: they are also the constantly renewed result of the process" (Marx 1976:1065).

knowledge.[6] And how are these gaps to be recorded or reproduced by our representational media? Iris Jean-Klein, in her account of social life in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, described the dilemma of an American photographer who arrived with a group of visiting Western students whom she accompanied to the town of Ramallah. He could find nothing to photograph, nothing which visibly or graphically represented a community in the midst of political struggle or an indigenous people in the process of cultural and political self-assertion. He and other members of the group did not know what they were being shown. What the photographer was commenting on, Jean-Klein says, was the *absences* that had become salient and noticeable to outside observers: "We were presented with glimpses of 'routine' and yet, concurrently, (and more paradoxically) we were shown glimpses of 'routine suspended.' These qualities were contrived by reference to 'gaps' and absences of various qualities" (1993:124).

Hence, when Collier makes a similar pronouncement—"*only* film or video can record the realism of time and motion or the psychological reality of varieties of interpersonal relations" (1986:144)—apart from the patent impossibility of recording "real time" on film and video I submit that such an assessment can be made only on the assumption that the act of recording is not at the same time an act of transfiguration, and the more total the medium, the more totally the depicted object is transfigured. In bringing forth the conditions of their own production as subject matter, film and video conceal this very transfiguring effect. In this sense, I would endorse Adorno's early observation that "there is even reason to believe that the more closely pictures and words are co-ordinated, the more emphatically their intrinsic contradiction and the actual muteness of those who seem to be speaking are felt by the spectators" (cited in Hullot-Kentor 1989:xvii).[7] More to the point, there is no reason that an appeal to realism *as film technique*—which is all that Collier could be laying claim to—should be privileged as representational strategy over, say, montage.[8] As the German film producer Alexander Kluge (1981–82:218–19, emphasis added) put it:

> If I conceive of realism as the knowledge of relationships, then *I must provide a trope for what cannot be shown in the film, for what the camera cannot record.* This trope consists in the contrast between two shots, which is only another way of saying montage. At issue here are the concrete relations between two images. Because of the relationship which develops between two shots, and to the de-

gree that movement (the so-called cinematic) is generated between such shots, information is hidden in the cut which would not be contained in the shot itself. This means that montage has as its object something qualitatively quite different from raw material.

I thus take issue with Ginsburg's and Collier's assertions: If film conveys to us "the real," how literally are we to take that, if we must admit that "the real" as such is inaccessible to us? And if in our everyday life the real is inaccessible, then in what realm does convention, which we do "know," reside? Would it not be more accurate to say that film, like other works of art, like rituals and myths, and most of all like opera, conveys not the real but rather something like "the truth" of convention, which is to say, the revelation of its caricatured form?[9] And can we not then affirm Adorno's (1984) words: "Art is the social antithesis of society"?

Visualism and Subjectivity

The main issue that arises now is the problematic status of both representation and subjectivity in the context of non-Western traditions. Given social science's current concern with these issues with respect to characterizing its position with regard to postmodernity, I consider the problems raised by Ginsburg to be important. I speak as someone who has taken seriously the program that Marcus and Fischer (1986) label cultural critique. As does James Faris (1992), I hold that we cannot consider the issue of indigenous film-making without simultaneously situating it alongside a critique of the filmic medium itself. Film is put forth as a guarantor of both the subjectivity and the autonomy of the

6. Film is, if anything, a decidedly un-organic depiction of this. We can say, paraphrasing Sartre, that film theory, "while rejecting organicism, lacks weapons against it" (Sartre 1963:77).

7. Hullot-Kentor (1989:xvii) goes on to say: "Although the effort to mimetically achieve organicity ultimately leads to stiltedness, which it is the role of film to obscure, a true organicity can be achieved only by way of a dissonant composition."

8. Marcus (1994) and Taussig (1987) advocate the use of montage, both filmic and textual, as a solution to the problem of the transparency of one's representational praxis.

9. The dilemma between realism and representation in ethnographic film is addressed by several contributors to the volume *Visualizing Theory* (Taylor 1994). The terms of this dilemma are articulated so effectively by Jameson (1990*b*:158) that it is worthwhile quoting him at length: "'Realism' is, however, a peculiarly unstable concept owing to its simultaneous, yet incompatible, aesthetic and epistemological claims, as the two terms of the slogan, 'representation of reality,' suggest. These two claims then seem contradictory: the emphasis on this or that type of truth content will clearly be undermined by any intensified awareness of the technical means or representational artifice of the work itself. Meanwhile, the attempt to reinforce and to shore up the epistemological vocation of the work generally involves the suppression of the formal properties of the realistic 'text' and promotes an increasingly naive and unmediated or unreflective conception of aesthetic construction and reception. Thus, where the epistemological claim succeeds, it fails; and if realism validates its claim to being a correct or true representation of the world, it thereby ceases to be an aesthetic mode of representation and falls out of art altogether. If, on the other hand, the artistic devices and technological equipment whereby it captures that truth of the world are explored and stressed and foregrounded, 'realism' will stand unmasked as a mere reality- or realism-effect, the reality it purported to deconceal falling at once into the sheerest representation and illusion. Yet no viable conception of realism is possible unless both these demands or claims are honored simultaneously, prolonging and preserving—rather than 'resolving'—this constitutive tension and incommensurability" (Jameson 1990*b*:158).

film-maker and as a useful and powerful medium of representation and self-representation for non-Western people. I think it is fair, however, to question whether the people of such traditions were interested in articulating the subject or the subjective and whether their modes of relational articulation could themselves be labelled representational.

Martin Heidegger first raised these issues in powerful form earlier in this century. He took note of what we could call in Foucault's terms an epistemic shift between the medieval and the modern period. It was with the dawn of the modern age that European society arrived at the notion that the world in its entirety could be pictured or represented. For Parmenides but also for our medieval forebears, "man is the one who is looked upon by that which is," whereas in the modern age "that which is . . . come[s] into being . . . through the fact that man first looks upon it, in the sense of a representing that has the character of a subjective perception" (Heidegger 1977:131). Thus, said Heidegger, "the world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age" (p. 130). Guy Debord, characterizing the "society of the spectacle," notes in similar terms that "the spectacle cannot be understood as an abuse of the world of vision, as a product of the techniques of mass dissemination of images. It is, rather, a *Weltanschauung* which has become actual, materially translated. It is a world vision which has become objectified" (1983:§5). Heidegger accurately identified this shift to totalising picturing as underwriting the emergence of subjectivity itself: "to represent means to bring what is present at hand before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it to oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into this relationship to oneself as the normative realm" (1977:131).[10] Thus, as Foucault (1973) notes, what is made possible by this is not just a relation of subject to perceived objective world; this *external* dualism also finds its *internal* form as *the subject's relation to him/herself.*

How would we address this transition in an anthropological context, and specifically with respect to the role of film? Michaels has, I feel, correctly identified the crux of the matter: "There is no necessary translation from orality to electronics; we are seeing instead an experimental phase involving the insertion of the camera into the social organisation of events. *The point is the necessity of locating such a position for the camera*" (1986:65, emphasis added). What Ginsburg and others fail to do is distinguish between *the representation of relations* and *a relation to representative praxis.* This is brought out most vividly when Ginsburg refers to the statement of the Kayapo video-maker Mokuka (quoted from Eaton 1992): "Just because I hold a white man's camera, that doesn't mean I am not a Kayapo . . . if you were to hold one of our head-dresses, would that make you an Indian?" (Ginsburg 1994*a*:9). Mokuka might

sympathise with Jameson's remark that "no one seems to have asked the Ayatollah whether the use of audio-cassettes marked a corrupt surrender to Western technology and values" (1992:117), leaving aside the question of whether modern Iranian society is in a more completed stage of modernisation than the Kayapo. But besides the observation that Mokuka has made a category mistake here—properly phrased, his question should be reversibly posed back to him as "If you were to hold one of our cameras, would that make you a *film-maker*?"—I wish to make two other points with respect to his pronouncement: (1) Is it not an assertion that the *essence* of culture is not affected by the medium through which it is made visible? And does it not therefore controvert what Ginsburg is trying to say about the intertextuality of indigenous media and its reflexive, relational constitution? Does it not then argue *against* the transformative power of film or at least its superior powers vis-à-vis other representational media, saying that no matter how radical a transformative effect we attribute to film and its technique and embodied representational praxis, the constitutive mechanisms and relational practices of non-Western society will nevertheless remain unaffected by it? (2) The difference between myself and Mokuka is that when I hold a Kayapo head-dress, I do not use it to constitute my self-identity, or to negotiate that identity or construct an image of it for others. It is exactly this *differential social/existential relation to the camera and its technology* that is the difference between us.[11]

In the Australian version of her paper, Ginsburg distinguished what these indigenous video-makers are doing—that is, depicting their authentic social relations—from what any ordinary bourgeois Western video recorder owner does when he or she (mostly he's, I would say, judging from my most casual inspection of weekend crowds in various parts of the Western world) makes footage of home, holiday, and other events and occasions of his/her social life. Westerners, she seemed to be saying, through their video-making practices are not focusing on creating images of their cultural or social life, at least not for political purposes. But in what sense could Ginsburg possibly maintain that the video camera is not intimately involved in constituting and representing such bourgeois relationality? And who is to say that they don't do it as well as or even better than the Kayapo or the Inuit?[12] Bourdieu (1990:83–84) comments on the intimate relationship between such picturing and Western bourgeois relationality:

The conventionality of attitudes towards photography appears to refer to the style of social relations

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10. These statements of Heidegger's are also forcefully discussed in an anthropological context by Pinney (1992*a*).

11. As Bourdieu notes, "An art of illustration and imagery, photography can be reduced to the project of showing what the photographer chose to show, and with which it becomes, one might say, morally complicit, since it approves of and bears witness to what it shows" (1990:86).

12. "Our familial and social relations are very much in play in the uses to which we bend media technologies, as are the vagaries through which they become elements of psychic life" (Cubitt 1991:16).

favoured by a society which is both stratified and static and in which family and ''home'' are more real than particular individuals, who are primarily defined by their family connections; in which the social rules of behaviour and the moral code are more apparent than the feelings, desires or thoughts of individual subjects; in which social exchanges, strictly regulated by consecrated conventions, are carried out under the constant fear of the judgement of others, under the watchful eye of opinion, ready to condemn in the name of norms which are unquestionable and unquestioned, and always dominated by the need to give the best image of oneself, the image most in keeping with the ideal of dignity and honour. How, under these conditions, could the representation of society be anything other than the representation of a *represented* society?

But while this may be perfectly accurate as a description of the sacred role of the photograph in the European context that Bourdieu focuses on, I wonder whether the American bourgeois relationship to it is as solemn. In fact, as I watched the Inuit in their igloos struggling to appear spontaneous and natural (whatever that might mean for them) in front of the camera in the scenes from *Qaggiq*, I thought of the ease with which middle-class Westerners stand before the camera. First of all, Westerners can hardly walk into a bank, a large department store, or a shopping mall without entering into the field of view of the now-ubiquitous security camera. We are usually unaware of this discrete panoptical visual recording device, and if so, we would hardly consider that what it records is anything resembling what we consciously and deliberately construct with the camera. But with regularity, we from time to time catch a glimpse of ourselves on a video monitor. What we see is ourselves with faces turned away (since the camera and monitor are usually not facing the same direction) even though we are looking at the monitor face on. We see ourselves looking at the monitor, not at our ourselves or at the camera.

Not only do we picture this viewing relationship to ourselves in our public space; we are brought up from the day of our birth to pose in front of its eye, from the series of photographic prints that constitute the visual record of our development to the meters of video tape that capture our happy and festive occasions with family and friends. We do not just use this footage to mediate encounters with each other; we demonstrate an awareness of filmic sensibility in all these encounters with others.

We look through the viewfinder and the implement itself disappears from the frame which it creates. Technology keeps making it smaller and smaller not so much to make it more portable as to make it more like a literal extension of the eye and hand. The camera seems to record without being visible for the most part. In this sense, the camera is *zuhanden*, in Heidegger's terms, ''ready-to-hand'' or ''available.'' We use it without attending to it as such, and our relationship to it cannot then be considered mediatory. We are in an un-

mediated relationship with a tool which nevertheless exercises a mediational function.[13]

But Western home video footage inevitably includes, if it can, the obligatory several seconds of the video holder being videoed by another video holder. And inevitably, we the viewers oblige by laughing at this. The video-maker's *relationship to the camera* becomes an item of representation; the video-maker's *standing outside the very relationships he or she is caught in* is captured for a few seconds in this obligatorily funny interlude. In this way we know that what the camera produces is not a documentary record, nor is it constitutive *in the strict realist sense to which Collier defers* of the social relationships it is portraying.[14] We make it deliberately parodic and exaggerated, for we learn to display that slightly self-mocking defensive clowning in front of the camera, the posing that says that what is captured is not the occasion or the social relations that constitute it as event but our own not-taking-it-seriously attitude towards them. Is this what we were seeing the Inuit engaged in? How would we recognise it if it were the case?

Perhaps it is this non-seriousness, this willful refusal to make of the home video a serious political or cultural text, that causes Ginsburg to dismiss it. The home video-maker isn't making images *on behalf of* anyone in the marked political/cultural sense in which Ginsburg is interested. But then who exactly do the indigenous film-makers represent? On whose behalf do they speak?[15] Who authorises them to produce these important texts of cultural identity? Are they merely some indigenous mirror version of ourselves, which is to say dilettantes, aesthetes, and *auteurs-manqué* with the time and resources to worry about culture? Are they in the same position with respect to their society as we imagine ''ritual experts'' to be in such places as New Guinea and Africa? Or must we now revise our understanding of the traditional ritual expert, as something of a dilettante him- or herself? There is much to recommend such a revision. And I think that such authors as Ginsburg, Worth and Adair, Michaels, and Terry Turner are cognizant of the need to situate the project of contemporary visual and filmic image-making within a communal assessment and evaluatory praxis and to make such situating part of the subject matter. In Ginsburg's effective commentary on indigenous aesthetics (1994*b*), she notes that ''this new and complex object—Aboriginal media—is understood by its producers to be operating in multiple domains as an extension of their collective (vs. individual) self-production'' (p. 368).

Nevertheless, to compare the role of the camera in this bourgeois world with its role in the Aboriginal or Inuit world strikes me as the central task at hand, and

13. ''*Tele*vision delivers near to sight that which almost always appears remote. Television is dealt with at arm's length (now usually via 'the *remote*'), it seemingly bridges distance without making material connection'' (Fry 1993:14).
14. ''For the film, what matters primarily is that the actor represents himself to the public before the camera, rather than representing someone else'' (Benjamin 1968:229).
15. These points have also been cogently raised by Faris (1992).

it is this task which receives no treatment by Ginsburg. In this unhesitating juxtaposition of images, image-making, and framing we find the most convincing demonstration of the postmodern status of Ginsburg's project, a project that is less impressed by one of anthropology's more conventional modernist goals—to see within art an alienating doubling of the world—than by the self-signifying powers of the visual image in and of itself (see Jameson 1992:96).[16] Is it unreasonable to speculate on the depth of understanding of Aboriginal or Inuit society that is being sacrificed to make these filmic events stand forth?

These questions expose another critical ellipsis in Ginsburg's program: in only one of her many articles (Ginsburg 1994b) identifying this new space of film practice, its new social-cultural-political positioning, and its producers is there any mention of aesthetics— and, in fact, Eliot Weinberger (1994) identified art and aesthetics as the acknowledged bane of ethnographic film realism. It could be that in the face of the overwhelming ineffectiveness of many of these efforts, we must suspend aesthetic judgement of these films because they are made by people inexperienced with both the technology and its technique. In this case, we must, as Michaels has done (1994:114–15), explain why it is that Westerners might fail to see what is or is not being framed by non-Western video- and film-makers. We could then instead see this failure as not adventitious to the medium but inherent in the dissonance between a non-Western representational praxis and the one inscribed within the Western filmic. Nor do I necessarily refer to the kind of suspension of judgement that Bourdieu (1990:90) refers to with respect to the Western family photographs:

> The taking and contemplation of the family photograph presuppose the suspension of all aesthetic judgement, because the sacred character of the object and the sacralizing relationship between the photographer and the picture are enough unconditionally to justify the existence of a picture which only really seeks to express the glorification of its object, and which realises its perfection in the perfect fulfilment of that function.

As Michaels further notes, both a ''failure to value and a banal overvaluation'' are bad anthropological approaches to this phenomenon, and I think both postures are evident in current evaluations of indigenous film and video. By invoking the aesthetic I do not mean that we should *only* judge these to be good or bad *as films;* they are an instantiation of an aesthetic insofar as Ginsburg claims that they are now *the form in which social relations themselves are brought forth and made visible* (see Weiner 1993a, b; Strathern 1988). Ginsburg refers to ''embedded aesthetics'' to ''draw attention to a

system of evaluation that refuses a separation of textual production and circulation from broader arenas of social relations'' (1994b:368). If exploring the interpretive dimensions of a social world is itself the manner of adducing the proper *form,* then it is essential to consider the aesthetic properties of these indigenous videos.

Ginsburg recognises that there is an incommensurability between the possibilities of representation enabled by film technology and those extant in non-Western societies, but where we differ is precisely on the *locus* of this incommensurability. Ginsburg says that ''the very *form* of Western narratives may undermine traditional modes'' (1991:97). From this point of view, we would have to agree with Cubitt's (1991:19) observation:

> Photocopying, video cameras and edit suites, computing and computer imaging are available for community use already. But those who try to appropriate each newly available technology for new purposes seem constrained to reproduce the patterns of textual production which the medium seems to demand. . . . [see Ang 1987] Something of the ''technological'' relation is deeply embedded, not simply as peer pressure, but as something far more deeply entrenched.

Ginsburg and other anthropologists, prefer, however, to make transparent the structural implications of the technological relationship themselves. For them, it is a matter of the different *styles* afforded by the medium. Ginsburg cites MacDougall (1987:54), who reports:

> The dominant conflict structure of Western fictional narratives, and the didacticism of much of Western documentary, may be at odds with traditional modes of discourse. . . . Differences may arise in the conventions of narrative and imagery. At a film conference in 1978, Wiyendji, an Aboriginal man from Roper River, argued against the Western preoccupation with close-ups and fast cutting, saying that Aborigines preferred to see whole bodies and whole events. . . . Such objections obviously cry out for more Aboriginal filmmaking.

In a similar manner, Turner has identified the stylistic difference between Western and non-Western filmmaking (1992a:7, emphasis added):

> We have tried to limit editing assistance and advice to *elementary technical procedures* of insertion and assembly, compatibility of adjacent cuts, use of cutaways and inserts, and avoiding abrupt camera movements or zooms. We have made no attempt to teach Western notions or styles of framing, montage, fast cutting, flashback or other narrative or anti-narrative modes of sequencing, nor have we sought to impose length constraints or other features that might render a video more accessible, or acceptable to a Western audience.

But surely this is tantamount to saying something like

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16. Barthes identifies a photograph which does not contain a ''point of rupture'' as *unary*. In this form ''it emphatically transforms 'reality' without doubling it, without making it vacillate; no duality, no indirection, no disturbance'' (1984:40).

"We have taught them English grammar, syntax, and semantics but have made no attempt to teach them iambic pentameter, the sonnet, or the couplet." As Hobbs (1991:44, emphasis added) has said,

> By its ability to shape our interest in information, television editing conventions and formats encourage a value system that emphasises fragmentation over continuity, repetition over diversity, and familiar messages over unfamiliar ones, all of it in 30-second bits instead of more sustained attentional patterns. It is this video legacy that has shaped modern American politics and business and religion and culture, not through the messages presented on television, but *through specific utilisations of the form and structure of the medium itself.*

I am suggesting, in other words, that the difference between Aboriginal and Western preferences for forms of filmic representation is situated one epistemological step too late. It presupposes the rôle and function of the picture as self-representation and as a document of subjectivity, and it is this relational *eidos* of Western visualist culture which, as Raymond Williams (1990) pointed out long ago, itself both *impelled* and was enabled by the development of visual image technology.[17] Moreover, in theatre or ritual one can always assume a vantage point from which the ritual or play can be seen as a contrivance (see Benjamin 1968:233). But the camera eliminates this possibility for the viewer of film. To cry out for more indigenous film-making under such circumstances as MacDougall (1987) does in the Australian context would then be to cover over even more concertedly the Aboriginal mode of making-things-appear.

To return to an earlier point, we therefore need to give constant attention to *theory,* the theory of representation, in order to determine whether modes of cinematic creation are serving to *erase* the precinematic relation to the visual of indigenous and non-Western people. If the use of media technology offers a "new opportunity for influence and self-expression" (Ginsburg 1991:97), then surely we are justified in questioning whether *self-expression* was a component of the relational strategies of such people. Turner argues that "Kayapo culture possesses a well developed set of no-

tions of mimesis and representation that antedate Western cultural influences, but which have also exerted their influence on Kayapo work in video and Kayapo representations of themselves in social and political interaction with the West" (1992a:9). While I feel that this would make the Kayapo unique among Amazonian societies, judging from what, among others, Hugh-Jones and Reichel-Dolmatoff have written about the precontact Amazonian lifeworld,[18] I think that what Turner is trying to convey is a point made by Fred Myers concerning the discourse of Pintupi painters from the Central Desert of Australia—that it "emphasizes their works as vehicles of self-production and collective empowerment. . . . [and that] these are not necessarily interpretations that are outside the processes of representation themselves" (Myers 1994:35). Fry and Willis likewise assert that film creates "a cultural space in which innovation is possible; it has a future. This is a new symbol of power in a culture dominated by the media. It doesn't override the effects of the damaged culture in which it functions, but creates a fissure in which a new set of perceptions can seep in" (1989:163).

Against this undeniably vital and useful perspective (though the idea of a "damaged culture" needs some careful thought here) must be balanced what is surely our *practical* understanding of the effect of film—that in the cinema "visual pleasure always triumphs over critical resolve" (Kaes 1989:7; see Barthes 1984). I would like to pose two polemically oriented questions of my own here: (1) If cultural difference can now take place only within the arena of electronically generated visual and audio images, how much scope is there for the uncovering or revelation of such difference? How will we measure what kind or how much cultural difference we find between, say, American and Soviet society, on the one hand, and American and Soviet film, on the other? Must not the techniques and material lineaments of film and video technology necessarily limit the range of expressive and social relational modalities available for the articulation of such difference? (2) More important, and again I point to the necessity of dialectical thinking in the characterization of this phenomenon, what new forms of concealment does this new medium also bring with it, given that every form of expression takes shape

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17. "The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear; it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones. Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. *The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses*" (Benjamin 1968:236–37, emphasis added).

18. Of the Desana, Reichel-Dolmatoff says, "Generally, the dances imitate animals and the songs that accompany them refer to the movements and colors of the animals they represent. 'But underneath goes the invocation,' says the informant, and by 'underneath' he is referring to the symbolic language of the songs (*vaí hayári/*fish song) in which all the references to the river, the traps, and the catch are, in reality, allusions to sexual intercourse" (pp. 163–64). Stephen Hugh-Jones appeals to epiphanic processes among the Barasana when he reports that the Yurupary trumpets are the form that the bird spirits (*He* or *minia*) take in human ritual (1979:140–41). He goes on: "The *He* state is known indirectly through myths or *bukura keti,* the stories of the ancients, but it is also experienced directly" (p. 247), neither of which appeals to representation or mimetic imitation as such. Finally, with respect to the Navajo, it might be valuable to recall Gary Witherspoon's observation: "In the Navajo view of the world, language is not a mirror of reality; reality is a mirror of language. . . . Ritual language does not describe how things are; it determines how they will be" (1977:34).

against a mode of repression which is its background? In considering the power of any medium to represent or picture everyday life, we must not ignore what is repressed or hidden or misrecognized in everyday life and how these everyday concealments are made inevitable through the conduct of social life itself. How then do we reconcile the power of making visible, or the representational impact of film, with the need to acknowledge the concealing properties of convention?[19] I remain convinced that we must ultimately judge the social, political, and aesthetic value of film in the same way that Brecht (1964:192) suggested we evaluate drama, in terms of what he called the "alienation-effect": "A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar. The classical and medieval theatre alienated its characters by making them wear human or animal masks. . . . Here is the outlook, disconcerting but fruitful, which the theatre must provoke with its representations of social life."[20] An aesthetics that remains "embedded" may certainly retain the perspective of the conventional, but its refusal to come free of the conventional obviates its transformative, consciousness-raising power. Only within an experience of self-alienation can we assess the complexity of the dramatic and filmic effect.

Complexity

We would all agree that Mephistopheles emerges as one of the most complex characters in our literature in Goethe's *Faust.* But how much of our insight into that character is sacrificed when that role is sung and acted in Gounod's opera? Would we have to say that opera is less complex than literature? Or are we dealing with two different kinds of complexity, two different strategies for the production of form, which are not totally transposable into each other? This is what Peter Kivy (1989:271) calls the "fallacy of misplaced depth"—here it refers to the attempt to make commensurate two incommensurate types of complexity, the musical and the literary. And it applies all the more forcefully, I suspect, to film—for much of Ginsburg's argument rests on her appeal to the *complex* and to the *complexity* of filmic representations: "My argument is that looking at media made by people occupying a range of cultural positions, from insider to outsider . . . [offers] us a fuller sense of the *complexity* of perspectives on what we have come to call culture" (1994a:6, emphasis added).

What is meant by "complexity" here? Certainly the Inuit actors' dialogue did not appear complex—if it is, in Inuit terms, again, we would need to have that explained to us, and such an explanation would probably

have to tell us about what precisely was being *not said* or what was being said in a deliberately banal way. (I must point out that I am responding only to Ginsburg's edited use of certain clips from the various films and videos and her comments on them; in no way is this meant to be a comprehensive critical assessment of the films and videos.) The footage in Jean Rouch's film *Petit à petit* of an African man taking cranial measurements of Parisians is amusing, but *by itself* how complex is it? The Native American Miguel sisters mimicking Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy's *Indian Love Song* might provide us with a giggle, but again, where is the complexity in this all-too-predictable (to us) parody? In contrast, the footage of *Sylvanian Waters,* made to look like exactly what it was parodying, home video footage, *was* an extraordinarily complex commentary on and savage mockery of contemporary middle-class Australian family relations. If it is complexity one wants to see, I suggest that one look no farther than Robert Altman's mordant commentaries on Southern Californian social relations in *The Player* or *Short Cuts.* Perhaps it is this *self*-mockery, the portrayal of a seemingly unintended taking-the-micky-out-of-the-film-maker-him/herself (especially in *The Player*), that was missing in the clips that Ginsburg showed us. My overwhelming reaction to these clips is that they did not work for me, and I desired more specific information on the manner in which they did or did not work for the producers and viewers themselves.[21]

If they do not work for us, then surely the mere viewing of these videos by us the anthropologists will not suffice. It is not enough for Ginsburg to show us these clips and say, "Here are the Miguel sisters being hilariously parodic" or "Here is an Inuit film-maker making a film about himself talking about film-making." We can judge this for ourselves. Ginsburg's comments do not, any more than mine do, constitute an analysis of this phenomenon, either critical or otherwise. Nor, because of the representational goal towards which they are deployed, can we see them as Sibelius saw his piano music—when asked what a piece of his meant, he merely played it over. Film is not as resolutely pragmatic an art form as music because it calls forth and makes visible its own representational, picturing function. I want Ginsburg to tell me what I can't know about the film just by inspecting it, and here I reiterate that a full-blooded anthropological treatment of this phenomenon cannot neglect the critical dimension. We need, in other words, further mediation.

This is because these films are *not* the same as a ritual or an artefact. The latter are incomplete without a consideration of the co-presence of an audience from

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19. "The unstable dialectic of the real and the apparent, the present and the absent, the visible and the invisible, is the condition under which TV enters into the social" (Cubitt 1991:33).
20. "The photographic 'shock' . . . consists less in traumatizing than in revealing what was so well hidden that the actor himself was unaware or unconscious of it" (Barthes 1984:32).

21. In this respect I am taking a position analogous to that of James Faris but for precisely opposite reasons: Faris too questions the rôle of Western filmic technology in traditions that have very different relations to visuality and representation. But whereas he sees Western consumption of indigenous videos as their driving force, I desire to know more about the conflict engendered by the production of videos which should be affecting the Western world but can only do so within the world of the video-makers themselves.

which a certain social response is elicited in a specific context. They have a specific, usually quite practical goal. This was what, among other things, Sol Worth and John Adair found out in their experiment with Navajo film-making (1974): the Navajo Sam Yazzie was not interested in film once he found that it had, for him, only a representational and not a practico-transformative effect. Ginsburg, however, does not conclude from this that filmic media might be irrelevant or inutile for the Navajo; instead, she criticises Worth and Adair for "focusing almost exclusively on the film text as the site for the production of cultural meaning" (1994a:10). But perhaps the real problem is that when Worth and Adair were among the Navajo the production of cultural texts had not yet become an issue.

Something like a ritual which has such a practico-transformative effect might be considered mediatory in such terms. But film and video can be characterized as what Baudrillard calls "speech without response" (1988:207); far from being mediating objects as Ginsburg believes them to be, "what characterises the mass media is that they are opposed to mediation."[22] In this respect, perhaps the comments of the Scottish TV and stage dramatist John McGrath (1985:52–53) are worth repeating, since they echo the sentiments of Adorno, Jameson, and Brecht to which I have referred in this discussion:[23]

> Drama has lost the quintessential quality of television—that of being an event brought to us as a nation simultaneously. Ten years ago, I think television drama was still primarily created as an event specially tailored for the one-off moment of transmission. . . . This was the quality that made it different from film, and linked it to the heroic unrepeatability of the experience of theatre.

Michaels (1987a) has gone farther than anyone else in elucidating this performative capacity of film-making in his description of the effects of auto-documentary film on the Walbiri people of Yuendumu. It is quite clear from his account of the making of the film *Coniston Story* that the documentary evoked strong emotional and social reactions among the people of Yuendumu—but to evoke and to depict are two distinct things. In such a case, it is reasonable to assume that just as Walbiri rituals and artefacts and myths did not have the representational function that film and photographic depiction must inevitably have, films such as *Coniston Story* are being used in ways that go beyond the representational. They are more than techniques or tools for the fashioning of identity or self-identity.

The Aesthetics of Culturalism

Earlier I suggested that memory and history might themselves be the product of juxtaposing two incommensurable interpretational modalities, which creates a space of temporality and within it the possibility of making social and historical transformation visible. I continue with this dialectical orientation by citing a passage from Habermas (1990:85) in which one could just as easily substitute the word "culture" for "history" and which addresses the quotation from Adorno that is this essay's epigraph:

> Modern consciousness, overburdened with historical knowledge, has lost the "plastic power of life" that makes human beings able, with their gaze toward the future, to "interpret the past from the standpoint of the highest strength of the present." In other words, the history invoked by many current writers all too easily abandons any pretense at hermeneutical perspectivism; it takes on a "paralysing relativism" rather than a living perspectivism; it blocks "the capacity to 'shatter and dissolve something [past]' from time to time, in order 'to enable [us] to live [in the present].'"

Jameson echoes this critique of ahistoricism in his identification of the "media phenomenon of neo-ethnicity. . . . Ethnicity is something you are condemned to; neo-ethnicity is something you decide to reaffirm for yourself" (1992:117). I now turn to the relationship between the representational strategies we have been discussing and what Ginsburg identified as the exigencies of cultural self-assertion. As she remarks (1994a:5), "Those . . . from indigenous, ethnic, or diaspora groups who are using such media, are more and more conscious of their activities as vehicles for mediating cultural revival, identity formation, and political assertion."[24] I trust I am not reading too much into that statement when I interpret it as meaning that there is something about filmic media themselves that causes this kind of

22. We should recall the words of Benjamin (1968:228–29): "The . . . performance . . . of the screen actor is presented by a camera with a twofold consequence. The camera that presents the performance of the film actor to the public need not respect the performance as an integral whole. Guided by the cameraman, the camera continually changes its position with respect to the performance. The sequence of positional views which the editor composes from the material supplied him constitutes the completed film. . . . Hence the performance of the actor is subjected to a series of optical tests. This is the first consequence of the fact that the actor's performance is presented by means of the camera. Also, the film actor lacks the opportunity of the stage actor to adjust to the audience during the performance, since he does not present his performance to the audience in person. This permits the audience to take the position of the critic, without experiencing any personal contact with the actor. The audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera. Consequently, the audience takes the position of the camera; its approach is that of testing."

23. What has emerged as the discursive constitution of American sociality through the relationship of co-viewing provided by the televised trial of O. J. Simpson seems to me a critical ethnographic opportunity for anthropology at this juncture.

24. Thorp utters a similar pronouncement: "Given a concentration of technical equipment and the energetic potential it represents, video may become the condensor or catalyst of concrete attitudes and behaviours, a certain way of looking at things that stems from genuine historical and cultural concerns" (1991:103).

cultural consciousness-raising even as they at the same time discourage us from theorising it. Indeed, television has done more than anything to facilitate the development of national identity throughout the world. The 1986 Peacock Report on the funding of the BBC concluded that "British broadcasting in its existing public service mode should and did assert and reflect Britain as a community, society, and culture and . . . was the principal forum by which the nation as a whole was able to talk to itself" (quoted in Murray-Brown 1991: 21). Identity in this case is established strictly speaking not through the give-and-take of social interaction but through co-identification with the same screenly images. For modern citizens, national and cultural selfhood "is realised in the knowledge that we are all watching the same image at the same time" (p. 21), and it is this usually tacit appeal to the "sociality" of the co-watchers that grounds the constructionist analyses of what TV or film "means" or "signifies."[25]

If such is the case, then what is being revived and asserted through indigenous video-making? It could not be the revival of a world in which visual representation was constituted in terms very different from our own, as was certainly the case with Papua New Guinea peoples and many Australian Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. It would have to be a revival founded on the possibilities and limitations of social and self-constitution inscribed in the new media. It would have to include the mirroring relation of self to self that screen media make necessary and inevitable, including the transitive, unarticulated, tacit sociality of the co-viewer, and it is this kind of peculiarly visualist sociality that I find so inappropriate to the characterization of non-Western ritual and performance and other so-called mediatory practices.[26] Hence, to return to a point made earlier, the nature of the political and cultural identity created through filmic media would have to have a most radically different relation to social and political practice itself, and it is some sense of the concrete lineaments of this relation, which Michaels ultimately identifies as the sole locus of analysis, that is missing from Ginsburg's account. Since we have only

the video clips with which to judge this relation, the cultural-nationalist message we are told it contains becomes "*a message*"—and ultimately a sociality—"*transmitted by the quality of the image, rather than its structural implications*" (Jameson 1992:208, emphasis added). While we must always be aware who is the author of a film or video, we cannot ask who is the author of a myth or ritual, and hence the filmic and the ritual-mythic must stand in a very contrastive relation of revelation with respect to such structural implications.

But then, of what use is the assertion of a new cultural identity if it does not differ in its *theory, cosmology, and mode of being* from our own? Why should we continue to do anthropology if we can only find a sort of ersatz difference in the manufactured sound bites, video clips, and promotional videos which will henceforth be everyone's most important cultural product? It remains for us to place indigenous video alongside all of the more "traditional" appropriations, if I can call them that, of Western representational and expressive forms. Where in our repertoire is a sound anthropological analysis of the lives and works of Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Albert Namatjira, or V. S. Naipaul? Why should video and film alone capture our imagination when it comes to cultural identity and assertion? But then, such a question I believe in large part supplies its own answer.[27]

Further, how will we be able to distinguish between different forms of cultural assertion if we have only aesthetic grounds for doing so? How will we be able to distinguish—culturally, politically, or in any other way—between these indigenous film-makers' products and the products of the growing underground video cultures, the porn enthusiasts, sports fans, and other "vidéastes" who now circulate their own images through the market (see Cubitt 1991:9)? Who will say that the social relations depicted in the latter are any less authentic a cultural product than the Inuits'? Will the answer to such questions do more than call forth indignant assertions of moralism or the judgement of taste or the Bourdieuian mixture of the two? Could this not be exactly the manner in which anthropological film-makers unwittingly have helped drive the final nail into the coffin of the non-Western world?

We are witness to a devaluation of the strange and the different in this exercise. No, not so much that—it is something more insidious. It is the replacement of genuine historical, linguistic, social, and cultural difference with an ersatz difference among electronic images.[28] As Jameson has noted, following Barthes, we are replacing genuine historical and social difference with the conno-

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25. In this respect, commentators on the role of mass media in constituting present-day Western sociality are confirming the observation that de Tocqueville made over 150 years ago: In early-19th-century American society, where the dispersal of population meant weak social ties and there was little centralization of political authority, newspapers flourished. "The political character of Americans' association was disclosed in the profusion of newspapers, 'which bring to them every day . . . some intelligence of the state of their public weal.' A newspaper survived, he understood, by 'publishing sentiments of principles common to a large number of men,' and hence 'it always represents an association which is composed of its habitual readers' . . . who through it were able 'to converse every day without seeing one another, and to take steps in common without having met'" (Tocqueville 1954:121–22, 119–20, quoted by Zynda 1984:253).
26. As Zynda (1984) points out, such appeals to the community of viewers, or of readers, "rest on a comparison of mediated communication to the directness of face-to-face communication. This comparison ignores the alienation of the receivers of mass-mediated messages from their senders, not to mention the content of what is printed or televised" (p. 251).

27. Even so, where is a specifically anthropological interest in Third Cinema, for example, the work of the Filipino producer/director Kidlat Tahimik?
28. "In the new dimensionality of postmodern cultural space, ideas of the older conceptual type have lost their autonomy and become something like by-products and after-images flung up on the screen of the mind and of social production by the culturalization of daily life" (Jameson 1992:24–25).

tation of it, "the purveying of imaginary and stereotypical differences" signalled by the pervasiveness of the nominalizing constructions "-ness" and "-ity" in talking about culture—"alterity," "otherness," "aboriginality," "*Sinité.*" It could be that this will soon be the only difference available to us, and one wonders whether that will spell the death of anthropology, or at least the death of its modernist foundations.

In fact, to be obsessed with the strange and the different in this "old-fashioned" sense is to be branded as anachronistic, an exoticist. But when strangeness and difference are disallowed as features of our encounter with non-Westerners, we at the same time deny, in the Freudian sense of *Verneinung,* the space of the uncanny, the strange, the inexplicable in our own life the perception of which makes social difference possible (see Weiner 1993*b*). We deny the possibility of the social visibility of what Lacoue-Labarthe calls *désistance,* the inherent instability or "infirmity" of the subject "without which no relation (either to oneself or to others) could be established and there would be neither consciousness nor sociality" (1990:83). We could also add that there would be no history either, and to return once again to Adorno's epigraph we would have to admit, as Jameson (1991:46) puts it, that

> the logic of the simulacrum, with its transformation of older realities into television images, does more than merely replicate the logic of late capitalism: it reinforces and intensifies it. Meanwhile, for political groups which seek actively to intervene in history and to modify its otherwise passive momentum . . . there cannot but be much that is deplorable and reprehensible in a cultural form of image addiction which, by transforming the past into visual mirages, stereotypes, or texts, effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project. . . .

To return to Marcus and Fischer, from whom I take my original cue, it must now be pointed out that cultural critique was advocated years ago by Brecht, who looked toward theatre rather than ethnography for this critical Archimedean leverage. Of a new critical review he was introducing in the early 1930s he wrote, "Amongst other things the review understands the word 'criticism' in its double sense—tranforming *dialectically* the totality of subjects into a *permanent crisis* and thus conceiving the epoch as a critical period in both meanings of the term. And this point of view necessarily entails a rehabilitation of *theory* in its own rights'" (quoted in MacCabe 1974:7). By pointing to the similarity of the agendas of Brecht and Marcus and Fischer I draw attention to the broader theoretical and historical frame within which, I maintain, the inspection of indigenous film and video must take place. This frame is defined by the progress of marxist theory in this century as it has confronted the changes in the form of capital formation upon which Western society has focused and its appropriation of image production

as its latest and perhaps final act of colonization: "As the indispensable decoration of the objects produced today, as the general exposé of the rationality of the system, as the advanced economic sector which directly shapes a growing multitude of image-objects, the spectacle is the *main production* of present-day society" (Debord 1983:§15) says. The only space thus left for the perception of totality—productive, cultural, or otherwise—is within the image itself.

Conclusions: The Total Work of Representation

Consider the words of John Kasaipwalova, the Trobriand aesthete (1975:1): "Our process of Kabisawali is a total movement involving our politics, our economy, our villages, our families and our persons, we are as a matter of consequence engaged in changing our given historical reality and at the same time attempting to create a cultural environment that is both contemporary of our times and relevant to our present needs." This was an introduction to a proposal for the creation of a modern art school on the Trobriand island of Kiriwina, to be called the Sopi Arts Centre. Through the encouraging of traditional graphic, plastic, and musical arts, it was anticipated that the Trobriand Islanders could establish directions of cultural development which would more effectively link present-day society with its own traditions while at the same time not closing off avenues for change and growth.

Let us now compare Kasaipwalova's formulation with Wyzewa's description of Richard Wagner, cited by James Boon: "With [Wagner], Art is no longer in painting, nor in literature, nor in music, but in the strict union of these genres and in the total life which is born thereof" (Boon 1972:171). What Kasaipwalova and Wagner seem to share is the Boasian, Benedictian, belief that the process of forming a community or a cultural tradition is similar to the production of a work of art (see Zimmerman 1990:11).

But such a belief is inextricably linked to the expressivist and expressionist tendencies in 19th-century social and artistic theory which still inform our view of culture and social identity and which I maintain are implicit in the approach of Terry Turner, Faye Ginsburg, and all of visual anthropology. For Wagner, "music is called upon to do nothing less than retract the historical tendency of language, which is based on signification, and to substitute expressiveness for it" (Adorno 1981:99). If we were to substitute "film" for "music" in Adorno's statement, we would then see film as 20th-century anthropology's latest formulation of the total work of art (Jameson 1992:158–59):

> Whenever other arts are foregrounded with a film— and, generally visual, these can range from video to cuneiform, or . . . from theatre to painting—what is at stake is always some formal proposition as to the superiority of film itself as a medium over these dis-

parate competitors. There would thus be a kind of built in auto-referentiality in the very cinematographic medium, which, without having read Wagner, instinctively proposes itself as the fulfilment for the ideals of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. . . .

In considering these imperialistic qualities of video, we might want to recall Raymond Williams's description of television as "whole flow" (1990). If Ginsburg appeals to the totalising medium of video as a privileged site of cultural articulation, she must by that token ask us to consider both social relations and culture as equivalent to a total image or total work—be it of art or production or the fusion of the two.[29] Under what conditions could this equivalence be established? What characteristics do works of art have that societies also have? And how are we to reconcile such a position with the equally valid intuition that art *opposes* conventional sociality and culture? I acknowledge that my critical view of indigenous film is from what some would label the "high-culture/low-culture" dichotomy whose last great theorist in this century was Adorno (see Huyssen 1986). But I maintain that this contrast is generated by a more general appreciation of the alienating effects of art, without which anthropology's own techniques of making culture visible would be seriously compromised.

Let me repeat what Ginsburg said: "Films embody in their own *internal* structure and meaning the forms and values of the social relations they mediate, making texts and context interdependent" (1994*a*:6, emphasis added). But included in this *internal* embodiment of relations must also be the relation between the viewer and the filmic text (see Cubitt 1991:87–88). It sites representation as a basic feature of relationality itself. It is in this very fusion of aesthetics and politics that Ginsburg situates her subject matter within a postmodern project, and I maintain that one of the effects of this particular postmodern position is the obliteration of the kind of cultural difference that anthropologists have been used to and by which they have defined their discipline and its replacement with an illusion of difference. In the words of Wolf Lepeneis, "If you believe in the unity of aesthetics and politics, you are already living in the period of *post-historie*"—and therefore of post-culture.

Now, elsewhere (Weiner 1995*a*) I have said that this isomorphy between methodology and subject matter is one of the defining characteristics of both anthropology and psychoanalysis. To study social relations, anthropologists have to enter into social relations with their hosts; to elicit from a patient the possibility of discourse, the psychoanalyst must inevitably become the focus of those anxieties the patient cannot at first speak about. In both cases, *the appearance of the transference and of the countertransference must at first be concealed from both parties to the analysis.* The reflexive

29. Adorno, who otherwise was an implacable opponent of Heidegger and his philosophy, nevertheless reached the same conclusion concerning the role of film in achieving this totalisation of representational subjects and subject matter.

effects of the analytical engagement are made tangible or palpable only by focusing one's attention elsewhere. In anthropological terms, this can be rendered in the following way: By focusing on the anticipated constructionist outcome of an act of representation, we conceal the constructionist origin of the transfiguration that accompanies such a representational act (see Wagner 1981). Drawing these social and psychoanalytical perspectives together, McCabe (1974:17) puts it this way: "the unproblematic taking up of the position of the subject entails the repression of the whole mechanism of the subject's construction."

But to me this is no more than an affirmation of what has been (up until now perhaps) one of anthropology's central tenets, one which was adumbrated by Victor Turner nearly 40 years ago: "the participant is likely to be governed in his actions by a number of interests, purposes, and sentiments, dependent upon his specific position, which impair his understanding of the total situation" (1964 [1957]:29). Anthropology exists only because it can poise the promise of a description of a total system against the perspectivism of its members. This promise cannot be secured by isolating and exalting the subjectivity of any of those members, whether anthropologist or indigenous "other." The position of externality, of outsider, is still necessary to anthropology.

The anthropological study of art, and of representation more generally, models this dialectic between inside and outside. We confront again the Brechtian paradox of art—and of ritual, to which Ginsburg originally compared the cinematic or video text: It is something produced within the social relations of life but which, if it is to be recognised as such, must stand apart from it. In his commentary on Adorno, Jameson says, "Every work of art is 'of the world' and . . . everything about it is social—its materials, its creator, its reception, art itself (or culture) as a leisure class activity, and so forth; as a thing in the world it is social, yet the most important thing about it is not 'in' the world at all, in that sense" (1990*a*:185–86). Insofar as the self in Western society is included within this arena of representable things, then in its practice and conceptualisation it is "always a production rather than [a] ground" (Spivak 1987:212). It is this productionist self which is inevitably consolidated through televisual media. But to the extent that the self and the body were components of such an unarticulated ground for (among others) the Walbiri, Foi, Chambri, Manambu, and many Native American peoples, the use of film will always work counter to their strategies of self-concealment.

Gewertz and Errington, in their compelling account of the Chambri (Papua New Guinea) experience of the modern world system, argue that in representing the Chambri's relationship with the developing nation-state one must not neglect to make visible the way in which the Chambri *resist* being turned into a culture of representation focused on subjective expression (1991: 168). The promoters of indigenous video insist that such people should have the power to produce their own images of their own society and culture. The impli-

cation, of course, is that this culture and society already exist as a knowable entities, and the people themselves have to be assumed to possess the rationalising and expressive urges so bound up with our own notions of the individual and its autonomy. That the Chambri importantly and decisively speak for others—the ancestors in particular—is clear. But let us not gloss over the other patent observation that for the Chambri *not* speaking is both a necessity and a prerogative of the powerful. As the ethnography of this region shows so pronouncedly, for some Melanesian peoples self-objectification is not the final and desired outcome of discursivity but a positive danger looming over all social life and discourse (Weiner 1991:193–94).[30]

The last film clip we were shown by Ginsburg in her Australian lecture was to my mind the most significant: It consisted of the face of an Inuit director, masked by opaque aviator sunglasses, explaining in what was for me, I must admit, an expressionless way the manner in which he had utilised this new technology of expression. If this is to be the ultimate product of video production—the mock-discursive elaboration of its own productive conditions of possibility—then all videotexts ultimately have the same subject matter, and culture as such becomes merely another contrived effect within the confines of the screen. I finally thought about a famously reported Native American propensity to "give up on words"—the "stolidness" we so often think of with respect to Native Americans[31]—and wondered how useful a medium that calls forth acting, overacting, projecting, and overprojecting as expressive modalities of the subject would be to people for whom the avoidance of such projection is a virtue.

Comments

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This is an ambitious paper—addressing as it does theory, practices, politics, and an aspect of the issue of anthropological representation in "televisualist anthropology." It is especially challenging to a highly promoted and currently popular modality—for careers are made, the drives of academic dividends, funding, and research leave are at stake, and consumption de-

mands (if not local peoples' refusals to submit to traditional anthropological scrutiny) motivate constant novel approaches to a discipline in increasing trouble and willing to reward anything that might save it. Surveys indicate that undergraduates prefer films, and anthropology instructors often "show a film" as a way of minding the class without lecturing—commonly, indeed, without explanation of the sort Weiner is here crying for. As he says, filmic consumption in the West is often direct, ironically un-"media"-ed; in fact, other input on the filmic text is sometimes resented.

To begin: Weiner is quite correct to point out the limitations, consistently ignored by "indigenous media" partisans, of the technology of optical recording devices—their obliteration of time, their silencing, their censoring—and to insist, moreover, that Western visualism ignores a multitude of other communicative modes and expressive styles. Representation is itself censoring (see von Sturmer 1989), whether of self (presumably indigenous media) or others (traditional anthropological ethnographies and film documentaries). But the problem is not necessarily the modality (given the caveats on limitations of scopic technologies) but the social relations surrounding intention, production, and use. People who insist on the neutrality of imaging devices such as cameras fail to remember that they cannot but involve social relations, whatever else may be ambient features. And it is those social relations, not the photographs, the films themselves, that are the object of political critique. The *means* for political argumentation are beyond the scope of this commentary, but I will argue below for political debate—political critiques of specific social relations (cf. Faris 1996). Suffice it to say that I would argue against means involving programs, projects, platforms, or some universal epistemological appeal.

Weiner notes that in Ginsburg's clips humor is quite apparent in the work of indigenous video producers she illustrates—parodies of white men, etc. But indigenous observers have been making fun of Westerners for years. To feature this in illustration of some cultural pastiche or reflexivity is almost pitiful; this is not power, it is patronizing self-deprecation—a safe humor that leaves social relations as they are. Humor, as we all know, is often used in situations where it is the only possible attack on power and unequal social relations—and possible only because it *does* leave such social relations intact. After all, the most powerful men in the world are the subject of cartoonists' daily assaults. At least in Turner's accounts of Kayapo indigenous video production there was more than parody, and their video efforts were supposed to have had some influence in stopping a World Bank dam project (that internationally famous rock stars lent their influence may also have been significant, however).

Turner quite consciously celebrates the technological adulteration. While this is a complicated matter (and no one is arguing that "indigenous" peoples remain untouched, a protected zoo of cultural integrity), it is at least an honest position (if stubbornly Western and postmodern in its focus). In Ginsburg's formulations

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30. As Pinney (1992*a*:48) has put it, "modern Western selves . . . consolidated themselves through an accumulating externality, an ineluctable accretion of possessions—presences—which effaced (through a displacement) the absence of the very self they purported to reflect."

31. "'The Bororo call civilized people *kidoe kidoe,* 'parakeet, parakeet,' because, like these birds, they talk too much. . . . The white man thus has his place in the native bestiary. . . . In return, white observers have often mentioned oral retention, 'a fierce reluctance to speak except when absolutely necessary,' as a behaviour typical of American Indians" (Lévi-Strauss 1988:164–65).

there is more hedging, and if it seems to be video that she approves of (and therefore shows in clips to academic audiences), it is labeled "mediation"—a fuzzy word suggestive of a type of normative methodology that must always ignore power and cannot appreciate difference. It celebrates a pastiche (Turner's term "adulteration"—wisely—is never used), perhaps a nonstrident humor (poking fun at Westerners)—a cultural constructivism (which can be viewed) that is not very challenging. "Mediation" of this sort is quite safe, comfortable, popular. Now they are more like us, have perhaps accepted elements of our humor, our methods of impotent criticism in parody.[1]

Faye Ginsburg and Terry Turner, as leading representatives and partisans of "indigenous media" (and the foci of much of Weiner's paper), might agree with some of the above and bemoan the shallow use of filmic materials and the increasing dependency upon visualist modalities. But, as Weiner has so carefully illustrated, their enthusiasms cannot be divorced from some of the problems such work has created, particularly their theoretical assumptions. Of course Ginsburg and Turner fully realize that there are nonvisual texts necessary to the comprehension of filmic narrative. But Ginsburg, particularly, insists that filmic text is "mediational," constructive, and revelatory of social and cultural relations, both new and creative. Weiner correctly, in my opinion, notes the assumptions that must lie behind such a position (the "views")—first, a curious, even atavistic appeal to reality and, most especially, the paralysis to any cultural critique if such assumptions are held. He goes farther, indicating the banal assumption in this "view" that aesthetics and politics are axiomatically linked (rather than situationally and theoretically posited and argued). This latter position has unfortunately enjoyed hegemony in Western aesthetic discourse for some time—the notion that there is recognizable bourgeois art or socialist realism or fascist aesthetics—some manner of straightforwardly reading politics or social relations from visualist productions or appropriate aesthetics from particular political relations. But there can be no true aesthetics of a modality that is so premised in reality. If one is to lean on canons of realism in the underlying assumptions that Weiner convincingly demonstrates for Ginsburg, there can indeed be no appeal to aesthetics at all (cf. Solomon-Godeau 1985, 1991). Everyone from the now-defunct socialist regimes and the United States Congress (say, as represented by Jesse Helms) to intellectuals such as Susan Sontag (1975) has accepted the notion that somehow particular aesthetics are appropriate to specific political relations. It is indeed the notion of *totality* that makes possible the axiomatic link between social relations and aesthetics, between content and form in a human entity, such as a cultural group.

Apart from the unfortunate 19th-century heritage of the position axiomatically linking aesthetics and political form, the notion is crippling in that it inhibits any serious political critique—exactly the point, as I understand him, that Weiner is making with his insistence on cultural critique (a concept promoted by Marcus and Fischer [1986] but never practiced by them) in his examination of "indigenous media." Along these lines, however, let me comment on some important implications for such critique.

I think that we must be extremely clear that while we have no business critiquing anyone's *culture* (beyond differences in personal taste), we have every right to engage in debate about social relations (I take the phrase *cultural critique* to mean a critique of *social relations*, a political critique—what I think Weiner calls a cognizance of "social difference"). This has long been a confusion in the literature, I suspect because of this unfortunate combination of specific aesthetics with specific political structures—in short, because of the concept of totality. While it is usually a culture's job to insist on such combination, such totality, it is the job of the critic to deconstruct such unity, such totality, for political critique—*not* in aid of another totality (the anthropological approach) but in debate. From Walter Benjamin to Marcus and Fischer, there has been a promise of cultural critique. But unless there is a firm existential totality of culture and social relations (which I argue there must not be, cannot be), then we cannot critique anyone's culture, however distasteful, ugly, etc., we may find it. It is the social relations behind any cultural manifestation which must be the object of criticism, not the cultural expressions.[2] So if people decide to circumcise their young (male and or female), otherwise mutilate their bodies, or goose-step about in black leather, that is their prerogative. If, however, the social relations signified in these practices are debated as inegalitarian, oppressive, racist, or sexist (and our future will challenge other relations of oppression of which we are now unaware as well as alter thinking about those which we now specify), then we have every reason to object, argue, and struggle for the change of such social relations. This need not and perhaps will not bring about any change in the expressive forms. So be it. There is no reason for particular social relations to be allowed to hegemonize particular noniconic symbols (even, for example, something so historically loaded in the recent West as the swastika).[3]

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1. Another term besides the awful "mediation" linked to it by Ginsburg and Turner surrounds "indigenous media," and that is the term "empowerment." It seems to me extraordinarily problematic, a term without meaning locally and of relevance only to visualist, surveilling, observing social relations vis-à-vis indigenous entities applied by external observers.

2. The notion of totality is also implicit in the terms "society" and "culture." While it is beyond the scope of this critique, I would argue for jettisoning such terms and being henceforth quite careful in our usage. Our political critiques can only be of specific social relations (between people, groups, institutions), and we must *theoretically specify* any concatenation of relations beyond these. "Society" and "culture" are not existentially given (see Faris and Wutu 1986, Hirst 1977).

3. The use of the swastika (and the mirror image) was common in Native American and other non-European art prior to World War II. After that, its use dropped away, out of self-censorship or rejec-

Weiner, I think, correctly assesses anthropology's promise as that perspective that can suggest a total system against the position of its members. I think, however, that this is also why anthropology (the "science" of representation) as traditionally practiced (and as still practiced by the vast majority of its practitioners) is doomed. It is part of the unfortunate promise of universal knowledge (which required a totality—such as a theory of the evolution of life forms [natural science], a theory of the individual in human social forms [psychology], and a reduction of the world's cultural variation and local expression to a master template [anthropology]). And that optimistic—no, arrogant—set of assumptions is now in quite serious trouble as the anarchy and chaos of human social reality (and "natural" reality in the case of evolutionary studies) increasingly falsify attempts to codify it nomothetically. Indeed, any attempt at totalizing theory would, as Weiner has suggested, mean a truly "postcultural" period.

If I understand him correctly, Weiner, however, appears more positive about the possibility of a totalizing theory of human culture than I would be. My views against a totalizing enterprise are noted above and have been detailed elsewhere (Faris and Wutu 1986; Faris 1989, 1993); it is sufficient here to say that there are methodological, theoretical, and even ethical problems with such a position. It is not to succumb to some silly relativism to deny the possibility of an overarching theory, but it is certainly to dismiss local views to adopt one. Surely at the end of the millennium we are no longer sanguine about mapping the world and its processes or even convinced that it is process-governed. All that unfortunate vocabulary ultimately dates from a century ago, with the triumph of rationalist discourse, and must now be jettisoned if we are to proceed. It will be a new enterprise that explores difference for critical debate; anthropology cannot do it, and I feel that Weiner is excessively optimistic to think so.

Visual anthropology still insists on a "view," still leans on an observationalist privilege, on a modality that can only involve a liberal access—even if it is their photography of themselves (us looking on, of course). There cannot be a revolutionary nonfiction cinema, a gesture of severance with the camera, for its very confinement to registering, to documenting ostensibly dictated by an external agenda (i.e., "reality"), condemns it. There may be other potentialities of which I am unaware, and certainly there are great possibilities with other narrative constructions, as the history of Hollywood and fiction cinema demonstrates. But insofar as anthropology leans on "reality" in its visualist obsessions (whether the documents of local people by local people especially championed by Ginsburg and Turner or the more classical productions of anthropological documentary cinema), its discussions of power are unfortunate, even deceiving, its gestures are ultimately re-

tion by the consuming Western public. That the Third Reich (and more contemporary fascists) came to have all authority over such a popular symbol was indeed unfortunate.

actionary, and its ability to preserve difference while obliterating Otherness—or the ability to differ ("the perception of social difference" in Weiner's terms)—evaporates. It is especially anachronistic to sustain an anthropology in such efforts.

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Writing a brief response to Weiner's article is an awkward task, as my work (and that of colleagues such as Terence Turner) is misrepresented and misinterpreted throughout. Nonetheless, I will use the opportunity for discussion provided here to consider some issues and clarify what I think are genuine differences between Weiner's position and that of those he attacks. Weiner's discussion of indigenous media is only the latest contribution to what has generally been a very lively and productive debate on the topic, a sign of the interest it holds for scholars in anthropology and media studies and for indigenous people.

Conflation and misrepresentation. I begin with an interrogation of the term "televisualist anthropology," a murky one that Weiner never unpacks. This might seem a pedantic note on which to start except that Weiner's failure to define his object is symptomatic of a broader problem: a general lack of familiarity with the phenomenon itself—indigenous work in film, video, and television—and the research and scholarship pertaining to it. Weiner doesn't find it necessary to define the term, nor is its meaning implicit in the article as it might be if he were writing exclusively about (for example) ethnographic films produced for and seen via television. Instead, he leaps from home movies to various national cinemas to ethnographic film to indigenous film, video, and television as if they were equivalent technologies and social practices. Additionally, he uses "indigenous" and "non-Western" interchangeably throughout, an ethnocentric category mistake that results in collapsing phenomena such as the Indian and Chinese cinema industries into the same cultural and analytic frame as locally based indigenous media associations in remote areas of Australia, Canada, or Brazil.

The term "televisualist anthropology" and the lack of explanation for it are also indicative of other problematic strategies of argumentation, particularly false attribution through rhetorical assertion. Weiner uses the term as if I or Turner had coined and used it and then attributes positions to us that we do not hold and argues against them, occasionally using our arguments as his own. This strategy, along with a lack of clarity and logic, leads to basic errors. For example, Weiner presents opposing positions as if they were the same; he collapses my interest in the *mediation* of social and cultural processes via a wide range of media practices and social actions—a position which is built on a fundamental recognition of the constructed nature of film

and video—with the contrasting view (no longer prevalent) of John Collier, who remains preoccupied with the presumed transparency (or mimetic possibility) of ethnographic film as a narrowly defined genre. Such basic misreadings are indicative of serendipitous knowledge of the field and confusion about some very central differences in contemporary debates in visual anthropology and media studies.

Weiner has failed to understand (or at least to represent) my argument. In the opening section of his essay, for example, he appropriates my position to his own. He begins by interrogating a video clip (3 minutes out of a 60-minute piece) I showed of an Inuit work called *Qaggiq* ("Gathering Place"). He asks how it can tell us something about Inuit social relations and the way in which the camera is being used to mediate them. These are precisely the kinds of questions I raised; I showed the segment as a case in point for my argument that these works are best understood in their ethnographic context. Ignoring that, Weiner himself argues (as if I had not) that such works must be understood in their ethnographic context, "that film, like all art forms, never stands alone." He then further distorts my position by taking a quote of mine out of context, contending that I am "opposed to grand theorizing" in favor of ethnographic practice, as if I saw these as contrary activities. In fact, my call for "ethnographic research as a corrective to grand theorizing" in no way expresses a desire to eschew theory; it was specifically aimed at work in film studies which has been, until recently, uninterested in examining the ethnocentrism of its theoretical assumptions about activities such as film spectatorship. (Even reception theory, which has begun to break that frame through the use of quasi-ethnographic methods, organizes itself in terms of constructed and mostly Western viewing environments.) The original text (1994a: 8, emphasis added) read as follows:

> If there is some original contribution to be made by an ethnographic approach, it is to break up the "massness" of the media, and to intervene in its supposed reality effect by recognizing the complex ways in which people are engaged in processes of making and interpreting media works in relation to their cultural, social, and historical circumstances. . . . By looking at the broad range of social processes that shape media production, distribution, and reception in particular settings, such inquiries offer cogent challenges to the ethnocentric assumptions of the inevitability of western media hegemony, exploring the intersection of local cultures, regional histories of cinema and television, and the political economies and ideological agendas of states and corporate empires. . . . Whatever the power and reach of media institutions and messages, the people who receive them continue to have unpredictable and creative responses to such processes; ethnographic research is especially well-suited to understanding these dynamics, as the cases I have described make clear. The variety and particularity revealed by such

research is a necessary corrective to grand theorizing that loses touch with the specific, embedded, and diverse ways that people use media to make sense of their worlds and, most importantly, to construct new ones. *It is only through such case studies, especially in diverse cultural settings, that we can refine and rethink prevailing theories regarding the power and impact of film and television, and reimagine the place of media in all of our lives.*

This serves as the introduction to a long section entitled "Mediating Culture," in which I discuss recent ethnographic studies of media precisely in terms of the contributions they make to a variety of theoretical debates regarding, for example, postcolonial representational practices or Habermas's notion of the public sphere as an arena of social criticism autonomous from state or market domination.

Weiner's central complaint, directed against distorted versions of our work, is that ethnographic attention to indigenous film, video, and television signals the decline of an anthropology engaged in a confrontation with radical alterity. Only cultures apparently unsullied by contact with the West provide the anthropological imaginary (in a Lacanian sense) that he desires, and in his view this indigenous work (as he misrepresents it) poses a threat to it.[1] He writes, "Why should we continue to do anthropology if we can only find a sort of ersatz difference in the manufactured sound bites, video clips, and promotional videos which will henceforth be everyone's most important cultural product?" As I will clarify below, this statement in no way characterizes the kind of research and analysis that any of us have been doing but is a projection of the imagined threat of ethnographic attention to "hybrid practices" which Weiner takes as a sign of the end of serious ethnography. He seems to long for what Fabian (1983) calls the allochronic as opposed to an anthropology of the present (to use Richard Fox's [1991] term).

Projection and the effacement of memory. It is ironic that Weiner begins his article by quoting Adorno on the effacement of memory, as he seems to have forgotten two discussions we have had on aspects of this essay in the past two years. The first was during the question-and-answer period after the keynote lecture I gave at the 1994 Australian anthropology meetings in Sydney, where he asked if Western home movies might not be considered indigenous media. Far from dismissing such practices (as he suggests I do), I mentioned the considerable scholarship on home movies and family photographs as aspects of Western bourgeois social practices and nuclear-family life, studied not only by Bourdieu (1990) (whom Weiner cites) but by others as well (Chalfen 1987, Zimmerman 1995). Such research fits in with a fertile and growing area of ethnographic research on media (see Ginsburg 1994a, Spitulnick 1993) which is beginning to appear in journals such as *Visual Anthro-*

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1. For an interesting discussion of this kind of framework, I recommend Trouillot (1991).

pology Review and *Public Culture.* Indeed, the cultural and political differences between home movies and indigenous media demonstrate precisely the (very basic) point that I make in a number of articles—that the employment of the media needs to be understood in its cultural, sociological, and political economic contexts. These may be the unreflective leisure practices of the American middle class in the case of home movies or the very self-conscious struggle of indigenous people for recognition of land rights and cultural autonomy, in which media skills may be one tool for making their claims known.

As a second part of my answer to the query on home movies, I pointed out that my use of the term "indigenous" would not apply to the American middle class. Rather, it is in accordance with its late-20th-century use as a referent for the original inhabitants of lands taken over by colonial settler societies: Aboriginal Australians, Native Americans, Maori, Sami, Kayapo, and other Amazonian groups, as well as Quechua and Mayan peoples of Central and South America. For these groups, the recent introduction of Western media technologies is only the most recent of a long series of impositions of colonial practices far more devastating than video technology, even if one were to agree that Western ideologies are smuggled in with the very apparatus of the camera.

The efforts of indigenous activists to appropriate video and television technology to their own use were a creative and in their view necessary response to this latest onslaught. Inuit people, for example, faced with unwanted Western (or Southern, as they would say) television programs following the launching of satellites over their remote lands in the 1970s, organized to demand from the Canadian government satellite space and training to create their own media. Their alternative was what is now the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) (Roth and Valaskakis 1989), a remarkably lively social formation and a force for cultural revival, language preservation, and dissemination of important health care information as well as political news on indigenous issues. A similar process in central Australia in the 1980s (Batty 1993; Michaels 1986, 1987*b*) sparked Eric Michaels's work with Warlpiri Media and the formation of a number of other groups such as the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) and Imparja (Ginsburg 1991, 1993*a*). These groups in no way represent the whole of Warlpiri or Inuit society (a ridiculously reductive position that Weiner attributes to me) but are aspects of late-20th-century contact that they have managed to indigenize in the service of cultural preservation, intergenerational transmission of tradition and language, regional contact with other groups, and more practical needs from the selling of indigenous artwork via satellite to long-distance driver education. It seems profoundly misguided for anthropologists to dismiss such efforts as "ersatz" because the actors are self-conscious about their culture-making efforts or are using Western media technologies to their own ends. Should we equally dismiss as inauthentic those who

have been subject to missionizing? In my view, Weiner's position signals a profound difference in our epistemological, intellectual, political, and moral commitments as anthropologists.

An aporia in the text. I fail to understand how Weiner can make such vehement claims about indigenous media without having actually looked at the material in question and talked to some of its producers. By his own admission, he has not viewed more than a total of ten minutes of short clips (approximately three minutes each of much longer pieces) that I showed at two different public lectures. I contextualized them ethnographically and formally at the time (and not by pointing out their "hilarity," as he misremembers)[2] but certainly did not expect an audience to comprehend or appreciate them in their entirety. A large proportion of indigenous work is made primarily for internal consumption (or in some cases as an archive of rituals that can be seen only by particular male or female initiates, as is the case at Ernabella in South Australia). However, I specifically showed works that had been viewed by general as well as indigenous audiences (whatever the intention of their makers). Although these short clips failed to "speak to" Weiner, they have had remarkable success elsewhere, having won numerous prizes and been received enthusiastically at so-called high-culture venues

2. In my notes from the talk, I contextualize a clip from *Sun, Moon, and Feather* (1989) in the following way: "Much of this work expands on the important insights of Benedict Anderson regarding how contemporary nation states constitute imagined communities (Anderson 1983) through print media, by demonstrating how critical the visual media are to the building (and contesting) of contemporary collective identities. This can be tracked through community-based media production such as local communications societies in monolingual communities in Canada's far north or in media associations in Central Australia such as EVTV or WMA; in regional centers like CAAMA in Australia or the Inuit Broadcast Corporation in Canada; and in national film or television industries, such as Studio Six, the First Nations' Production Center for National Film Board of Canada, or the Aboriginal Programs Unit at the ABC. The variety of sites challenges arguments that view the media as inexorably hegemonic and homogenizing, wiping out the cultural integrity, authenticity, and diversity of people living in mass societies. Rather, they clarify the importance of looking at the complexity of social processes that shape the global spread of television and film, and of examining the range of practices that influence its production and reception.

The film *Sun, Moon, and Feather* (1989), for example, is a hilarious and poignant examination of this sort of complexity. It is made by Lisa, Gloria, and Muriel Miguel, Native American sisters of Cuna and Rapahnonok descent who grew up in Brooklyn where they were part of a medicine show circuit as children in the 1940s. As adults in the 1970s, they formed the Spiderwoman Theatre Company. In *Sun, Moon, and Feather,* they blend performance, memoir, and home movies to reflect on their complex histories and identities as Native American women. Their childhood memories coincide with those of many other Americans (the arrival of a sibling, discovering sex, alcoholism), yet those experiences differed in important ways as they negotiated their subjectivities through distorted images of Native American culture. This is brought home to the audience not through solemn indictments of Hollywood for its inherent racism, but through an antic re-enactment by the sisters of 'Indian Love Song' intercut with the original cinematic version featuring Nelson Eddy and Jeanette MacDonald, followed by an evocation through home movies, reminiscence, and humor of their own roles as 'public Indians.'"

such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. I stress this point as some kind of "objective measure" (beyond my opinion) of these works because of the peremptory tone Weiner adopts in discussing their quality. Given that his whole essay is built on his interpretation of such work as "ersatz," his lack of knowledge of it creates a gaping lacuna at the center of his argument. This is particularly puzzling in that I specifically encouraged him to look at some works produced by Aboriginal people in Australia when he asked me for comments on an earlier version of his essay via e-mail in early 1995. (I also pointed out that he had misrepresented my ideas and the broader discourse on indigenous media and the ethnographic study of media.)

Aboriginal works are readily accessible to Weiner in Australia; he could see EVTV in action in the Aboriginal community of Ernabella, north of Adelaide, where he teaches, or he could talk to Sydney-based Aboriginal filmmakers such as Tracey Moffatt (whose films masterfully capture the intercultural production of the Freudian *Verneinung* that Weiner so longs for). He could also have read the work of the distinguished Aboriginal activist/actress/anthropologist Marcia Langton, who at the request of the Australian Film Commission (AFC) wrote an important treatise on Aboriginal media entitled *"Well I Heard It on the Radio and Saw It on the Television . . ."* (1993). Perhaps such "natives"—some of whom hold advanced degrees in anthropology and head organizations such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander Studies—are not sufficiently "alter."

Langton (1993:84) addresses this attitude acerbically. Contemporary indigenous self-consciousness and representational practices, she argues, are in part the product of centuries of colonial practice. Indigenous people are now asserting cultural and political concerns through their skills at collective self-production, using a variety of oral, performative, and visual media:

> Aboriginal people have invented a theatre of politics in which self-representation has become a sophisticated device, creating their own theories or models of intercultural discourse such as land rights, self-determination, "White Australia has a black history," and so on. . . .
>
> The complaint, "This is all so tiresome and infantile; why do we have to listen to this chorus of 'I want', 'I demand'?" is part of an intellectual malaise. Some intellectuals even demand that the Native answer back in a refereed journal, say something about the French intellectuals, Jacques Derrida or Jean Baudrillard, and speak from the hyperluxury of the first world with the reflective thoughts of a well-paid, well-fed, detached scholar.
>
> The notion of social justice appears to have become boring and has disappeared from the rhetoric. But this, like the consumption and reconsumption of all ideas and style including all that is regarded as "the primitive," is a symptom of postmodernism and economic rationalism.

One of the key issues that Langton addresses here (and one that underscores the significance of indigenous media) is erased in Weiner's accounting: that many aboriginal people are engaged in social movements for political, human, and cultural rights, movements which are central to their survival in every sense. These are processes in which the media play an increasingly important role, as was clear in the mass demonstration organized by the Kayapo and other Amazonian groups to stop the building of a hydroelectric dam at Altamira (Turner 1992*b*). These kinds of actions are part of what appealed to me, as an anthropologist who works on social movements (1989) as well as visual anthropology, about indigenous media.[3] Indeed, the fact that this has become a phenomenon of interest for contemporary ethnographic inquiry seems to have provoked Weiner's polemic. The more important social fact (in my view)—that film, video, and television have been appropriated by indigenous groups to help produce conditions that might give them greater control over their cultural futures—seems not to interest him at all (although this aspect is of considerable theoretical and political interest to other scholars besides myself, among them Carelli [1988], Langton [1993], Michaels [1987*b*], and Turner [1992*a*]). I hope that this exchange will encourage interest in the work itself and the lively research and theoretical debates that have been produced on this topic over the past decade (Batty 1993; Carelli 1988; Faris 1992; Ginsburg 1991, 1992, 1993*a, b*, 1994*a, b*, 1995*a, b*, 1996; Langton 1993; Michaels 1986, 1987*b*, 1991; Roth and Valaskakis 1989; Ruby 1991; Turner 1990, 1991, 1992*a, b*, 1995*a*).

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At Weiner's request I gave him comments on an earlier version of this paper, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to do so further here. He has made substantial changes to the original version, and so I treat the present one *ab initio* to the extent that that is possible. I should preface these remarks by noting that I was closely involved in the early work on indigenous media in Australia by the late Eric Michaels and have been for the past ten years engaged in a rather eclectic study of media production and effects in Thailand. While I would not see "televisualist anthropology" as an apt term for either of these projects, I will not delay the discussion to examine the issue.

"Theory" is a major concern of Weiner's paper, not always explicitly. The entire piece is saturated with theoretical questions and assumptions, which are

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3. I have been writing about indigenous video and film makers as cultural activists as a way of both placing their work and distinguishing it from standard social movement frameworks (Ginsburg 1996). In addition, I have addressed how the emergence of this work resituates the theory and practice of visual anthropology (1991, 1994*a*, 1995*b*).

stated as if there were or ought to be universal acceptance within anthropology of certain approaches and understandings. The initial quote from Adorno sets the tone: there is some furious and conscious activity afoot to efface memory, to achieve a forgetting. Whose fury is thus engaged? The perpetrator seems to be the anthropologist who attends to the visual productions of indigenous peoples, who gives them credence and thereby some sort of validation. But is it the anthropologist who is effacing the recollection of an authentic "native" world by allowing modern technological forms of representation to be admitted as valid cultural products? Or, worse, is it "the native" who is being lured to forget his/her own authentic cultural traditions by taking up the video camera? At different points in the paper, both charges seem to be made.

Throughout Weiner's paper runs a sense of accusation, if not exactly of bad faith then at least of somehow betraying the authentic project of anthropology. The accused are those who embrace "televisualist anthropology"—but presumably not all of them, since he reserves some approbation for Eric Michaels's work, at least to the extent that Michaels speaks of a "failure to value and a banal overvaluation" of Aboriginal cultural production (though I believe that Michaels was referring to art in these remarks, not video). Weiner's failure to evaluate Michaels's own project is particularly odd in the light of later comments in which he appears to be suggesting that the televisualist anthropologist is a "promoter" of indigenous video and that this promoter seems to "insist that such people should have the power to produce their own images." It was Michaels who in the mid-1980s insisted that his research would not take an objectivist "before and after" approach to the introduction of national broadcasting to Aboriginal people in Central Australia but would instead give them the technological capacity to take the medium into their own hands and make their own programs. Indigenous peoples' use of the media, both in and beyond Australia, has proceeded apace since that time, and Ginsburg's project aims to understand the contexts in which these cultural forms have arisen and their meaning and significance in the technologised world in which such peoples are now enmeshed.

Part of the puzzle of Weiner's treatment of the subject arises from his apparent failure to understand that indigenous productions exist in a dialogical relation with other already existing visual products in contexts in which visual technologies have been long established in the cultural environment. I imagine that few anthropologists would argue that it is preferable for people to make videos or to watch them than to make rituals and participate in them. However, these are simply not the alternatives. Weiner, perhaps because he has worked among some of the last few humans on the planet who are not already engaged with modern technologies, puts forward the view that media such as film and video rest on foundations which "could be opposed to and even subversive of non-Western modes of knowledge." Thus the argument seems to be that anthropologists who at-

tend to new media and their effects on—who? "natives"? "primitives"?—are actively participating in the undermining of the basis of those peoples' modes of existence.

Weiner's Heideggerian approach to the deep cultural significance of en-framing and the fundamental transformation in consciousness and self-consciousness in the technologised world of representation is well-taken. There is no doubt that dominant Western cultural practices arise from an intersection between technology and subjectivity which marks a determinate break with premodern forms. It is understandable that some kinds of anthropology are suffused with regret and nostalgia for a genuinely "other" world, the "cold" world of the Lévi-Straussian primitive. However, the brute fact is that, for virtually all indigenous and "tribal" people within Western settler colonies and for many others as well, this break has already occurred. They are already "viewers," with all the disruption to indigenous subjectivity which this implies. I well remember sitting in the open-air "cinema" at Maningrida in 1968 with several hundred Aboriginal people watching the steady diet of American cowboy and Indian movies which their settlement superintendent thought was suitable viewing for a Saturday night. People were reading these movies as "real" then; they wanted to know, for instance, what had happened to John Wayne's wife, who had appeared in one movie the previous week and now seemed to have disappeared. And where were his mother and father? His other kinsmen? Where was his country, and his countrymen? And I was puzzled to see that they cheered the cowboys who slaughtered the Indians. I thought they should identify with the Indians, of course—some romantic essentialism, the common denominator of invasion and genocide to be recognised across time and space. But of course they identified with the cowboys, because the cowboys were the winners. Under the peculiar conditions of cultural circulation today, the situation may well be reversed: the global emergence of identities as "indigenous peoples" has been taken up and redefined, often through film and video itself, and "winning" occurs no longer in Hollywood film but in global contexts such as the United Nations and in the legal environments of nation-states where peoples are putting forward their particular claims.

Now Aboriginal people in the most remote parts of Australia are sophisticated viewers. People deep in the Western Desert hire videos, often brought in by air, and they can in many places also watch segments of broadcast television made in their own languages through the various media providers in Central Australia, such as CAAMA. Indigenous broadcasting and video production and circulation have taken their place alongside other products of the media from the broader Australian environment. Could anyone seriously think that Aboriginal people would be better off if they saw *only* these external products, a steady diet of Rambo and Jackie Chan videos, and not much else? What is the betrayal, or cultural undermining, of indigenous peoples

already enmeshed in the world as viewers of now being able to see their own world on screen as it appears to their own kinsmen behind the camera or before it in the broadcasting studios? It might not amount to much in Western aesthetic terms, true, but to suggest that there is some kind of devious intention behind the failure to teach them to conform to Western aesthetics in film production (as seems to be suggested by "We have taught them English grammar, syntax, and semantics but have made no attempt to teach them iambic pentameter") seems to suggest that "we" are the privileged viewers and have the right to interrogate the "quality" of their products. As I have suggested to Weiner before, it is not "we" who are the intended viewers. The aesthetics, embedded or otherwise, are directed at viewers whose pleasure arises precisely from the difference between conventional Western visual productions, with which they are highly familiar, and those which they identify as their own. The long landscape pan found in virtually all Aboriginal videos, discussed by Michaels, provides an outstanding example of this. Western viewers simply can't "see" what there is in the landscape; it's just a long boring shot of nothing. But Aboriginal viewers "read" this leisurely image through codes arising within their mythological systems, linking space, place, and ancestral meaning. The fact that the landscape is on video allows a collective re-experiencing of these codes, memories, and meanings; of course, it might be better to *be* there in the place, but if one can't *be* there, then seeing it on video seems better than never seeing it at all.

Although Weiner promises to discuss the role of film in anthropology, that is, as an ethnographic tool and an object of ethnographic inspection, the abstruse discussion which follows does not do this at all. Rather, the approach of various "primitive" societies to revelation and elicitation is discussed, and then it is suggested that there is a fundamental split between a "dialectical" and a "social constructionist" analysis. It would have been helpful to have a fuller discussion of what characterises these two approaches and what difference it would make to use the "dialectical" approach (apparently the one favoured by Weiner) in evaluating the role of media in indigenous communities. Or is it that a dialectical approach would not pay attention to such phenomena at all? Unfortunately, no such discussion takes place; rather, Ginsburg is suddenly accused of a disreputable marxism insofar as she is charged with seeing "the relations of film production standing for the entirety of a social world." A footnote promises to explicate this bizarre charge, but actually we read a quote from Marx in which he describes the production of the relations of production *in the economy as a whole.* This seems not to have anything to do with the "social relations" which Ginsburg has discussed in various places; as I understand it, she is concerned largely with the existing prior social relations among film/video-makers and community as subject and audience at once. To clarify this point, in Australia, Aboriginal film-makers are constrained in terms of who holds the camera, who directs the view of the lens, and who appears in what contexts in the film by pre-existing kinship and ritual relations, particularly those between "owners" and "managers" of country and/or associated ritual. These social relations within the existing community must be taken into account for indigenous film productions dealing with country/ritual to take place. All this was clearly set out and discussed by Eric Michaels a decade ago, but it seems to have escaped Weiner. Instead, he suggests that Ginsburg supports the notion that film is better able to capture experiential and phenomenal wholeness (of what? of culture? of a ritual? better than what else?). Weiner's thinking here is very hard to follow. Why invoke Collier's statement about "the realism of time and motion"? Does Ginsburg support Collier's view? There is no evidence to suggest so. On the contrary, anyone who works in the film/media area is fully aware of the constructed nature of all films and videos and of the problems of "realism." Where does Ginsburg claim some special virtue for film in conveying "the real"? Or is it something to do with conveying "the essence of culture"? It would have sharpened the debate considerably if we had been told exactly what "the essence of culture" is or how it could be grasped, understood, conveyed, and translated in any medium.

There may be a further point here. Is Weiner suggesting that only the deeply embedded ethnographic practice of "traditional" anthropology can discover or reveal "authentic social relations"? Or does his response arise from some misapprehension that Ginsburg is endorsing indigenous film-making as "better than" the anthropologist's account? It is true that many voices have been raised in recent years in protest of Westerners' representing indigenous cultures in film, particularly ethnographic film. Perhaps the majority of such complaints have arisen from a certain theoretical position, one commonly encountered in cultural studies. This is not to dismiss the issue; it is a fundamentally important one for anthropology. But Ginsburg's writings are not directed towards this complaint. Nowhere does she claim that indigenous film/video-makers are rightly supplanting the textual interpretations of anthropology. On the contrary, she is occupied with the way in which new media forms allow a different kind of relation between representation and an *indigenous* audience. Of course the products of such an encounter are not going to be in harmony with the aims of traditional anthropological ethnography, but neither do they discount or discard them.

A further analytical point: Weiner seems not to grasp that different "visual media" have different forms of construction, different effects on viewers, and different entailments in terms of representation. He speaks of "television," "videos," "films," and "photographs" as if all these, by virtue of being aspects of Western technologies, could somehow be equated. For example, he suggests that Ginsburg has failed to understand that the Western home-video-maker is not creating images of his/her cultural and social life and that she "dismisses" such efforts. He supports this with a long quote from

Bourdieu concerning the Western bourgeoisie's use of photography. But the contexts in which photography is embedded are a far cry from the production of videos by Inuit or others. And the "ease" of the Westerner in front of the video, in his example the surveillance camera at the bank or shopping mall, is hardly comparable with the situation of indigenous people brought into relation with an indigenous video-maker talking about kinship inside their igloo.

Weiner raises an important question when he asks who indigenous film-makers represent and who authorises them. This question must be answered empirically, in relation to the actual context in which each and every such record is made. Certainly there is the possibility that certain kinds of "indigenous people" are more likely to be engaged in such representation than others and that these individuals, perhaps educated, urbanised people with a strong and sophisticated political commitment, are not "identical" with those they represent. But this hardly suggests "dilettantism" or that such people are posing as "ritual experts."

Perhaps the fundament of Weiner's complaint can be discerned when he locates evidence of "the postmodern status of Ginsburg's project." This is contrasted with anthropology's modernist goals. But anthropological modernism is described in a throwaway remark as that of seeing "within art an alienating doubling of the world." Which modernist anthropology focuses on this issue? On the contrary, modernist anthropology as I understand it is dedicated to the principle that "the real" can be represented in anthropologists' texts. The "depth of understanding" which Weiner claims is sacrificed by attending to indigenous media must therefore be the depth of understanding which the anthropologist, and only the anthropologist, is able to bring forth.

Weiner is also substantially concerned with the question of aesthetics. He sees a small collection of video clips (shown, for example, during Ginsburg's presentation in Sydney) as evidence of "overwhelming ineffectiveness." For whom? Mainly, it seems, for a Western viewer with certain stylistic expectations of film and video. But behind this is an even more heinous crime: presenting the possibility of erasing "the precinematic relation to the visual of indigenous and non-Western people." "Self-expression" seems to be the demon here. Weiner locates it in the past tense: was self-expression "a component of the relational strategies of such people"? Probably not, although there could be arguments about what "self-expression" might mean. But this, too, is not the real problem. The real problem is that of "cultural difference." The complaint now seems to be that anthropology must bring forward the register of cultural difference that is its sole *raison d'être*. But who decided this? Certainly this is one view, but it is hardly one universally held. In any case, the "differences" which may occupy our attention can no longer be those between some imaginary construct of "ourselves"—i.e., Westerners—and "others," that is, natives, or people occupying the planet in some imagined pristine state of pretechnological expressivity, but rather all the "others"

who may be found in our own streets or even in our own hearts.

Anthropology's modernist foundations are certainly shaky. It is hard to know how long anthropologists can go on clinging to the space of "the other," a strange, uncanny, and inexplicable space where only the Western observer can enter and mediate. Difference is possible in all kinds of registers. How can video/film-making by indigenous people be imperialistic, when the cultural imperialism of the global system has already encroached on and subsumed the former spaces of intersubjectivity? This *post-histoire* world may transform the registers of "difference," but does this necessarily imply "postculture"? Is this not a concealed evolutionism, when all is said and done?

If the illusion of absolute difference, a radical alterity, is challenged, so is the illusion of times and spaces separated by the world of Western technology. It may be sad, particularly for Westerners, that this has happened, but to believe this necessarily obliterates the task of anthropology is to take an alarmingly essentialist and pessimistic stance towards the emergence of the post-everything world which now confronts us. Anthropology has never, in its praxis or writings, been capable of representing "the total situation": it is the modernist delusion of grandeur to suppose that it could be so. Nevertheless the anthropologist, by training, practice, and intellectual/philosophical intuition, is always the "outsider" to whatever situation is being analysed. That is the source of anthropology's power and enduring value, as against the simplicitous gestures of an ideologically constructed "cultural studies."

Weiner's conclusion is particularly opaque, like the aviator glasses of the Inuit director. Who is it who decides what "virtue" should be? Who says that indigenous media producers are simply providing a "contrived effect within the confines of the screen"? Is the anthropologist to be the principal arbiter of what is "good" for native peoples or of what is valuable in their representations? Modernist anthropology clings to its paradigms by its fieldnotes. The contemporary reality of global cultural circulation embraces "indigenous" people, and they in turn make interventions within it to the extent that they are able to do so within the national imaginaries of the states within which their existences are modernistically (and thus anachronistically) circumscribed. It is this relation which Ginsburg is articulating, and the regrets of anthropologists in the last excolonial backwaters are understandable but not supportable.

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Weiner's provocative paper deals with issues at the very centre of anthropology by questioning the appropriateness of transposing Western formulations of representation and subjectivity onto non-Western cultures. He ar-

gues that assumed concerns with both representation and subjectivity lie at the core of recent affirmations of indigenous filmic productions as "grounds" of identity formation and reproduction by recent anthropologists. If, as Faye Ginsburg claims, the use of media technology offers a "new opportunity for influence and self-expression" (Ginsburg 1991:97) for indigenous peoples, then, as Weiner counters, we are justified in questioning whether "*self-expression* was a component of the relational strategies of such people" in the first place. Weiner thus usefully problematises the continued uncritical anthropological approach to film as a transparent technology and claims that such an approach constitutes a final totalising anthropological project.

Alongside Weiner's core thesis that we must not shy away from critically theorising the very material process of film making are several important themes. For one, the privileging of film over other artistic endeavours as authentically representing culture is untenable in that film, like painting, writing, or opera, is a situated cultural product which, like any cultural product, arises out of sets of varying social relations. Weiner forcefully presents the theoretical argument that we must situate any critique of indigenous ethnographic film alongside critiques of other indigenous cultural productions. We also need to consider the inherent racism of overvaluing any indigenous film as saying something critical (for us as Western academics) about indigenous social relations and then address the question of how we are to differentiate and evaluate the cultural productions of varying groups, both Western and indigenous.

First, however, I am interested in working through Weiner's argument that indigenous anthropological film is primarily a new form of indigenous cultural production. He successfully problematises the idea held by some that film is a phenomenal form of social relations—that films "embody in their own internal structure and meaning the forms and values of the social relations they mediate." Certainly Spivak argued that the formulation of the representable is "always a production rather than [a] ground" (1987:212). Are there not numerous, often conflicting, social relations at play in both the production and the repeated consumption of such films? Films may be open commentaries on social relations, but they do not "embody," for this would suggest that such relations are seamless totalities in the Heideggerian sense of modernity's project of the total picture. Instead, Weiner argues that we must distinguish between "the *representation of relations* and a *relation to representative praxis.*" If we consider the Western filmic tradition, it should be clear that film can arise only as an outcome of social relations. By adopting the signifying practices of the West, indigenous anthropological film makers are transforming their own relations to representation and subjectivity as well as the relations of the peoples they represent. As Weiner argues, because film is a cultural product it has particular foundations in Western visualism, and this suggests that film has the potential to subvert non-Western means of "knowing."

Weiner's argument is further supported by the fact that the film maker, as social being, makes particular choices and frames certain elements (both textually and visually) and not others. Therefore, we must consider the theory embedded in textual narrative and the "metaphysic" re-posited in our image-producing technology. In other words, the very means by which we commit image to frame necessitates that we live our world contingent on the reality of the frame. That desire to represent brings with it a whole set of cultural assumptions which have nothing to do with a transparent transfer of culture to celluloid. Of course, this should not come as a surprise to anthropologists; it has been a long time, indeed, since anyone believed that "the camera never lies." Weiner reminds us, however, that what is in question is not the difference between the constructed and the real in cultural terms, because any cultural production is always a dialectical relation between the two—that the very presence of the camera constructs our view of the proceedings in such a way that any concept of "our" view is impossible without the camera.

We must, therefore, acknowledge cultural differences in signifying practices where signifying practices are at all relevant. Weiner argues that as Westerners we do not understand the complex relationships between visible and invisible because for those of us who already live in the mass visualised world all is spectacle. I would add that the reproduction of images in Western society is also something that needs to be considered (Benjamin 1992 [1936]). This is a crucial aspect of the theoretical argument which Weiner does not address, although I realise that his concern is to problematise the issue of subjectivity and representation in the first place. The very possibility of representing the self in multiplicity is another aspect of the impact of Western film technology on indigenous social relations. The desire to transform the world around them into a dizzying infinity of fun-house mirrors certainly suggests that the way in which film makers see themselves and the world they live in is dramatically different from that of those who do not seek to represent. Furthermore, the reproduction of images is contingent on the emergence, the *growth,* in fact, of mechanised, economised society. How do reproduced images make sense in societies that do not define themselves in terms of growth and mass production? A correlate of this might be, How does mass production make sense in largely non-visualised societies? Although an aside, I feel this could have interesting implications when we examine globalised economies and the use of the southern hemisphere as a production line for the north.

In response to Weiner's questioning of the uncritical assumption that representation and subjectivity are global concerns, I would like to problematise also the very idea of "Western subjectivity." Are all Western visualist societies visual in the same way? Is this stress on Western visualism itself not a further example of monolithic cultural classification? In arguing against Ginsburg's equation of indigenous myth and ritual with

film and video production, Weiner points out that myth and ritual are "social *strategies of elicitation*" rather than signs as communication (which is how he defines film and video). Certainly equating film and video with myth and ritual subsumes specific social relations within Western modes of seeing and being seen, thus working to erase cultural difference. However, I feel that perhaps this argument overgeneralises Western productions. Is not our ability to differentiate between ritual as a unified moment of cultural production and consumption from Western cultural products which are meant to be consumed at a later date the symptom of a more general divorce between the means of production and consumption characteristic of capitalism and, particularly, the late capitalism of which Jameson (1984) writes? Certainly Western society *appears* to be concerned in the main with communication, but I would think that this very fetishisation of communicative signs is similar to the masking of social relations that Weiner describes among the indigenous peoples of Papua New Guinea and Australia. Perhaps in our transforming everything to spectacle we are engaging in far more complex masking strategies, constructing more echoing "social silences," than is generally thought.

Moreover, here in the U.K. certain stereotypes have been circulated over the past two centuries regarding the visual aesthetic (or lack of it) in Wales, a "truth" repeated by the well-known architect of Portmeirion, Clough Williams-Ellis, but problematised in the past 10–15 years by such writers as Peter Lord and Pyrs Gruffudd (Lord 1990, Gruffudd 1995).[1] What is now argued, of course, is that Wales's visual culture cannot be defined in terms of England's, thus highlighting the impossibility of generalising the Western visual experience. Previously, it was assumed by (largely Anglo) academics that representation was of given importance to all people in the same way and that the Welsh were simply bad at it. This bears a striking similarity to the discomfort Weiner feels when watching the superficial irony of some of the indigenous films screened by Ginsburg. It would seem that rather than being inferior cultural products, both current indigenous films and the past artistic productions of Wales do not arise out of universal concerns with representation and subjectivity and thus reflect a certain awkwardness characteristic of cultural productions generated in foreign media. And, as Weiner also points out, today in the U.K. film and video are seen as important "grounds" of identity formation, particularly for the outlying Celtic nations of Cornwall, Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (see esp. Drummond, Paterson, and Willis 1993). It is interesting, then, that although these cultures are

not what we would normally categorise as "indigenous" (although many modern Celts would argue against this [see Piccini 1996 with accompanying commentary by Davies and Shanks]), the issues of film as "ground" rather than "product" and differences in signifying practices are relevant *within* Western society too.

The one group that does seem to share a seemingly all-encompassing concern with visualism and representation is that made up of broadly Western tourists. I find this strand of Weiner's paper extremely interesting. My present work involves exploring how people consume heritage representations in Wales (Piccini 1997). Go to any heritage site or "living history" museum, such as the Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagans outside Cardiff, Castell Henllys Iron Age Hillfort in north Pembrokeshire, or Celtica in Machynlleth (Montgomeryshire), and you will find people filming. What they are filming is all about who they are in relation to their ideas about the past and who they may once have been. For Welsh visitors such sites have to do with a certain affirmation of being Welsh, and even for those who do not claim Welsh identity the interest in coming to sites such as these has to do with trying to understand how we as humans once lived and ordered our lives.[2] Their video productions, then, are about placing themselves in some relation to the past which bears on general notions of their own identities. Indeed, Weiner argues quite successfully that tourist videos are often more technologically literate explorations of Western identities than the video productions of indigenous peoples in that as Westerners we are constantly filming and being filmed and therefore much of what constitutes our understanding of ourselves has to do with such representative practices. But as he points out, if this is the case, then surely we must treat all filmic texts equally in that they would all seem to have equal status as texts of identity formation. And if this is so, "if cultural difference can now only take place within the arena of electronically generated visual and audio images, how much scope is there for the uncovering or revelation of such difference?"

Returning to indigenous film, Weiner also critiques appeals to filmic realism by the many anthropologists who continue to argue that any obvious filmic technique is somehow disingenuous and overtly Western. He points out that this stress on realism "presupposes the role and function of the picture as self-representa-

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1. This sort of statement is, however, still repeated even now. During interviews about their perceptions of Welsh heritage several people have explained a continued Welsh emphasis on family life, *gwerin* (the folk), rugby, religion, and the industrial past by saying that "of course the Welsh are not a visual people, they prefer memory" (information gathered in the course of two years' fieldwork for the Social Construction of Heritage and its Meanings in Modern Wales Project).

2. In our Board of Celtic Studies project The Social Construction of Heritage and its Meanings in Modern Wales, David Herbert, Pyrs Gruffudd, and I have been observing and interviewing producers and consumers of Welsh heritage to explore the changing meanings of heritage in contemporary Welsh life. The results of large-scale quantitative survey, in-depth interviewing, and non-invasive observation all show that people (whether museum visitors or not) value a certain knowledge of the past and argue that they cannot know who they are without knowing who they have been. Even those heritage-centre and museum visitors who explain their visits in terms of "leisure pursuits" bring up in conversation the importance of "knowing" about the past in their contemporary identities (Gruffudd, Herbert, and Piccini n.d.).

tion and as a document of subjectivity, and it is this relational *eidos* of Western visualist culture which itself . . . *impelled* as well as was enabled by the development of visual image technology'' and asks whether it would not be better to foreground film as cultural production by using overtly artificial film techniques such as montage. Weiner appears to be in problematic territory here in that his calls for filmic complexity would seem, much like Ginsburg et al.'s calls for realism, again to hold up Western film making as the measure for indigenous cultural production. His calls for the use of montage bear a striking resemblance to Clifford's celebration of the ethnographic surreal, usefully critiqued by Roberts (1996), in which easily markable "weird" cultural juxtapositions are held up as saying something critical about indigenous relations to the Western world. This elevation of the cleverly and often superficially postmodern is contingent upon a certain undermining of the distinction between the Western self and others which an uncritical celebration of the "surreal" with its dependence on the "exotic" entails. Weiner quite rightly critiques, however, the rather facile cleverness of some indigenous film, pointing to Western films such as Robert Altman's *The Player* and the Australian documentary *Sylvanian Waters* as possible ways forward, but I would argue that more appropriate cues come, perhaps, from recent Latin American and Asian cinema. Although film, through its technological limitations, determines to a great extent exactly what can be done with it, I feel that it would perhaps be more interesting to encourage even greater experimentation with the medium. It is likely that, as has been happening within indigenous literatures, for example, new twists on originally Western genres will be produced.

How are we to evaluate these indigenous cultural productions? And if we must first of all critically examine the adoption of Western representative practices, then by what criteria can we judge Western art forms produced by non-Western peoples? And will cultural difference be ironed out into sameness simply through the adoption of specifically Western artistic traditions, as Weiner seems to be arguing? This appears to be the ultimate reasoning behind his call for a close look at theories of representation so that we can begin to determine "whether modes of cinematic creation are serving to *erase* the pre-cinematic relation to the visual of indigenous and non-Western people." A central task for anthropologists now should be to compare the use of the camera in Western and non-Western societies. It would be very interesting to compare filmic productions to explore exactly who includes what and how—to explore issues of silences and gaps, the unspoken that constitutes every society. Also crucial is the issue of consumption. Weiner mentions that he wants to know more about whether the films he saw worked for others, the seemingly intended indigenous audiences, or whether they fell short of the mark. We need, then, to explore the ways in which these films are watched and understood not only by Western academic audiences but by the societies the films purport to represent.

Ultimately, what Weiner's paper suggests to me (and it is something he himself begins to address) is that the separate category of ethnographic film is no longer viable—that documentary is as much a cultural product as *Independence Day.* The most important aspect of his argument, then, is that to laud indigenous ethnographic film simply because it is indigenous is theoretically unsound and that, in fact, the continued attribution to ethnographic film of a certain "truth value" over other genres of cultural expression suggests the sort of totalising project anthropologists have been seeking to deconstruct for some time now. Perhaps what now needs to happen is for indigenous film makers to begin to use film techniques to say something specific about their own relation to Western subjectivity, to engage with the medium and their relation to the medium rather than attempt to represent social relations as a whole. By resorting to clever-clever plays on Western ways of knowing, indigenous peoples seem almost to be representing themselves as we, as Westerners, would wish them to be. This seems to be the most significant implication of Weiner's argument—an argument that was long overdue.

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Weiner's collection of thoughts is stimulating and exasperating by turns. Weiner, a theorist and ethnographer of immense skill, is right to draw attention to the resistance of some cultural forms to visualism and public representation. I applaud his insistence that it is anthropology's job to remind us that many traditions consider identity immanent in the world rather than a matter for human action and intention. As with claims for local agency which resurrect bourgeois notions of utility (Chakrabarty 1989), the current eagerness to bestow representational autonomy can cloak an insidious ethnocentrism. In an age when broadcasters and cultural commentators seem to be convinced that all Indian peasants have satellite dishes to receive MTV, anthropologists need to reiterate the strength of local disdain and indifference. In this respect, Weiner's comments on the aporias among "dialectical" societies are of value.

However, his attack on Ginsburg is almost wholly misplaced. To conflate the position of Ginsburg and MacDougall with the naive realism of Collier, as Weiner does, is absurd. Some "visual anthropologists" do deserve to have a large bucket of Heidegger poured over them, but Ginsburg is not one of them. On the contrary, for manoeuvering visual anthropology out of what she describes as its "atavistic and myopic" backyard (1994*a*:6) Ginsburg deserves all our thanks. But perhaps Ginsburg's real sin in Weiner's eyes is that she lays the groundwork for a rethinking of the constraints

of the anthropology of art, a subdiscipline that is bereft of any theoretical coherence. Ginsburg's initial audience was those who study and make "ethnographic film," and her lecture/article is part of an attempt to re-engineer Sol Worth's prescient call for a shift towards an anthropology of visual communication. But this transformation has implications for the anthropology of art, a subdiscipline hazily concerned with a disparate collection of objects and practices that sundry anthropologists consider to be "art." As Alfred Gell has recently observed, anthropological "art" is frequently "those types of artefacts one might find on display as 'art' only in a very sleepy provincial town" (1996:35), this reflecting anthropology's reliance on Western aesthetic theory. For Gell, Weiner is a potential saviour, but the Adornoesque high-modernist vision of art as negative dialectic that Weiner offers here is as problematic as any view descended from Winckelmann. It is equally ethnocentric and has the added disadvantage of bearing almost no relation whatsoever to any practice ever recorded by an anthropologist, art historian, critic, or any other interested party.

In short, Weiner elides Adorno's programmatic statement of what art should be like ("the . . . valid intuition that art *opposes* conventional sociality and culture") with what art as social practice actually is. He invokes Adorno's claim that "art is the social antithesis of society," but this is mere wishful thinking that should be rendered as a desire that it *should be* the social antithesis of society. Are there any examples of this outside Western avantgardism? To say that these views are ethnocentric deals with only part of the problem, for even Adorno was at pains to point out that this was true only for a particular (fleeting) moment in the history of European art production. We might also phrase the proposition thus: "good" art is the antithesis of society, and good art is good if it does what Adorno and Weiner think it ought to do.

Adorno's view on negative aesthetics was indissolubly linked to a theory of mass culture, and, depressingly, Weiner appears to reproduce this linkage in his critique of the lack of "complexity" in the videos (*Sun, Moon, and Feather, Petit à Petit,* and *Qaggiq*) that Ginsburg showed. Weiner describes the videos as, variously, "banal," "a giggle," and "all-too-predictable," recalling Huyssen's (1986:25) comment on the "lack of breadth and generosity" in Adorno's canon.

The second major problem with Weiner's critique is its invocation of an essentialism and a nostalgia for pre-mediated societies. If Weiner seems to have some of the failings of Adorno, he seems to have many of Heidegger as well. Indeed, he seems to exemplify those anthropologists who view mass media as "disruptive if not corrupting of the integrity of small-scale non-western societies" (Ginsburg 1994a:9). Now, Weiner's objections might have substance if applied to (say) an American documentary about the Foi or the Avatip that sought to represent those societies primarily through the visual image, although there is no reason a successful film could not be made that took as its chief concern the concealment and non-visualisation of knowledge. Indeed, what more Adornoesque project could there be than such a filmic equivalent of atonality? However, the object of Weiner's critique is not an insensitive frenzy of Cartesian perspectivalism aimed at a peak-time Western audience but films made by local film-makers who are under no compulsion to conform to any inspectional regime. That such films are being made and have, certainly in the case of the Kayapo and many native Australian groups, become deeply integrated into social practice confirms what most already know: cultural practices are situated in mediascapes, exist in various states of flux, and are remade every day in slightly different ways. But for Weiner the films are alien agents, potentially distorting an underlying essence. Although throughout the article Weiner attributes to Ginsburg the assumption that the indigenous media that interest her are merely a "reflection" of the societies that produce them, Ginsburg herself continually stresses "the impact of such visual media on the production of culture" (1994a:8) and how local use of new media "might transform our objects of analysis" (p. 6). The "representational" trope that so alarms Weiner (unless it is the "self-mockery" of *Sylvanian Waters* or *The Player*) presumes a stasis, but paradoxically it is Weiner rather than Ginsburg who appears to have more invested in a static and essentialized model of culture. His argument puts me in mind of Dumont's assertion on the first page of *Homo Hierarchicus* that the reader seeking information on modern India in it will be disappointed. It is perhaps no coincidence that Dumont has never considered the role of Indian cinema (the largest cinema industry in the world, producing feature films since 1913) in the constitution of Indian society. The ongoing preoccupation with romantic love and the nature of individual action and social destiny in Hindi film is irreconcilable with a Dumontian perspective. Dumont of course is concerned with a "model" of Indian social organisation, but it is a phantasm, a model which (quite deliberately) has almost no relation to India's modernity.

Weiner lauds Robert Altman's *The Player* for its "mordant commentar[y] on Southern Californian social relations" and *Sylvanian Waters's* parody of Australian home videos but asks whether, in the case of the Zacharias Kunuk's *Qaggiq,* the camera is "passively recording . . . relationships, or more actively creating them through its particular mediatory capacities." The implication here seems to be that films about film cultures are fine: should we on the same principle give credence only to ethnographies about literate societies? Similarly, does this mean that ironic films about Bollywood (Bombay) are OK? If so, would films by villagers who like watching Hindi movies be OK? What about films by people in the next village who see the cinema as a vector of moral degeneracy but want to make a film about their concerns?

Mokuka, I am sure, is right, rather than Weiner. Along with Ginsburg I read him as declaring that film

technology does not have an essentialised cultural identity. This is not to say that film will not have a dramatic impact on a society, but it is to claim that those effects will not be predictable and will not reflect any inherently "Western" practice. I recall a conversation with an Indian peasant about the history of bicycle manufacture: I eventually agreed with him that cycles had originated in a nearby town; it seemed utterly pointless to argue otherwise. Cubitt's technological determinism is wholly erroneous and misleading: just watch a Hindi film.

Film's xeno-staus is also underwritten, for Weiner, by its readily identifiable *auteurs*. Contra Ginsburg, he seeks to distance such individualistic artefacts from the anonymous and organic realm of myth and ritual: "while we must always be aware of who authors a film or video, we cannot ask who authors a myth or ritual." Instead of authorship, however, we should enquire into enunciative modality and dwell not on *auteurs* but on film as social performance: how and when films are shown and mediated in a given cultural situation. These are exactly the questions that Malinowski suggested we should ask about myth. Anthropological questions about film, myth, and ritual are parallel: why and by whom they are made operational in the present.

At two points Weiner touches on the relationship of media to cultural difference. He asks how American and Soviet film might be seen to reflect differences between those two societies and writes of "an ersatz difference . . . in video clips." There is a crucial methodological issue to be teased out here: the problem of what Carlo Ginzburg, following Gombrich, terms "physiognomic reading." In a critique of Fritz Saxl's attempt to relate Durer's changing style to his religious crises, Ginzburg (1989:5) noted that

> the historian reads into [images] *what he has already learned* by other means, or what he believes he knows and wants to "demonstrate." . . . The more or less conscious basis of this approach, naturally, is the conviction that works of art, in a broad sense, furnish a mine of firsthand information that can explicate, *without intermediaries,* the mentality and emotive life of a distant age.

Weiner's implied question of what film *in itself* can tell us about social relations is, without doubt, enormously important.

Weiner concludes his article with comments on *Qaggiq* which are reminiscent of Swinton's (1978) nostalgia for "traditional" non-perspectival Inuit art. Film-engendered idioms—"acting, overacting, projecting, and overprojecting"—are conjured and opposed to worlds which prize silence and the absence of subjective expression. *Qaggiq* captures this tension and is for Weiner a trace of an incommensurability, but might this not also be seen as culture in the making? Poised at a moment of change, the expressionless, sunglass-wearing Inuit director extolling the expressive potential of film thus becomes a revealing trope. It is clearly a revelation for Weiner, but a revelation of the sort forecast by Ginsburg.

Finally, "complexity" is in the eye of the beholder. I thought *The Player* was lousy.

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One of Weiner's several pertinent insights is of more than particular interest: that the reflexive effects of analytical engagement are only made tangible (visible) by focussing attention elsewhere. The engagement between himself and Ginsburg replays, it seems to me, two positions which anthropologists have long occupied. I want to make this evident by focussing "elsewhere."

First, however, it is Weiner who has called for the engagement. We might say that he is acting out his quite significant characterisation of anthropology as the promise of a description of total system (Weiner) against the perspectivism of its members (Ginsburg)—not that he pretends to a totalising view, but the theoretical positions he summons necessarily have that aim. At the same time Ginsburg, in acting along with the subjectivity of the film-makers she describes, is immersed in a social encounter (adopting a perspectivist position among them) which works precisely because it does not require the externality of theorising. This throws light, I think, on one of naive disappointments of academic anthropology, that its practical extension—into development projects among others—does not often result in returns that can be re-co-opted as new theoretical insights. Hence the intellectually untenable debate between pure and applied anthropology (to put it at its crudest) continues to be socially active in colleagues' relations with one another. This hardly means that "grand theory" is irrelevant to anthropology: on the contrary, Weiner is able to use theoretical resources—reflection on the status of the categories we use—to raise some extremely important issues about concealment and display. He also gives us a language, as I have been trying to show, in which to reflect on the nature of the engagement with Ginsburg. But if Weiner's argument is correct, I imagine Ginsburg's reaction would be that this activity (reflection as theory) is irrelevant to the world she participates in as an anthropologist among other social actors.

What is confusing perhaps is that such participation, sustained in the anthropologists' relations with those who become the objects of their study, does not necessarily take the form of socal interaction. Ginsburg's stance belongs to the imagined reciprocity often contained in the desire to make one's own analysis (technology) enabling. Don't we all do it? Recall the characteristics of their own modes of presentation that anthropologists have ascribed to the societies they de-

scribe—holism, classification, rationality, not to speak of "system." This becomes a kind of cultural generosity, and serious politics, when anthropologists also give away—or have demanded of them—other constructs dear to their own background. Think of the efforts that have gone into showing that people everywhere have "history" or "law" or "social cohesion" or "tradition" or "culture," for that matter. I don't see that imagining people as having "visual representation," or literalising that into "having a camera," is any different. Some of these items remain within the covers of anthropologists' monographs; others become tools in conflicts of interest or illuminations of identity and self-expression. This seems to me to be a mode of connecting to the people whose works and lives are being studied which constitutes an equally significant characterisation of anthropology.

Such endeavours belong to the world of (political) action, as Ginsburg makes clear: to be made operable concepts have to be, like taking action itself, singular and unified. Theorising requires instead exactly the kind of nuanced situatedness that Weiner provides: one idea carries conviction to the extent that it is set among and illuminates others (a theory speaks to other theories). These are unavoidable realities, and I don't see how one could define an anthropology that did without either.

Ways of seeing 1. Let me focus attention elsewhere. It is a curiosity that visual anthropology is not by and large interested in vision. From one point of view this is a necessary occlusion (the eyes don't see each other, let alone each eye itself). From another, it has some consequences for ethnographic interpretation.

"Ways of seeing" has become a habitual metaphor for shifts of perspective in the description of social life and "perspective" a metaphor for the location of the anthropological observer. I have been impressed in my brief encounters with students in visual anthropology with how readily they adapt the medium to showing diversity in ways of seeing the world. Indeed, putting the camera into the hands of the filmed, so to speak, seems an obvious extension of this viewpoint, another set of perspectives that can be gathered up into the composite eye of the observer. What has equally impressed me is that all these visual metaphors have worked as just that, as metaphors. They are about the gathering of knowledge, not about (so to speak) ways of seeing.

This is a topic that Brennan and Jay (1996) address in the context of psychoanalytic theory, literature, and art criticism. The ocularcentrism of 20th-century Euro-American society rests at once on its apparatus for conveying images, on its assimilation of knowledge to sight, and on the "optical unconscious" appearing as a new continent (I am quoting) ripe for exploration. If there is a chiasmic intertwining of the eye and the gaze, Jay asks, or between viewing texts and reading pictures, can one talk of a "pictorial [a.k.a. linguistic] turn"? What do we mean by "the gaze"? asks Brennan; does it echo the old physiological theory of extramission, the notion that the eye not only receives but gives out rays of light? (Extramission was dissolved, she notes, when an analogy was drawn with the camera obscura.) The book poses the question of what the pictorial turn has to do with sight and vision.

It would seem to be an ancient question for Euro-Americans and their forebears. Since Weiner himself cites the example of the epiphany, it is interesting to note Soskice's (1996) comments on the medieval church. She points to ambivalence towards the "physiological vision" of the eye by contrast with the "intellectual visions" of the soul. This was part of an equivocation about the celebration of the visible body and flesh found in the doctrines of resurrection and incarnation. Aquinas questioned the Anunciation: why should "the angel of the announcement have appeared bodily to the Virgin" when Augustine had taught that "intellectual vision is better than physical vision" (Soskice 1996: 321). The answer: Mary saw the angel precisely because the messenger's announcement was that God was to be made flesh and the flesh made visible. Augustine, Soskice adds, had taken the view that corporeal vision was nothing without the understanding or interpretation, the intellectual vision, of what was seen; one had also to behold spiritually. Insofar as the workings of sight were understood as part of human corporeality, they were to that extent, like all human senses, imperfect.

The inadequacy of sight, the unreliability of the senses for understanding the world, was played out again in a later epoch. Not only was the eye proved to be an imperfect instrument (by the standards of instrumentation), incapable of perfect resolution, but something invisible was (in the form of "ether") the source of universal energy. This imaginary substance was to be transformed into the invisible waves and particles of modern science. Beer's (1996) contribution to the same collection speaks of the 19th-century discoveries of the relationship between vision, sound, and heat when each is imagined as waves and of the natural science that put its subject matter into a dark continent. That is, the subject of science became by and large what could not be seen without instruments, whether large-scale or small-scale. It deployed the same imagery of revelation, we might add, that fuelled social science. Social science would not exist if it were not investigating invisible phenomena—statistical variations, structural principles, patterns of behaviour. Such entities do not appear to the eye. And even if they did appear to the eye, something would be lacking, for (as was reported in 1855 [Beer 1996:90]) the eyes have a perceptible defect of centering, which means that we cannot clearly see horizontal and vertical lines at the same distance simultaneously. But the trick of science—the power people accord it, however qualified or provisional scientific claims themselves are—is to produce a perfect vision of *what has been made visible* through its efforts.

Ways of seeing 2. We are made aware on all sides of the revelatory power of the techniques that 20th-century Euro-Americans use to make things visible to

themselves. They have invented a battery of techniques for ensuring accumulatable, permanent visibility in their libraries, records, films. What makes things invisible can come to appear as no more than a technical barrier to such recording. Indeed, the habit of valorising what *has been made* visible leads to the latter-day assumption that sight just happens to be there, a human capacity like any other which technology can enlarge and enhance.

What has this to do with film-making? There is a small reason one might have imagined that ethnographic film would address the question of (in)visibility and imperfect sight as an interplay between physical and intellectual vision. The reason is that the process of film-making involves a supersensitivity to technology, to the shaping effect of the camera, an elected dependence on the apparatus of seeing. But by and large its experimentation has been with film technique as such, as Weiner notes, not with vision. And perhaps this is because ethnographic film-makers are instead deflected into social realities. So we have other sensitivities. Ethnographic films tend to be about the complexity (to re-use Ginsburg's term) of social perspective, cultural standpoint, personal experience, and above all the actors' view as a coeval subjectivity—in other words, intellectual vision; ways of seeing are all about the knowledge one creates.

I return to the (few) visual anthropology students I mentioned at the beginning. Their adroitness was social, not visual. What I referred to as a curiosity was also a lived impasse. The issue was not really where their interests lay; it was that I failed to interest them in others. I wanted to draw their attention to some of the topics Weiner notes with his Melanesianist hat on, to strategies of concealment and display, to non-perspectival placements of images, to the perceptual tricks that people play on one another in terms of spatial orientation, to the placement of the observer as simultaneously looking at and looking from (e.g., from within a mask)—the list of optical tactics is long. It is not surprising that a Melanesianist would have sensitivities on this score. The ethnographic record is full of the significance people accord sight: from washing the eyeballs of initiates to ceremonial display under a noonday sun and from the encasement of widows in seclusion to the idea that things will only grow and multiply if they are kept hidden or that one can only put the dead to rest by erasing visible traces of them. I was perplexed as to why none of this translated into lessons for camera work.

What seemed to me challenges in the construction of perspective or in the staging of revelation and the importance of keeping back the invisible simply cut no ice. I had to be addressing the wrong audience. I was being too literal about the technology, making a naive connection between visual imagery and the visual performances that were so often its subject matter. ''Visual'' technology has in fact already done its work, as Weiner notes, rendering null differences of vision. For these students the context was the technical production of the film they had to make and all the relationships this entailed. Perhaps the counterpart they found in their subjects, the actors with whom they interacted, lay in what the actors were themselves producing, namely, social life. In any case, they could not make the film without some engagement in that themselves. Making social life had to be as ''real'' as making the film.

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Weiner represents his paper as a commentary on the work of Faye Ginsburg and, to a lesser degree, myself with indigenous video and television and, more broadly, on indigenous peoples' use of video and other new technologies of visual representation. It therefore comes as something of a shock to realize that he has made no effort to view any indigenous videos beyond the few brief cuts used by Ginsburg to illustrate one of her lectures or to read more than a couple of papers by Ginsburg and one by me out of the many we and others have devoted to this subject. Of my papers on the topic (Turner 1990*a, b, c,* 1991, 1992*a, b,* 1995*a*) he cites only one (1992*a*); of Ginsburg's he seems to use only two (1994*a, b*). It moreover appears from his misinterpretations of the passages he does cite from our papers, his attribution to both of us of ideas we do not hold, and his complaints that we do not deal with issues which we actually discuss at length that he has failed to understand even the little he has read.

It appears that Weiner's only real concern with indigenous media and the work of anthropologists like Ginsburg and myself specifically concerned with them is as a pretext for venting his general views on representation. He is clearly unhappy and frustrated with our work, as with the phenomenon on which it reports, because his views require denial on a priori theoretical grounds that any such thing as indigenous media could exist and a fortiori that any of the specific things that Ginsburg and I have said about indigenous media production could be true (or at least theoretically correct). This settled conviction of the nonexistence of the whole subject doubtless accounts for his considering it unnecessary to look at any indigenous videos or to read more than a few token excerpts from what anthropologists have written about them. In this respect, at least, he makes good his claim to be a follower of Marcus and Fischer: his paper, with its imputation to Ginsburg, myself, and indigenous film-makers of views we do not hold, is a full-scale ''crisis of representation'' in microcosm (cf. Marcus and Fischer 1986).

Weiner's text makes sweeping (and erroneous) generalizations about anthropological evidence and whole ethnographic areas on the basis of superficial acquaintance with one or two cases. The most glaring examples of this are his assertions about Amazonian and, even more broadly, Amerindian cultures, which are sup-

ported by citations of only two sources, Stephen Hugh-Jones's and Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff's books on two closely related Tukanoan groups. Weiner cites these two works as the basis for his claim that my detailed account of representational practices in another Amazonian group, the Kayapo, makes them "quite unique among Amazonian societies" because other Amazonian cultures, represented by the two Tukanoan groups to which he refers, lack representation (Turner 1992*a*). Ironically, the covers of both of the works he cites are decorated with reproductions of elaborate indigenous paintings—visual representations—of hallucinogen-inspired shamanic visions. One thus does not even have to read a word of either book to see that Weiner has got it wrong. The Tukanoans, of course, like the Kayapo and all other Amazonian groups, and indeed all cultures in the ethnographic record, possess culturally specific forms of representation, visual, linguistic, and otherwise. Weiner would have done better to have made a genuine attempt to deal with the ethnographically documented case of Amazonian representational practices I presented, despite its inconsistency with his grand-theoretical scheme, than to avoid discussing it on spurious grounds of ethnographic atypicality.

In a similar vein, Weiner makes much of the fact that Ginsburg mentions esthetics in only one of her papers, claiming that this signals a major "critical ellipsis" in her "program." He goes on to claim that this supposed lack holds true of indigenous media work and "ethnographic film realism" in general—this despite the fact that in the article of mine that he cites (1992*a*) I devote a lengthy discussion to Kayapo esthetic values and the ways in which Kayapo videos exemplify them. Weiner in other places treats Ginsburg's and my work with indigenous media as theoretically interchangeable; why not here?

In sum, and speaking only for my own work (Ginsburg will speak for hers), I find that where I have offered ethnographically grounded theoretical arguments that contradict Weiner's general claims, he simply avoids dealing with them, even though he cites the paper in which they appeared. This might be more understandable if he were actually covering a large number of Ginsburg's and my papers; as it is, since his total sample seems to be effectively limited, in my case at least, to one, it is difficult to avoid the impression that he is simply ducking what does not fit his grand theory.

Indigenous media making for indigenous audiences raises issues about the media makers, their products, their audiences, and the effect of video and telemedia on their cultures distinct from the more familiar issues raised by visual representation of non-Western cultures by Western anthropologists, not to mention non-ethnographic Western documentary and Western art film. Weiner recognizes no such distinctions, eliding indigenous video indiscriminately with "all visual anthropology," Western documentary and art film, television, and general Heideggerian reflections on visual representation in Western culture. He raises as serious objections to the few snippets of indigenous video and televi-sion he has seen that they do not provide enough ethnographic contextual information *for him* to understand them (as if they were anthropological films made for his edification rather than for indigenous audiences that would need no special background information) and that they are not esthetically "effective" *for him* (as if they were Western art films). It clearly never occurs to him that the activities, purposes, and products of indigenous video makers as such might be worthy of his attention in their own right. How could they be, after all, when his whole theoretical position defines them out of existence?

The limitations of Weiner's grand-theoretical preconceptions are exemplified by his complex misunderstanding of the Kayapo video maker Mokuka's response to a questioner at a film festival, as quoted by Ginsburg: "Just because I hold a white man's camera, that doesn't mean I am not a Kayapo. . . . If you were to hold one of our head-dresses would that make you an Indian?" Weiner claims that Mokuka here makes a "category mistake," failing to recognize that the point at issue was not cultural identity (Indian or Western) but praxis (whether or not holding the camera makes Mokuka a film maker). Mokuka was attending the festival at which he made the quoted remark as a video maker showing films he had made. If someone had asked him Weiner's question, he would presumably have answered that making videos made him a video maker. The context in which he was asked the question to which he was actually responding (I know, because I was the translator) was one in which precisely the issue that Weiner makes central to his case against indigenous media—whether the video camera does not impose conventions of representation so at variance with indigenous cultures that it transforms anyone who uses it into a Westerner, or at least a *faux indigène*—was uppermost. Weiner goes on to object to the second part of Mokuka's statement on the grounds that if he were to hold (i.e., put on) a Kayapo headdress he would "not use it to constitute my self-identity or to negotiate that identity or construct an image of it for others." Weiner seems unaware that these are precisely the reasons Kayapo wear their headdresses and that this is exactly Mokuka's point: Weiner and other non-Kayapo might hold or put on a Kayapo headdress but would not do so for the same purposes, "to constitute their self-identity" as Kayapo, just as he does not use the camera to constitute his self-identity as Western. Mokuka is saying that it is not the brute material or technical properties of a thing but the way it is used and the purposes of that use that confer the crucial cultural meanings of that use, including the "self-identity" of the user. The "category mistake" is thus Weiner's, not Mokuka's.

Weiner argues that Ginsburg's use of Mokuka's statement shows that she confuses "the representation of relations" with "a relation to representative praxis" (including under the latter term the camera itself), meaning that she does not problematize the way the camera is inserted into the social organization of the indigenous subjects who employ it to represent their so-

cial relations separately from analyzing their representations. It seems to me, however, that Ginsburg spends a lot of time doing precisely this, and I have devoted a whole paper and extensive parts of several others to the process through which the camera is incorporated into and positioned within the social relations of Kayapo communities (Turner 1991; see also 1990*a*, *b*, *c*, and 1992*a*). Ginsburg's citation of Mokuka in this connection is entirely appropriate, for this was Mokuka's whole point: it is the way he uses, positions, and points the camera (and edits the resulting shots), not the camera itself, that creates the Kayapo meanings of his videos and reflects his identity as a Kayapo video maker.

Part of Weiner's problem may simply be that he has obviously never used a camera himself. If he had, he could never have said that "we look through the viewfinder and the implement itself disappears from the frame which it creates." That, however, is not what happens when you try to take a picture! The camera as implement not only "creates" a frame, it *is* the frame, and anyone who has tried to use one knows what a continual and self-conscious struggle is involved in focusing and fitting it around what one wants to appear in the picture—as well as trying to remain aware of what is going on outside the frame that needs to be brought into it. Anybody who uses a camera "without attending to it as such," as Weiner says that "we" (i.e., all "Westerners," with a few favored exceptions like Heidegger and himself) do, is going to produce pictures as silly as Weiner's Heideggerian description of the process of taking them.

Weiner's unfamiliarity with the use of cameras may be related to his overvaluation of the power of the camera as an instrument of cultural indoctrination. He asks rhetorically of the work of indigenous film makers, "What is the use of a new cultural identity, if it does not differ in its *theory, cosmology, and mode of being* from our own?" (I note in passing that Weiner regularly makes his points in the form of such rhetorical questions, thus avoiding the normal concomitants of authorial responsibility for the assertions they contain, such as the provision of apposite evidence and logically compelling arguments). Here he is implicitly asserting that indigenous video makers, whom Ginsburg and I have interpreted to be expressing indigenous cultural identities even as they transform and objectify them in new ways, are merely expressing Western cultural identity (i.e., Western "theory, cosmology, and mode of being") because it is imbued and inculcated willy-nilly by the technical properties of the camera and filmic medium.

Two kinds of reductionism are involved in this claim: a technological reduction of the construction of meaning to the mechanical techniques through which it is effected and an atomistic reduction of the meanings of complex symbolic and representational constructs to their minimal elements. The former is analogous to reducing the meanings communicated in speech to the articulatory mechanisms of vocalization. The latter is equivalent to the claim that the meaning of discourses is given by the sum of the significations of the signs of which they are constituted. The result of these twin reductionisms is to forestall the possibility of understanding representation as a complex process of syntagmatic connection of multiple elements of context, signification, syntagm, and paradigm, which I take to be fundamental not merely to an understanding of the nature of representation as a praxis but also to the differentiation of modes and genres of representation in different cultures, periods, and contexts.

Weiner borrows from Heidegger an abstract, synchronic conception of the nature of representation as a totalizing visual relationship between an alienated (Western) subject and the world. He then commits the fundamental category mistake of taking his philosophical conception of the nature of representation (uniformly applicable in principle to all parts of the representational relationship) as tantamount to an empirical description of representation as praxis—as a diachronic activity of construction. To understand a representation as a construction means to grasp that its meaning is conveyed only through the union of its component features or parts. Such an understanding is the opposite of imputing to every part or component feature full and equal participation in the meaning of the whole. Taking the latter course, Weiner imputes to the most minimal, technical features of the camera and its uses a fully determining effect on the structural, meaningful, epistemological, and ideological properties of the representations it is used to produce. The result is that the camera and the elementary techniques of using it assume for Weiner the character and powers of fetishes, fraught with the whole "cosmology" of Western culture and capable of inculcating it through the condensed relation of representation that they embody and reproduce.

The confusion to which this fetishized way of thinking about filmic representation leads is well exemplified by Weiner's misinterpretation of my account of the training in basic camera and editing techniques which I provided to Kayapo video makers taking part in the Kayapo Video Project. In the passage he cites, I wrote that I "tried to limit editing assistance and advice to elementary technical procedures of insertion and assembly, compatibility of adjacent cuts, use of cutaways and inserts, and avoiding abrupt camera movements and zooms" (1992*a*:7). Weiner says that this is "tantamount to saying something like 'We have taught them English grammar, syntax, and semantics but have made no attempt to teach them iambic pentameter, the sonnet, or the couplet.' " Not so. The correct analogy to the basic techniques of holding and using a camera in my list would rather be to the basic features of language in general, like the distinction of bundles of phonetic features as phonemes, the differentiation between the levels of phonology and morphology, and the generic process of linking the morphological units that carry signification through the forms of combination comprising syntax. This is still a far cry from a specific language like English and farther still from stylistic conventions of English literary genres like those Weiner mentions. His incorrect analogy thus proceeds directly from the

reductionist framing of his approach. The elementary features of language or camera technique do not, in and of themselves, carry full cultural meanings or "cosmologies," whatever might be the value of Whorfian arguments about how such meanings may be encoded in the structures of specific languages or specific visual techniques such as fades, montage, or jump-cutting.

The issue of reductionism is related to another theme of Weiner's attack on Ginsburg's and my work and much of anthropology into the bargain: the relation between dialectical and "expressive" theorizing. Weiner writes, "What differentiates a social-constructionist from a dialectical analysis is precisely the manner in which totality is appealed to." In this context, he appears to claim that Ginsburg, because of her "essentially marxist framework" is therefore *not* a dialectical thinker: "behind the marxist metonymy by which Ginsburg sees the relations of film production standing for the entirety of a social world lies that particular constructionist appeal to totality which is not inscribed in dialectical analysis: the lure of the self-evident wholeness of the experiential and the phenomenal and the superior powers of film to capture this wholeness." Weiner's problem here is not Ginsburg's or mine, but the passage is noteworthy at least for the opposition it appears to set up between Ginsburg *and Marx,* as undialectical "social-constructionists," and Weiner, as a truly dialectical thinker. As the Duke of Wellington once remarked about a similarly outrageous case of confused identities, "If you believe that, you'll believe anything." Continuing in this vein, Weiner returns to the attack on Ginsburg's and my supposed commitment to the undialectical "Boasian, Benedictian, belief that the process of forming a community or a cultural tradition is similar to the production of a work of art. . . . such a belief is inextricably linked to the expressivist and expressionist tendencies in 19th-century social and artistic theory which . . . I maintain are implicit in the approach of Terry Turner, Faye Ginsburg, and all of visual anthropology." This specimen of rhetorical overkill bears no relation to my ideas or, so far as I can tell, to Ginsburg's and is unsupported by any references or passages quoted from our writings. On the contrary, it is Weiner, not I or Ginsburg, who persistently does what he accuses us of, presenting whole "cultural traditions" as *expressive totalities* embodying a single esthetic principle, mode of representation, or form of subjectivity. Thus we have Weiner's postanthropological contrast between the "West," a culture supposedly expressing its "productive" type of selfhood through totalizing visual representation epitomized by Renaissance perspective painting, on the one hand, and contemporary television, on the other, and most if not all "non-Western" societies, for which the self, the body, and reality in general are experienced nonrepresentationally as "unarticulated grounds" of "being" which "unfold," in Heideggerian fashion, through "epiphanies." On the contrary: all societies, including the Papua New Guinean and Amerindian ones to which Weiner refers, have ways of *producing* and articulating the bodies and self-

identities of their members, rather than simply leaving them "unarticulated" as self-unfolding "grounds" or "modes of being" (in this connection I might cite my work on Kayapo production of bodiliness and subjectivity: 1969, 1980, 1995*b*).

Epiphanies are indexes, indexes are signs, and signs are representations, so even the Papua New Guinean societies which are Weiner's preferred examples of supposed non-Western nonrepresentationalism are not so. The ethnographic fact that such societies may believe that features of the landscape are epiphanies of ancestral or supernatural power and remain unaware that they have socially constructed this belief does not entitle one to take their beliefs at face value, as Weiner does, as tokens (representations?) of their essential, nonrepresentationalist cultural reality. Weiner's whole confused argument about Ginsburg's and my "expressivism" exemplifies a pervasive feature of his text, namely, the projection of his own ideas and perspectives onto others, followed by criticism of them in this alienated form while unselfconsciously continuing to use them himself. In the slightly modified words of the epigraph with which Weiner begins his text, in this forgetting of himself, one senses the fury of the one who has to talk himself out of what he believes, before he can talk everyone else out of it.

Reply

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> Rameses means nothing to us . . . *We* know better than to use our science for the *reparation* of the mummy, that is, to restore a *visible* order, whereas embalming was a mythical labor aimed at immortalizing a *hidden* dimension. [Baudrillard 1983:19]

I thank all the participants in this forum for their stimulating responses, and I hope that my reply will give some indication of the extent to which all have contributed to a successful exposition of some important issues in contemporary anthropology.

There was a time in anthropology when, if one were presenting the analysis of a ritual in a seminar, one had to make sure that one provided the audience with all the information about the ritual one needed in order to sustain the analysis. One couldn't count on everyone's being able to travel to Tikopia or Ghana or New Guinea to see the ritual, nor would one have been able to substitute for one's analysis a full-length film version of the ritual. In Ginsburg's somewhat impatient advice that I view more of these films for myself, I hear no response to my plea that she, the anthropologist, provide me with a better analysis of them herself. She continues to speak as if the analysis of the films and their productive matrix were somehow immanent in the very act of

showing them (and, after all, the audience at the Museum of Modern Art thought so, too), and it is her faith in the transparency of what the films do and mean that impelled me to this exercise in the first place.

Returning to the question of ritual, which Ginsburg originally invoked as a model for what she perceived was at work in indigenous film and video production, there are two points I wish to make. First, in considering mythico-ritual performances in Australia and Papua New Guinea, one must recall the sheer scale and size of the performance and its associated objects relative to that of the human community. Throughout Australia, ceremonial grounds had to be large enough to accommodate a number of dancers and viewers, who through the form of their dance inscribed an iconic version of a mytho-geographic track of certain creator beings, a track that was very large (see, for example, Keen 1994: 199). Among the Marind-anim of southern New Guinea, certain artefacts such as the bull-roarer were considered to be the voice and other parts of the giant creator being Sosom. We witness the attempt to fashion some gigantic version of human action and life, wherein the actions of beings had cosmological and geomorphic consequences that were permanent and vast, and thus to precipitate human community and sociality as some smaller version, component, or effect of it. But I will no doubt continue to provoke my interlocutors by saying that in filmic representation only the technological relations of production supporting the global cinematography and video industry are "vast" (though because they are invisible in Ginsburg's accounts they acquire what Gell and Bourdieu would call enchanted qualities), whereas the products are themselves a small effect on a small screen. The effect created, in other words, is that humans and their technology are big and all-powerful in relation to their "ritual" productions, which have become small. When a stroke of a politician's or bureaucrat's pen in Canberra can eliminate the elaborate channels of funding that keep some of the central Australian Aboriginal media projects going, whose power and autonomy are more surely and definitely being made visible? At the same time, there may be some comfort in knowing that a few Aborigines plodding along a ritual dance track, unfilmed and untelevised, may retain their own sense of the gigantic in their lives by escaping the government's and developer's miniaturizing attention—an opinion I think I share with Faris.

The second point about ritual concerns anthropology's conventional approach to it. From Malinowski to Rappaport, anthropologists were convinced that large-scale, important ritual activity had to have effects and consequences beyond the overt performative and symbolic properties of the ritual itself, however central these properties were to our analysis of them. Paradoxically (though only so from today's perspective, it seems), this tacit acceptance of what lay beyond the representational gave our symbolic analysis that much more depth. But if such productions are seen to have symbolic properties as such only when we take too literally what "symbolic" means in Bourdieu's term

"symbolic economy," then our symbolic analysis itself becomes a small thing.[1] There is no reason such ecological, economic, and sociological dimensions must drop out of our anthropological analysis of contemporary "ritual," whatever its form, cinematographic or other, for it is only by anchoring our symbolic analysis in them that such analysis does more than replicate its own terms. And so I fully support Strathern's and Ginsburg's attempts to turn what appears to be a moment of visuality into a dimension of social relationality, as long as we understand that relationality too is always constrained by what lies beyond it.

Hamilton firmly tells us that "the brute fact" (a phrase also invoked by Appadurai [1991] in a similar context) is that our erstwhile radically non-Western interlocutors are "already 'viewers,' with all the disruption to indigenous subjectivity which this implies," though "indigenous subjectivity" was the very thing the existence of which I was trying to render problematic. Behind this rueful acknowledgment of brute fact I suspect lies barely concealed relief that anthropology will now be spared the irksome task of learning difficult languages and the distasteful business of living in boring, out-of-the-way places. But if there are those who really think that anthropology can now safely ignore these so-called ex-colonial backwaters, I invite them to join me on one of my visits to the Foi of Lake Kutubu, Papua New Guinea, to watch the Chevron Oil Company in full operation at one of its most important petroleum reservoirs. And I would be truly discouraged if I had to spell out to my colleagues how and why the work I have done over the past 17 years on Foi language, myth, social structure, geography, ritual, and poetry was necessary for me to arrive at the stage where I could contemplate an anthropologically informed *Foi* account of what they have experienced since the Chevron Oil Company arrived.

If we neglect this task, then we only have one version of representation, one version of subjectivity, one version of power, and that, as Piccini remarks, is our own. This is what I tried to draw attention to, and it is what was demonstrated to terrifying effect by Turner's erasure of the social reality of the non-representational in non-Western societies. For Turner and Ginsburg, "the real is not only what can be reproduced, but *that which is always already reproduced*" (Baudrillard 1983:146), and the evidence for this is that they do not think seriously about why I should see no difference between their position and Collier's.

What Hamilton, Turner, and Ginsburg hope to salvage from this brute fact is the possibility of the reassertion of the autonomy of our interlocutors. We would perhaps see the exchange of their non-Western, amod-

1. As Wagner (1984:144) notes," if the action of the ritual is considered as wholly symbolic in its effect, then it will be of the same 'scale,' or phenomenal order, as its translation. . . . But if the ritual communication is freighted with sociological or ecological implications as well, then as mere translation, however sensitive it may be, it cannot possibly bring across all of its implications and effects."

ern culture for a new autonomy and subjectivity as a fair bargain under today's conditions. But the autonomy and the subjectivity secured are as much an illusion as our own. Allow me, then, to turn on my own virtual projector and present a screening:

In June 1995, the state of South Australia began a formal inquiry into whether certain Aboriginal women of the Ngarrindjeri nation, the traditional residents of the Lower Murray River region of this part of Australia, had recently and deliberately fabricated a claim of secret women's religious knowledge associated with Hindmarsh Island (in the Murray mouth) and its surrounding channels for the purposes of blocking the construction of a proposed bridge that was to link the island with the town of Goolwa on the mainland. The year before, these women had successfully applied under the terms of Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act of 1984 to have this site judged one of particular significance to Ngarrindjeri tradition. The then federal minister for aboriginal affairs responded to the application by imposing a 25-year ban on the construction of the bridge. The royal commission's inquiry was instigated by the South Australian state government shortly after the Adelaide media prominently reported the views of a group of "dissident" (as they came to the called) Ngarrindjeri women who publicly denied that secret women's knowledge was part of their tradition.

In July 1995, in the early days of the inquiry, representatives of the women who had made the original application asked for a private audience with the presiding commissioner, Iris Stevens. Away from the courtroom, full of media reporters, the developers, various anthropologists, historians, and archaeologists, and their legal counsel, the women revealed to the commissioner two secret objects associated with the mythological foundation of the restricted women's knowledge. Like Ginsburg, these women must have had faith in what they surely felt were the immanent meanings visible in the objects themselves, but to their dismay these meanings ultimately failed to be perceived by the commissioner. Shortly after this, through their own counsel (an Anglo-Australian Queen's councillor), the "proponent" Ngarrindjeri women, as they would come to be called, withdrew in protest from what they declared was a racist inquiry into the religious beliefs of Aboriginal people. The royal commission thereafter heard testimony, with one exception, only from Ngarrindjeri women who had publicly disputed the existence of this women's ritual knowledge on Hindmarsh Island.

A key witness for the royal commission was a young cultural geographer from the South Australian Museum, Philip Clarke, who had recently finished his doctoral dissertation at the University of Adelaide on the cultural history of the Lower Murray region and had extensive knowledge of Ngarrindjeri history and culture. Clarke was to spend many hours documenting the lack of evidence for gender-based restrictions on ritual knowledge among the Ngarrindjeri such as were being put forth by the applicant women in what came to be

revealed as a considerable body of literature, ethnographic and quasi-ethnographic.

His testimony at one point was illustrated by reference to a central Ngarrindjeri creation myth, the story of the male ancestral creator Ngurunduri, who travelled the length of the Murray estuary and the South Australian coastline creating various features of the landscape as he journeyed. Ngurunduri, so the myth goes, was chasing after his two wives, who had run away from him. In the course of various adventures during which he creates all the fresh- and salt-water fish of the Murray estuary and various features of the landscape and the heavens, he catches up with his wives and kills them out of vengeance. This myth was accorded centrality in a compendious summary of precontact Ngarrindjeri culture recorded during the 1940s by Ronald and Catherine Berndt (1993), two young anthropologists working with three aged Ngarrindjeri informants (two men and one woman) who gave accounts of these practices and stories which at that point had been all but obliterated from Ngarrindjeri communal consciousness.

A dramatization of this myth, featuring people who were members of a prominent Ngarrindjeri family as the actors, had been produced in 1987 as a highly successful and effective video, made with the help of the South Australian Film Corporation and another young South Australian Museum scholar, Steven Hemming, a historian who was to appear before the royal commission in support of the claim of the proponent women. In fact, the man who played Ngurunduri in the video, Henry Rankine, was one of the most important supporters of the proponent women and a former member of the Lower Murray Heritage Committee—a Ngarrindjeri committee which negotiated local cultural heritage issues with various government and business development interests. At one point when his testimony was being led by the counsel assisting the commissioner, Clarke screened the video (entitled *Ngurunduri: A Ngarrindjeri Dreaming*). The courtroom was not cleared for this screening. Indeed, the video is a most public artefact in Adelaide. It is screened continuously without stop at the South Australian Museum during its public opening hours as part of its permanent display of Ngarrindjeri material culture and photographs.

In this short response I wish to say only a few things about this incredible appropriation, presentation, representation, and interpretation of images surrounding the very public issue of cultural difference in Australia (see Weiner 1995b, 1997; also 1995c). I could say that at no point did any of the participants in this inquiry show any interest in the *myth of Ngurunduri* and the implied obliteration of women's lives and activity within the context of inscriptive activity along the Murray estuarine coast, nor was it conceded that the myth was now being used by Euro-Australian "social scientists" (I am glad to say that none of those deferring to it in this way were anthropologists) to undermine a political claim that the Aboriginal actors in the film were themselves

supporting. I could say that what was at stake was two versions of the gigantic, the personalized version of Ngurunduri the Creator and the Anglo-Australian version of a man-made nature, wherein, under the accords made by the Australian states of Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales earlier this century, the large-scale use of the Murray-Darling River system for agricultural irrigation permanently altered the estuarine geography of the South Australian coast and gave to the farmers' water pipes the same place-making power that Ngurunduri's club, canoe, and spear once had (this evidence, recounted by an official of the South Australian Water Commission, of the recent, "anthropogenic" alteration of the coastline was adduced by the royal commission as a counterweight to the "mythic" rationale for its contours and its sacredness given by the Ngarrindjeri proponents). How are we to juxtapose these accounts except as explanatory, theoretical totalities (a point for which I thank Faris)? We can reverse Lévi-Strauss's famous description of mythopoeia: it is the mythographic that is determined in our theories of knowledge as much as the other way around, and this includes visual interpretation as well as all of the "hydraulic" theories appealed to, Aboriginal and Western, in the course of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Royal Commission.

The local and national media, particularly television, played a prominent role throughout this affair, first in bringing to public attention the "dissenting" opinion of the 13 women who disputed the claim of the proponent or applicant women and subsequently in covering the inquiry itself. They converted the courtroom proceedings into local melodrama, turning the restricted nature of the Ngarrindjeri's mode of knowledge revelation into another item of evidence adduced towards the inauthenticity of Ngarrindjeri culture, fostering the view that dispute can only indicate a deficient knowledge rather than a relationally constituted one and that mythic knowledge must be revealed as defective in relation to its scientific counterpart. Having originated within the vast, productive nexus of Western images, which we all concede has its own mythic dimensions, the myth of Ngurunduri in its filmed form and the Ngarrindjeri people who appeared in it returned themselves and their life to the symbolic economy of image production which reproduced them as a Western form of seeing. Pinney is therefore correct: the effects of film will not be predictable, especially when filmic relations of production are themselves embedded in a matrix of global economic formations far removed from the intentions and concerns of film-makers.

Ngurunduri means *nothing* to us, any more than the tri-state Murray-Darling Authority means anything to Ngurunduri. They can only come to reflect each other in the anthropologist's account of a contemporary South Australian society in which they find themselves staring at each other as if astounded at the turn of events that should bring them face to face in such a manner. Neither for the Ngarrindjeri nor for Euro-Australians can Ngurunduri's creation any longer assume the gigantic scale it once literally did. Henry Rankine, whether as Ngurunduri the film character or as a member of various Ngarrindjeri committees who must travel back and forth between Ngarrindjeri communities and the board rooms and council chambers of different governmental and business organizations in South Australia, traces the path along which will sprout new marinas, highways, and ecological caravan parks and convention centers, as well as Aboriginal "culture centers," and the sites of productivity in this contemporary Ngarrindjeri mythographic inscription will be created as a result of conflicts over land and power between the Ngarrindjeri and the non-Aboriginal people and government of South Australia. It is left to the anthropologist to continue as he or she has always done—to return the sense of the gigantic, that is, the global, to myth, both Western and non-Western, in cases like this and to reinsert these images into an ethnographic analysis out of which the creative incommensurability of cultural difference can once more emerge as our irreducible subject matter and ultimate goal.

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