# ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE MEANTIME

## EXPERIMENTAL ETHNOGRAPHY, THEORY, AND METHOD FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

### MICHAEL M. J. FISCHER

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COVER ART: General Akashi Gidayu writes his *jisei* or death poem (seen in the upper right) as he prepares to commit *seppuku*. *Akashi Gidayu,* in the series *One Hundred Aspects of the Moon*, Tuskioka Yoshitoshi (aka Taiso Yoshitoshi), 1890. Wood block print. Courtesy of the author. Photo by Thorsten Trimpop. The *jisei* genre originates in Zen Buddhism and the three marks of existence (*sanbōin*): the material world is impermanent, attachment to it causes suffering, and all is emptiness. Such poems were written by poets, warriors, nobles, and monks, expressing an enlightened way of looking at death and reality without affect or attachment (*satori* in Japanese, *wu* in Chinese).

To my fellow journeywomen and men, colleagues and interlocutors, of the MIT Laboratory for New Ethnographic Methods, Contemporary Social Theory, and Emergent Forms of Life (ETL: Ethnography, Theory, Life) who have worked up and down the scales of multilocale ethnography from eagle-eye views to anaconda meanders, naga floodings of the fertile earth, desert oases, urban galactic polities, archipelago seas, and the habitats in-between.

The different places have been enriching, the people inspiring,
the diverse cultures exhilarating. But it was at the margins of all these
individually brilliant experiences that I found the most enlightening
of spaces and moments. They were so singularly beautiful that one had
to invent vocabularies to describe them, these uncharted territories,
unexperienced happenings, unfathomed depths, these images at the
margins. —KUO PAO KUN (Chinese and English language playwright
of Singapore), *Images at the Margin*

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> Along with Galileo, the *malin* [the evil in the world[1]] sweeps away the revolu-
> tionary illusion, the humanist hope. Descartes takes note of all this, accepting
> the setback but refusing to abandon hope. One must live. Once the revolution is
> over, the war of position begins. —ANTONIO NEGRI, *Political Descartes*

No doubt, as will become clear in a few decades, we live in another time
warp like that of 1633, when, with Galileo's condemnation and the burning
of his books, the humanist crisis came to the fore, shocking such figures as
Descartes into recognizing that humanist freedom had lost out against a
flow of history that was no longer in favor of bourgeois, civil, and humanist
ideals and would need an absolutist state as defense against both the nobles
and revolts from below (Negri 1970/2006). According to Antonio Negri's
compelling reading, Descartes came to represent the world after the burn-
ing of Galileo's books "as *malin*, as inverted truth, as a *fable* of a power that
does not want truth to live in the world" (Negri 1970/2006, 147; empha-
sis in source). The arrow of history and conceptions of time do not move
in one direction but move with variable speeds (accelerations, differential
speeds), backward and forward (*à la* Karl Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire
of Louis Napoleon*[2]), in ouroborus eternal returns (of the seasons, of cycles of
life-death-life, of repressions-returns), spiral fashion picking up once aban-
doned elements into new formations, with multiple competing streams, eddies,
and currents, only retrospectively seemingly linear.

New social structures and new "forms of life" (both biological and so-
cial, sometimes quite intertwined) are emergent in ways we cannot quite

foresee, despite confident predictions. If floods of populations flee rising seas, poverty, environmental toxicities, and tyrannies, and if receiving societies are destabilized, health care systems collapse, and infrastructures are overwhelmed, in such circumstances, new forms of organization, good and bad, will form in the con-fusions, chemical like reactions, and sub-version circulations—not necessarily as centralized totalitarian forms, or charismatic cults, as past imaginaries would have it, but perhaps in decentralized weavings of new stronger textures of social life, post the hackable Internet of Things on which our critical infrastructures for living (water, electricity, information) seem now to depend more fragilely than we thought only a few years ago. By then perhaps we will have renewable clean energy. By then perhaps we will have understood what it takes to live again in the oceans and in space, and to find biological repair mechanisms for what has been destroyed.

Certainly, at the very least, *in the meantime*, *the time of anthropology*, will be one of *constant experimentation*. This is *the space for ethnography*, a *third space* of the "reality principles" and "anthropology from a pragmatic point of view,"[3] between the fantasies of nostalgia and apocalypse, between horizons of the Holocene and the Anthropocene. Here in this third space the actually existing worlds of anthropology from a pragmatic point of view can flourish: ask not what the human being or the world is but what we may expect of them—and of them in the plural. These worlds can flourish not merely by observation and participation but also by helping relay experiences in one place to other places, reflecting upon the experiences, and articulating what is going on beyond, inside, and around the formal structures of nation-states, transnational organizations, and NGOs, helping to rebuild newer, more flexible and robust structures from local municipalities and intentional communities on up, using tools being developed, such as participatory budgeting, also in huge Asian cities.[4] They can flourish by ground-truthing statistical patterns, algorithmic simulations, and governance metrics; by finding and propagating modes of flourishing, well-being, and new paths of conflict management, new multiscale synergies and mutualities.

This book stakes out a claim, a twenty-first-century extension of the still canonical "grounded theory" of Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss or the still valid advice of Robert K. Merton, that work at the mesolevel of theory is the most productive, what this book will call "anthropology in the meantime." Retooling for the twenty-first century is required, and is developing, in a context of more layered media (as research tools, as means of emotional persuasion in the public arena, and as habituated modes of communication)

and where small networks and local cultural niches can be leveraged and become as important as standardization across such networks and worlds.

"Anthropology in the meantime" is a methodological injunction to not get carried away by either dystopian or utopian extrapolations that govern so much of contemporary "theory" but to do the ethnography of how the pieces of the world interact, fit together or clash, generating complex unforeseen consequences, reinforcing cultural resonances, and causing social ruptures.

## Anthropology and Ethnography in the Meantime

*Anthropology in the meantime* is the (im)practical, life-affirming use of ethnographic methods in the gaps between the *financial* or *design experimental* (computational, prototyping, and "demonstrations-as-products" to be continually replaced) and the *experiential experimental* (slowing down, affect savoring, lifeworlds of playful artistry). The *gaps* between surprise-producing scientific experiments, pleasure-producing aesthetic experiments, and code-producing test-bed experiments are interactively productive ones. These gaps are where anthropology reflectively and critically weaves its magic of understanding.[5] These are the gaps between, on the one hand, the explosive energy of "now time" (*Jetztzeit*) that in sudden collisions of past and present arrests or interrupts the flow of naturalistic time,[6] and thus, on the other hand, dialectically, allows for the *recursive* reconstructions of, or reconfigurations of the conditions of possibility for, the afterlives of now time, and thus of the work required to bring about livable, meaningful, emergent futures. This is *anthropology in the wake of the future.*[7]

Anthropology *in the meantime* is precisely *not the suturing* of these gaps, rushing to judgment, but the reflective play with the gaps as opportunistic heterotopias for realizing worlds differently, constructing alternative futures. As recursive, restless, continuous social reanalysis, anthropology operates in these gaps or *third spaces*—the spaces of analytic, comparative, or juxtapositional cultural critique; spaces of questioning and interpretative work that themselves are spaces of value added (even if often incommensurable, or nonreducible to metrics). These gaps and third spaces are the lining of technology that needs to be pulled out and examined lest the technologies we build around us turn deadly, as they often do. Anthropology provides the smartness, sensitivities, or sensibilities[8] that sensors and algorithms fail to provide despite their advertising and public relations. It requires patience, taking time, *slow time*, for *figuring out how* peopled things intersect, interact,

interfere, inter-refer. It requires the time for *locating* con-texts, for *listening*, for *attending to* the telling detail, for *sounding out* moods, anger, passion, nonverbal communication. It requires the time for *looking* under the hood of memes and slogans, beyond the framings of photographs and films, for how stories are being coded for which targeted audiences, how jokes are mobilized (offensively, defensively, or as phatic filler), and how futures are preempted and rerouted. It is a form of ground-truthing, of showing when aggregate statistics, models, and maps produce errors that do not match what is happening "on the ground," in reality, among actual people.

Anthropology *in the meantime* attends to the *peopling of technologies*, without which technologies do not exist, do not get built, maintained, repaired, upgraded, reconfigured, or replaced. Anthropology in the meantime attends to the gaps between visions and implementations, to the differential gears of accelerations and decelerations of contesting and layered social movements (changes in the directions of history), to the politics of the rise and fall of branded communities of expertise or practice. It attends to the messiness of the interplay of theory and practice, justice and law, regulatory science and experimental science, speculation and artistry (imaginaries, Disney-like imagineering or marketing, loosening up frozen ideologies, allowing sub-versions).

Anthropology *in the meantime* is the study of what Henri Lefebvre resonantly called *l'homme totale* (the fully human person) who dwells in a lived space of the imagination, sustained and made accessible by the arts, literature, and human creativity.[9] It thus also resonates with what Marcel Mauss called *total social facts* or what British social anthropology and later ecological approaches articulated as the rule or law that "you cannot change only one thing." Interconnections and interventions make for ramifying, and often unpredictable, implications, consequences, and cascading effects. Ethnography in the meantime is an anthropology emergent out from the chrysalis of the twentieth century. Ethnography in the meantime is *slow time*: it is the mapping, tracking, or inquiry into cascades, changes, and implications.

### A Colloquy of Essays

This book also makes a claim (following both Theodor Adorno and Clifford Geertz) for the value of the essay form as *one* way of doing precisely anthropology in the meantime with grounded theory, not instead of monographs, group projects, and other forms, but as a supplementary form or parergon (the more that is at work) to direct attention to the spaces for which tradi-

tional frames and theories no longer suffice. The essays are essays in conversation, not just a collection, that hopefully add up to more than the sum of their parts. While each essay can be read independently, they are intended to gain depth and force as they speak to one another. They are conversations with two of the leading edges of anthropology: with the humanities, and with the sciences and technological developments. Among the key matters of concern in every essay is the epistemological and ethnographic value of thinking through local and multiple cultural genres, rhetorics, and logics, open to other languages and other cultural tools; through visual media as well as writing; with literature as well as ethnographic monographs and articles. The short opening essay, "Experimental Ethnography in Ink, Light, and Sound and Performance" (chapter 1), is both a model to show that one can write in plain prose and flag a series of experimental moves that have shifted the fields of anthropology, cultural studies, comparative studies in history and society, intellectual history, philosophy, and others over the decades; and that this applies to ethnographic film or cinewriting, and perhaps to the social and cultural landscapes of sound, and ethnographic performance for civil activation, as well as ethnographic writing. Chapters 2 and 3 continue the discussion by directing attention to the issue of cultural genres, away from more parochial European philosophical ones on ontology and metaphysics, or scholastic ones on logical distinctions. The ethnography at issue in chapter 2 (largely the northwestern Amazon) is followed out further in chapter 5, while that in chapter 3 (on Germany and Iran) is picked up again in chapter 9. Ethnography in the meantime, I argue, is required in all these spaces rather than jumping to quick conclusions, criticisms, or glib evaluations. Critique and ground-truth are required iteratively to explore the gaps and topologies of third spaces between actors' imaginaries and practical realities, between the promissory motivations (for capital and psychological investments) and the adjustments and redirections along the way.

The second matter of concern thus, "ground-truthing," pursued more explicitly in chapters 4 through 8, is that of dialogue, listening, and friendship across cultures and through the hieroglyphic longitudinal work across the corpus of individual anthropologists. This involves reading, probing, looking for their competence and skills (linguistic, elicitatory, attention to inequalities, etc.) to do the *ground-truthing*, the field science, the living with and engaging with the people being written about and for whom, anthropologists hope, the ethnographies are also being written, as well as for students and audiences in general. The listening involves listening across conflict boundaries, not just dyadic conversations. This is a matter of hospitality

(chapter 8), which, like the gift of which Marcel Mauss (1925) wrote, can contain aggression and hostility as well as generosity and social bonding, and applies also to ecology and our biological place in our planetary or Gaian nexus.

The tone and tuning of the writing of ethnography, thus, is not merely a matter of ground-truthing or empirical data collection but also one of address, tact, and tone. And tonality means also resonance with other modalities of discourse. In chapters 7 through 9, attention shifts to actors' philosophical registers, not only academic philosophy but also vernacular philosophies and attention to the contexts out of which those philosophies arise. In all three chapters, but particularly chapter 9, I argue that juxtaposition can be a helpful mode of conversation across cultures, genres, forms of speech, and traditions, so as not to tear things out of context, to compare and contrast without doing violence to nuance, multiple registers of meaning, and potentials for new meaning formation, in the original sites of locution.

A fourth matter of concern, fundamental to all the above is thus that of the materiality, temporality, and recursivity, as well as conceptual development, in ethnographic works over the past century and especially the past three decades with the arrival of the Internet, the web, the interconnected Internet of Things, and smart city and smart nation initiatives. These matters of material change in modes of writing, information availability, and sequestration (chapter 10), are intertwined with those of temporalities and historical horizons, and conceptual recursivity of reworking old ideas and cultural resources (chapter 11), with new and differently targeted ones in the development of anthropological approaches for new circumstances (chapter 12). The notion of "zen exercises" in chapter 12 is intended to allude to what used to be debated as matters of objectivity (evaluating situated knowledges or differential points of view informed by class, gender, religious, worldview, etc., positions within contentious social worlds). For this, ethnography and anthropological perspectives are both urgent and indifferent (indifference here not in the sense of lack of concern but in the sense of critical understanding about placing in context particular interests, perspectives, and understandings, a critical understanding that can be mobilized for debating and intervening in the service of the social good, and preserving or creating new cultural and social commons on which flourishing of "the human condition in its plurality" [après Hannah Arendt; see chapter 9] can exist).

In the epilogue, I attempt to draw together the arguments and thematics of the volume, while simultaneously incorporating the imaginaries that inhabit our worlds and direct our anticipations toward the future. Much of

the future imaginary even in Western writing is located in Asia (e.g., from William Gibson's *Neuromancer* [1984] on immersive cyberworlds to Ramiz Naam's *Nexus* [2012] thriller on psychotropic expansions and national security state global war). I've become particularly interested in such writing from Asian points of view by technoscientifically literate authors. But while broadening the purview of ethnographic registers in Asian hard science fiction literatures, where much of the contemporary imaginary is sited—and that explore current disasters from avian influenza and other emerging pandemic threats to intensifying threats from earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, and industrial disasters such as the Fukushima Daiishi nuclear plant meltdown, and rising sea levels—I remain dedicated to the hard work of actual ethnography and juxtapose the work of my fellow ethnographers with those of the science fiction writers working the same terrain (and often themselves scientists and physicians with strong empirical bents).

## Perfect Pitch in Ethnography

Ethnographies as literary forms are like novels, except they have to stick to reality. They work best when you can lose yourself as a reader in their worlds. Recognition, understanding, connecting the dots, and theory emerge like the ambrosia of immortality in the Hindu story of churning the ocean. They arise from the work of interpretive value added by both writer and reader. Statistics, charts, crime scene maps, photographs, articles in scientific journals with their temporality of emergence rather than settled fact, and all those sorts of supports are aids and heuristics along the way. It is like the challenge in hard science fiction: as author, you have to stick to actually existing scientific knowledge and technologies we currently have or at least have the knowledge to build; yet like hard science fiction, ethnographies too have speculative edges. The speculation works through comparison, juxtaposition, and contestation with other ways of organizing social life. The speculative work, as in comparative zoology or genomics, is to be found in variation and difference, teasing out the particularities, the unique qualities, linkages, genealogies, precursors, genitors, biomechanics and biochemistries, and families of resemblance. Rising above all in ethnography are the acoustics: the nuances and accents need to be right, lest it sound wrong. Nothing worse than a period film about Vienna where the actors speak with Berlin or Hannover accents and idioms—hard to take it seriously. Similarly, ethnographies of other cultures and other language settings challenge the writer for translations (glosses, literal translations, and cultural expansions).

*Traduttore, traditore*: Translator, traitor. Hence the need for local critical apparatuses, the aids across language divides, to explain, to draw into the delicate webs of meaning so easily torn by rough handling. Not much different if those other cultures are scientific or occupational specialties with their own argots and practices, good hands and intuitions based on deep experience that are quite different across even collaborating fields. Synthetic biology, for instance, is riven by opposing intuitions and practices between engineers and biologists, and challenged by the requirements of safety and security, and legitimating requirements of "human practices" taking knowledge and instruments beyond laboratory walls.

A good ethnography has perfect pitch and cadence or at least allows you to understand what perfect pitch and cadence would be. Matters of tone and tuning are also matters of ethics, of tact, and of address.

### Ethnography for Whom, with Whom? Ethics of Ethnography?

Ethnographies used to be *of and among* peoples *in physical environments* and shaping ecologies: deserts, mountains, cities, ports, islands, villages. Increasingly they are done *with* people *for* their own utilities, whether helping departments in hospitals learn what each other do in order to ease workflow hang-ups; helping communities map and document illnesses around toxic waste or show environmental justice inequalities; planning with boomers for active "aging in place communities"; or redesigning urban spaces to make them more livable. The *shift in prepositions* "of" and "in" to those of "for" and "with" make an important difference, as does the *pluralization* of grandiose nouns and *points of view* (History, Reason, Progress; histories, reasons and cultural logics, enlightenments and corrections; hegemonic "naturalizing" rhetorics, class or gender positions, ethnic and religious histories and sensibilities, traumas inscribed in nervous systems and muscle memories).

Ethnographies used to be of and among peoples in places for the use of *philosophizing* and *comparative criteria:* What is rationality? Is rationality universal? (E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* [1937] remains a touchpoint text.) How is risk differently structured in different settings? What is the difference between ritual purity and hygiene? (Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* [1966], drawing on fieldwork among the Lele, remains key.) Is gambling irrational or meaningful? (Clifford Geertz's *Daedalus* essay "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" [1972] is still a model text.) Ethnographies might be for the use of, or in contestation with, *administration*: do not withdraw male labor from agriculture, with its

mutual aid reciprocity, to use as labor in copper mines and then pay them bare nutritional wages, if you don't want agrarian collapse and famine. (Thus the warning of Audrey Richards's *Land, Labor, and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba* [1939].)

Today ethnographies are often *multilocale* mappings across sites of strategic access to *multiscale* distributed industries and processes. Such methods are required to understand diasporic feedback in the weaving of national cultural, political, and affective textures (Mehdi Abedi's and my *Debating Muslims: Cultural Dialogues in Tradition and Postmodernity* [1990]; Orkideh Behrouzan's *Prozak Diaries: Psychiatry and Generational Memory in Iran* [2016] and its diaspora). Such methods are also needed to understand industrial accidents and "natural" disasters of transcontinental chemical industries (Kim Fortun's *Advocacy after Bhopal: Environmentalism, Disaster, New Global Orders* [1991]); different vernacular understandings of climate change and overcoming resistance to public discussion (Candis Callison's *How Climate Change Comes to Matter: The Communal Life of Facts* [2014]). They are required for understanding the recursive building of software infrastructures and on- and offline communities (Chris Kelty's *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software* [2008]); or the transnational trade in changing notions of death, interchangeable human parts, psychosis of transplantation, and socialist versus free market access to care (Aslihan Sanal's *New Organs within Us: Transplants and the Moral Economy* [2011]). Many of these are exemplary forms of the work of the Laboratory of New Approaches to Ethnography, Contemporary Social Theory and Emergent Forms of Life at MIT.

One reason multilocale ethnography is so important is that socialities tend to be linked overlapping small worlds. Experts in a field tend to know one another, and their networks lead to other small worlds. In this, and many other ways, mentoring lineages, network analyses, and snowball interviewing techniques are important tools for unpacking larger questions of global processes such as those listed above, whether or not they strictly match the various mathematical and algorithmic models of small-world experiments.[10] What is ethnographically important are the knowledges and lines of exchange, competitions and collaborations, that are built up within these small worlds, and how they articulate with other circles, networks, and chains of distribution. Ethnography is less concerned with the formal correctness and linearity of communication, and more with the social worlds so connected, their intensities, modes of attributing credibility, trust, hierarchies, linguistic and behavioral codes of recognition and shibboleths of

exclusion, and ways of viewing the world in relation to other ways of viewing the world.[11]

Ethnographic fieldwork used to be focused on oral face-to-face interactions and performativity in situ. Two generations of ethnographers (from 1920 to 1960) looked askance at too much reliance on written texts as abstracted from context, and likely to mislead. This was a form of Plato's argument in the *Phaedrus*, made famous again by Jacques Derrida (1972/1981), but also by anthropologist Jack Goody (*The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, 1977), by Jesuit language historian Walter Ong (*Orality and Literacy*, 1982), and by classicist Eric Havelock (*The Muse Learns to Write*, 1986), that writing changed the situational understanding of communicative acts, abstracting them, making them seem impersonal and wrongly definitive, much as models and simulations today explicitly simplify. When detached from their original contexts, they can mislead, and are better deployed dialectically with ground-truthing, with ethnography. Anthropologists were like Socrates in relying on the dialogic face-to-face contexts where possible, and like Socrates (or Harold Garfinkle [*Studies in Ethnomethodology*, 1967] or Erving Goffman [*Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1956]) in often upsetting the taken-for-granted naturalness or truth of particular social norms. These aesthetics of ethnographic authority (being there, knowing who was saying to whom in what speech genre of sociolinguistic register, seeing how what was being done did not accord with what was being said, looking for the unsaid and the unsayable,[12] what was indicated through allusion, posture, gesture, or tone) had their time and place, and they continue to be invaluable under changed conditions of time and place. The dialectic is ever more important between written archives that provide documentation but often leave much out or falsify, and fieldwork that provides situated perspectives for parallax correction, questioning, and reframing but that cannot encompass everything, and can also be subject to people not cooperating, withholding, misdirecting, making of the tapestries of fieldwork engagements each themselves puzzle fields of social action.

In more recent ethnographic work, as explanatory demands for wider contexts increased, archives and other writings, including earlier fieldwork studies, became important tools to account for the varieties of discourses and opinions and socially grounded arguments *within societies* and across different accounts and by different anthropologists (Robert Redfield 1930 versus Oscar Lewis 1951, on the Mexican village of Tepotzlan is a classic teaching pair). Reported beliefs by individuals of themselves or by third-party observers (anthropologists) are constructions and interpretations built out

from disputations, disagreements, politics, fights, experiences, not so much the search for unique authority, origin, or philosophical deduction. This anthropological understanding has its predecessors (and objects of study) in the stories deployed in the scholastic debate traditions of Islam and Judaism, Catholic casuistic logics, Buddhist and Jain parables, and epics whose narrators adjust the meanings according to their audiences, and stress the limited understanding of any particular actor, including the narrator. Internal arguments and attention to genre forms and to local critical apparatuses of evaluation became crucial elements of valid ethnographies. The world has become too well known (through film and television, the Internet and cell phones, but also tourism, expatriate living, and business travel in development and humanitarian industries as well as education and commercial ones) for claims through single perspectives or summaries to carry weight.

In earlier ethnographic work, there was purification of reality by actively ignoring novels, films, and other aesthetic works that could not be reduced to symbols of beliefs. In more recent ethnographies, attention to imaginaries, fictionalized forms of self-presentation, writing, film, arts, speech, and performance genres of both everyday life and of social memory have become increasingly important to the work of tapping into and exploring "immanent critiques," differences and struggles within interpretive traditions and within conflicted modernities.

In earlier ethnographies of the 1940s and 1950s, there were often formats of presentation presumed to set up accounts of particular social assemblages for comparison with others often continuous with human geography formats: ecology, kinship, politics, economics, law, religion, and so on were chapter titles or serial volume titles. Key institutions, symbol constellations, and rituals were used to unlock cultural logics, ethnosemantics and classification systems, values and worldviews. In recent ethnographies such topics are often folded into quite different formats organized around compelling matters of concern that overflow localities and typologies. Instead of traditional kinship studies (interesting in their own right and for certain places and contexts), it is today often more important to explore the social "kinship" relationships developed through lineages of scientific mentoring, or linkages among scientists whose work coalesces in advances for reproductive assisted technologies or transgender technologies [Najmabadi, *Possessing Selves*, 2014], or legal precedents and legal reasoning to give recognition in court for new forms of family. Religions no longer command but share and dispute territories, and often have conflicted relations to their own pasts. Money, diseases, and legal battles overflow what once were thought of as boundaries. Aporia,

ambiguity, risk, trauma, asylum, refugee status, and uncertainty have become new epistemological objects requiring ethical choreographies, settling into, at best, temporary ethical plateaus of decision making.[13]

Ethnographic "writing"—print, film, digital, sonic, performance—has become increasingly inventive and aesthetic in the sense of modes for seeing or apperceiving, for understanding anew, for following over time, across space, up and down scales or granularities of organization.

The uses, formats, and goals of ethnography have changed in both subtle and explicit ways over the past few decades. It has a renewed role in ground-truthing models and theories not just in academia but also in corporate life, and in policy making (Adams, ed. 2016; Cefkin, ed. 2009); in claims for new technologies (e.g., production of anime [Condry 2013]); in clinical trial labor (Cooper and Waldby 2014); and in allying with grassroots resistance and criticisms of hegemonic technocracy (Wiley 2018), or mainstream discourses that are tuned out by much of the public (Callison 2014).

Ethnography's primary modes of dissemination continue to be in long-form print media (the ethnographic monograph, the ethnographically informed essay), but with important shifts into online forums (*Somatosphere*; *Savage Mind*), sometimes with secondary print forms (*Limm*), and into film and video formats (Chris Boebel and Chris Walley's film *Exit Zero* [2015], on family and class in postindustrial Chicago; Robert Lemelson's film *Forty Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy* [2009] and Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* [2013] on the aftermaths of the enormous massacre of alleged communists in 1965); and Sulfikar Amir's *Healing Fukushima* [2017] on the network of local doctors responding to the triple or six fold compound disaster there in 2011. There is also a growing tradition of ethnography in corporations (with its own association, EPIC, Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Community), a legacy of pioneering work in XeroxParc, IRL (Institute for Research on Learning), and various anthropological consultancies (Suchman 2006; Cefkin, ed. 2009).[14]

"Ethnography in the way of theory" (Fischer 2009a) is also a transformed mode of theory building from within rather than as outside observers, both challenging theories and models, and providing the tools for making them otherwise: here exemplary cases are provided by work on synthetic biology (putting the presuppositions of biology, engineering, safety, and privacy into conversation), the ethics of clinical trials (attending to class, gender, and access to care inequalities), the organizational innovations for directing research patents, dollars, and expertise by patient groups.

Ethnography can also provide modes of moral philosophy and self-cultivation, in analogous ways to novels and theater, for both writer and reader, particularly by rich evocations of the challenges staged in social arenas of varied locations, scales, and intersections of multiple technological changes (chapters 7, 9, and 12). The discussion about emergent forms of life poses ethical decision making at the center of some ethnographic accounts, not simply as individuals making decisions but also the affordances and constraints of technologies and discursive regimes, and the trade-offs of decision making, where none is entirely satisfactory. I have previously reworked Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's term "plateaus" into *ethical plateaus* as momentary stabilizations of contradictory forces or intersections of new technologies that require decision making where the morality is unclear, contested, having no perfect way to resolve but only temporarily coming to a degree of stability, until all is again destabilized and has to find a new plateau (Fischer 2004). Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman (2009) provide an example in their account of the shifting historical sociology of trauma.

Increasingly, ethnography also informs and corrects guild histories by returning to sites of long-term fieldwork over longitudinal time (chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 12). Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* (1983) and *Out of Our Minds* (2000) remain cautionary and vivid about the nineteenth century—using grammatical forms that place the described in a time distant from that of the writer; erasing, sometimes through drink and drugs, the local affordances, long-distance trading, and explanations in order to claim egoistic and heroic "discovery"—but these are less the case today except in short-stay genres. Instead there are other blindnesses that are more pervasive and subjects of ethnographic analysis, as well as occasionally imposing constraints on ethnographic work itself: project time, short-term contracting, industrialization of aid, and almost obscene increasing inequalities between rich and poor (making hypocritical much so-called ethical theory or ethical review), not just among classes or groups but also in the extractive debt systems among countries.

The anthropologist remains a figure of speech, a token of comparative humanistic social science, of cosmopolitical theory of unsocial sociabilities informed by actually existing societies, and a parallax perspective, an interlocutor crisscrossing and revisiting presuppositions and assumptions and ways of doing things.

Ethnography is a way of slowing down rapid assessments, of asking the provenance of judgments and statistical claims, of weighing layered causalities,

and, of course, of representing (in both the sense of political conveying and of translating into visualizable text).

### Anthropological Parergons for the Humanities

Cultural forms, lively languages, and works of art are important trading zones, crucibles for emergent transnational idiolects and dialects, in anthropological analysis.

Cultural forms and emergent forms of life are dynamic and dialectical. Cultural forms may be "traditional" (with or without traceable histories and variant uses), but increasingly they are not just "hybrid" or "transnational" but entirely new syntheses, culturally, technologically, and epistemologically. We live in worlds of fusions, borrowings, and montage, and yet not in worlds of mere shreds and fragments, nor just in Fredric Jameson's (1990) superficial worlds of pastiche without histories or depth, but indeed where histories constantly return in deep and powerful ways, sometimes interfering with one another, sometimes referencing one another, but all "working through" into unanticipated *emergent forms of life* full of, first, surprise, and then sometimes retrospective recognition, as deeper patterns manifest. For the anthropologist, cultural forms are often scaffolds or skeletons, legacy structures, to which commentary and interpretation from within or comparison from without can attach similar/different, new/old empirical objects, events, conjunctures, and intersections into generative arrays, matrices, classificatory positions, and reconfigurations. The structural possibilities of stories, theater, praise songs, rituals, and forms of debate can take on quite transformed affordances in new settings, while preserving or reanimating older understandings.

We are used to this in problems of translation across languages, but with increasing pressures on quick takes and instrumentalized understandings, we often forget these resources when working in development, health care, planning, and other practical fields. Countering such forgetting is an important anthropological contribution, and theoretically is crucial to serious comparative/contrastive work all too easily left by most social sciences at high-level generalities, easy to criticize in endless series of mindless "contributions," avoiding the detail work. But the ethnographic details are pebbles that destabilize pretty theories and explain why the best-laid plans often fail.

*Lively languages.* Languages are littered with prepositions, metaphors, complex rhetorical figures, simple tropes, pluralizations, phonemic binaries and distinctive features, grammatical presuppositions, and etymologies gen-

erating disparate, even sometimes contradictory, meanings. Like land mines found after the fact, they are recognized through their effects. Systematic study of this semantic and social liveliness lies in the skills learned in the anthropological disciplines of linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics and metapragmatics, poetics, rhetoric, and other such domains. Deconstruction may have rediscovered some of this and has shown how to deploy it to unhinge and probe conventionalized readings and understandings, and thus to uncover alternative and more open possibilities, not only in old texts but also in advertising, popular discourses, and everyday life.

The *work of art*,[15] as a probe analogous to the work of anthropologists, explores imaginaries that animate and anticipate practical action. Art has become an economic engine and a development goal in many parts of the world. Biennales and art shows are big business in the same way as trade shows that often accompany scientific (not merely engineering) meetings. Cities across China have designated special zones as creative and design (not just innovation) spaces, and the Chinese premier, Xi Jinping, in February 2015 called for "maker spaces" in every high school in China. Globally the ideology of teaching has increasingly been infused not just with the buzzwords of innovation and value creation but also design, project-based learning, rapid prototyping, and above all that elusive value of "creativity." Like anthropologists, artists often have feet in several worlds, not merely that many have day jobs (including commercial art and advertising) while they do their "real" art on their own time or in separate spaces, but, more importantly, that art operates in tension between finding the patronage, grant funding, or business model and pursuing the three C's (commentary, criticism, critique) within the world that artists inhabit or try to speak to.

### Tone and Tuning of Ethnography

Don Brenneis, casually walking with me along the streets of Chicago during recent anthropology meetings, dubbed the original versions of chapters 9 and 10 with the lovely epithet "tone poems." I don't know if he was being polite or slyly critical, but I admit to a certain aspiration to get the tone and the catacoustics (the sonic refrains) of ethnographic writing to accurately register time, place, and theoretical interlocutors. It is like the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a film about Vienna (my prelife) or Iran (some of my formative graduate student years) in which the accents are not quite right: it can ruin the pleasure, the ability to watch, and the ability to take the aesthetic or conceptual effort seriously. This of course varies, and it means

more vigilance to these issues than an impossible demand for ethnographers themselves to always be virtuoso sociolinguistic mimics.[16] Where sensitivity to ethnographic or historical accuracy crosses over into the pleasure of watching a play by Euripides, Shakespeare, or Ibsen reset in a different place and time, dress and context may be a fine line, one often dependent upon political resonance, another kind of music.

Thus while many were powerfully moved by Peter Sellars's American Repertory Theater production of Euripedes's *Children of Herakles* in 2003, with an international cast (a Kazakh epic singer, for instance, replacing the odes of the Greek chorus) during the post-9/11 war on Iraq (the Second Gulf War), the classicist-quibbling reviewer for the *New York Review of Books* was inexplicably and pedantically put off.[17] For most reviewers and the local audience, however, the 430 BCE play was returned to its powerful public debate function, complete with ritual and raging passions, set as if in a Congressional hearing or a war crimes trial. The play pits Athenian proclamations of democracy and defense of refugee children against both external threats from Argos, which wants the children returned for execution, on pain of war, and the bloody sacrifices and possible internal self-destruction of Athenian principles that the children's asylum entails. The Argive envoy-lawyer, played by Elaine Tse, in business suit with briefcase, is icily legalistic in laying out her side's claims, the options open to her opponents, and enforcement threats, reminding several in the audience of then secretary of state Condoleezza Rice asserting American imperial power under President George W. Bush. The public debate function was supported by preshow panels with refugees from Bosnia, Guinea, Cambodia, and elsewhere, and with human rights lawyers, immigration service lawyers, trauma therapists, and others; and postshow screenings of films from places producing large numbers of refugees, including Werner Herzog's *Lessons in Darkness* (1992), shot in Kuwait in the aftermath of the First Gulf War, showing massive oil fires burning out of control, Texas firefighters attempting to quell them, scenes of devastation in Kuwaiti hospitals, and Saddam Hussein's former torture chambers.

One could say the difference in reception was one of discipline or of prestructuralist yearning for authenticity and historical accuracy versus a poststructuralist recognition, understood by all epic storytellers, that a Euripidean, Shakespearean, or Ibsen play is defined not by an original version or interpretation but by a structural set of potentials that constitute its corpus and its resonances. When a potent play, or ethnography, sets off reverberations, parallels, and contrasts, it creates new ways of seeing and understanding. It

functions as cultural commentary, criticism, and critique (all three quite different things) in the best senses. Ibsen's plays, restaged in India to highlight struggles over caste and gender rather than only class and patriarchy (*Doll House*), or restaged in Singapore to highlight struggles over planning versus whistle-blowing (*Public Enemy*), have a power that is often not achieved in productions true to nineteenth-century Scandinavia.[18] Similarly, Ong Keng Sen's versions of *King Lear* explore contemporary issues of Asian haunted and unsettled intercultural ghosts, using the stylized dramatic resources of Asia, while remaining true to Shakespeare's themes of internalized parental figures and parental projections about children betraying them. These are, Ong says, "very close to Chinese melodrama where parents always debate whether their children are 'filial' or 'unfilial'" (K. S. Ong 2013, 244). His production in 1997, he says, "aimed to be a morality tale for young generations who kill their fathers, but then realize that it is almost impossible to break free from their heritage" (244). The allusion is to a variety of political strong men, including Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and his promotion of a distinctive Asian form of democracy or neo-Confucianism. Despite Japanese feminist playwright Rio Kishida's scripting, Ong wrote, "Japanese critics felt threatened by the fact that Goneril was interpreted by a Chinese opera singer, while the Father was performed by a Japanese Noh actor" (245).[19] In the version of the play performed in 1999, *Lear Dreaming*, Ong Keng Sen notes, "There are still ways in which this new production can resonate politically, and I am now aware that I cannot stop people from making those readings. For instance, people could ask why the Mother, a Korean court singer, kills the Japanese king. One possible interpretation has to do with the issue of Korean comfort women, and I subscribe to that reading to an extent. However, I am more interested in the human aspect of the story," and in the exploration of dramatic forms, such as those of a matrilineal Sumatran community storytellers (245).

The notion of "tone poems" provides a kind of tuning fork. Both Kant and Derrida wrote essays titled "Raising the Tone" of debate, and ethnographers should be doing that as well. Tone poems can be used dismissively in music as "program music" that provides the signature lines one hears when a character or a plotline is introduced, that makes the music subordinate to the text or story or other extramusical form. But I have always thought of Paul Celan's poetry or Donald Barthelme's short stories as tone poems that depend as much on the sound for meaning as the text itself. I never could quite figure out Barthelme's stories until I heard him read and realized how his distinctive cadence and inflections made them perfectly obvious, and they

became among my favorites. Celan's poetry, of course, like Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* in a slightly different way, is more complex, depending on layerings of allusions as well as sounds.

Chapters 4 through 6 use the life work of particular anthropologists over the longitudinal course of their careers as vehicles for surveying regional archives of ethnography and longitudinal appreciations of social change. A certain pleasure, and I hope honesty, comes from having written them for presentation face to face to their subjects while they could receive, respond to, and correct my accounts. Clifford Geertz was a first-rate stylist and word-smith, the author of five classic monographs on Indonesia, a comparative volume on Indonesian and Moroccan Islam, and a volume with Hildred Geertz and Lawrence Rosen on Morocco. His essays, collected in *The Interpretation of Culture* (1973) and subsequent volumes, walked the line between ethnography and philosophy. Many of these essays became as famous as those of Émile Durkheim's students were to an earlier generation: Marcel Mauss's *The Gift* and *On Prayer*; Robert Hertz's *Death and the Right Hand*; Henri Hubert and Mauss's *Sacrifice*; Franz Steiner's *Taboo*; and many others, foundational for British social anthropology as well as French thought.[20] Geertz's monographs on eastern Java and Bali remain touchstones for all subsequent ethnography in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Stanley J. Tambiah similarly produced a series of monographs on Buddhism in Thailand, a master work on the world-conqueror, world-renouncer pattern of South and Southeast Asian polities, and two important volumes on militant Buddhist politics in Sri Lanka, and one on ethnic violence in South Asia. Jean Jackson, apart from her classic ethnography of a nearly unique situation of marriage rules requiring one to marry someone of a different language along the Vaupes River in Colombia, like others teaching in MIT's anthropology program (Martin Diskin and James Howe), has been engaged in defense of Native American rights with full interest in tracking historical changes in the struggles over those rights. I try to take a reading of what is state of the art in ethnographic and historical accounts of indigenous groups of the Amazon today. But this essay is also another response to the empirically thinning discourses that are the subject of chapter 2, as well as an extension of an earlier essay, "In the Science Zone: The Yanomami and the Fight for Representation" (2001).

In chapter 7, Veena Das's long-term fieldwork on health care among the poor in New Delhi illustrates the power of ethnography to analyze three cultural registers (advocacy, ethics, and contradictions and ambi-valences) through seven "scenes of instruction" built around nine characters or case

studies. The seven scenes of instruction involve seven narrative motifs that are also at play across Hindu, Greek, Jewish, and Islamic myths in families of resemblance: (1) visibility-invisibility; (2) control over desire/passion; (3) direct seeing/witnessing versus delegated narrating/reporting; (4) female counterpower to male hierarchy; (5) humiliation by disrobing and power through restraint and asceticism (*tapas*); (6) "human beings propose, but destiny proposes otherwise"; and (7) paired ritual/epic tales. In order not to allow cultural forms to be essentialized, temporally distanced, or separated from our own lives, I frame the essay in both a contemporary case of health care for a professional friend and in my explorations of the biomedical and bioscientific research in India.

Chapter 12 builds on the analysis of chapter 7 by reviewing a series of recent ethnographic works as parables or allegorical forms of writing culture or cultural commentary, or what I call seven kinds of "elementary" zen exercises: (1) ethnographic practices of camaraderies and trajectories (à la the discussion of the friendship topos discussed above and explored in chapters 5 through 9); (2) the exercise of picking case studies with a certain detachment from the world, not a detachment of indifference but a meta-stable standpoint from which critique and politics can emerge; (3) calligraphies of human lives in settings of extreme social violence that incorporate hope, self-organizing defense, and paths forward; (4) the aporia of forced incorporation of alien cosmologies and ideologies; (5) the containment of poisoned histories and divided cities through contemporary forensics of massacres and through rebuilding and disciplining of pilgrimage sites; (6) horizoning by climate change modelers as practice rather than as jeremiad; and (7) unfinished exercises and lifelines.

Chapters 9 and 12 return to the notion of hospitality and the relationship between philosophy and anthropology. In particular, I am concerned that this relationship not be one of subordination, ethnography as illustration of philosophical formulations, but that ethnography be itself a source for philosophy, as it often has been in the past, and that philosophy be historicized and made ethnographic. The relationship then becomes one of illumination back and forth, a relation of juxtaposition, that provides points of attachment for creative and productive dialogue beyond mere comparison, beyond the dialectic of seeing (*theoria*) and conceptualizing (theory), attentive as well to the affective body of interpersonal emotions, the tropes of vulnerability and calls for social justice, and the ear, face, and critical apparatuses of the other as places for ethical ethnographic exchange.

### Temporality and Recursivity in Ethnography

Chapters 11 and 12 recall *Writing Culture* and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, and chart the material and conceptual differences since then, focusing attention on the material platforms that have changed. Chapter 11, in part, updates "Before Going Digital/Double Digit/Y2000: A Retrospective of Late Editions" (Fischer 2000a), as well as "Worlding Cyberspace: Towards an Ethnography in Time, Space and Theory" (Fischer, 1991), and "Raising Questions about Rouch" (Fischer 1999). "A Polyphonic Nine-Canto *Singspiel*" (chapter 11) originally was a response to an invitation from Andrew Lyons as editor of *Anthropologia*, the journal of the Canadian Anthropological Association, who wanted something short to mark the quarter century since *Writing Culture*. Given the interest in writing tactics probed in the original volume and many of its successors, I wanted to play a little with genre, do something celebratory but also fun. Polyphony and dialogue, collaboration between anthropologist and interlocutors, was a hot topic in the 1980s, and so I thought to try to re-create the polyphony and debate or dialogue among the anthropologists as they were locked up together for a week at the wonderful School for American Research in Santa Fe. I try very hard to remain true to the original essays, channeling voice and concerns, while reminding the next generation that these are not icons to be toppled or superseded; instead I attempt to make them come alive again in the round as interlocutors, as in a theater in the round. I use initials rather than names, not to obscure anything but to make clear that these ventriloquies are my invention. Part of the discussions in those days was the ethics of, in the end, the anthropologist always being the one who holds the pen (as I do here). For Steven Tyler at the time this was in a sense unethical. He called for a therapeutic modality of ethnography, reducing the ideal ethical anthropology to only unwritten, face-to-face dialogue. I wanted a more pragmatic middle way to preserve writing, the encounters, and the anthropological analysis of the social context.

At the same time I was interested, along with my cohort, in making such writing more open. I experimented with making cofieldwork explicit. I cowrote *Debating Muslims* with Mehdi Abedi, experimenting with a variety of genres of writing: drawing upon oral autobiography processed by the anthropologist; scholastic traditions of debate and their critical apparatuses for evaluating validity, as well as their use in political debate; poetics and political debates pursued through poster art, stamps, and other visual culture; and a master novel of psychological adjustments of migration filtered

through vernacular jumbles of Bollywood-style stories and distorted memories of childhood religious instruction, based upon classical Islamic hadith (the subject as well of a key example in chapter 3). I cowrote an essay with Stella Gregorian, based on interviews that we did in Armenia after the Leninakan earthquake (magnitude 6.9) on December 7, 1988, and during the fighting with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh (majority ethnic Armenian highlanders in an enclave within Azerbaijan), using a Pirandello-like form of "Six to Eight Characters in Search of Armenian Civil Society amidst the Carnivalization of History" (1993). I experimented with Leszek Koczanowicz to textually represent counterarguments through sidebars in a lightly edited transcript on the modern cultural and political history of Poland ("One Hand Clapping: Dialogue, Silences, and the Mourning of Polish Romanticism" [1993]). And in my essay in *Writing Culture* itself, I tried to present voices and writing tactics of five groups of hybrid American ethnic autobiographical writing, both male and female voices.

## Repatriation and the Work of Art in Biosensible and Maker-Space Worlds

Repatriation was the call of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* in the 1980s. It was a call to turn the lens back on ourselves, not as implicit comparison (as in Geertz's commentary on Washington, DC, in *Negara* [1980]) but as detailed ethnography, multiscalar, up close, across multiple contexts at different strategic points of access.

Today the call of repatriation is different. It is environmental, often bioremedial, looking to regeneration where possible, mitigation and adaptation where not, or even exploratory into new environments (the warming Arctic, outer space, the oceans) requiring yet new forms of life. It is a call for attention to the multiscalar and global, up close and in context, in place across multiple contexts; to the East and West, North and South; and transversally to China and the West, the Third World and the First, indigenous and migrant, rooted and spreading rhizome-like, viral and in lines of flight, forceful and stringy.

Environmental degradation, climate change, late industrialism's toxicities and health damage, species loss, and the Anthropocene have become widespread concerns in many ethnographies, both as topics themselves but also as sine qua non settings for what might once have been screened out in the search for salvage of historical culture, ways of living, mythologies, alternative modernities, and "before modernity."

One of the interesting venues for thinking about these concerns—both conceptually and as practice—is in the work of art, an experimental space parallel to that of ethnography, often itself an ethnographic register of contemporary matters of concerns, and often exploring, reimagining, or remixing and retargeting their cultural genres or forms of expression. These latter are variable across the globe in their geographical and historical groundings, providing translation bridges or double-horned contact points between local concerns and universal ones, giving them interpretive power for understanding the way people act in differing circumstances. Theater practice (a topic on which I am currently working in Singapore) and visual artworks (printmaking, painting, performance art, and installations, on which I have been writing occasional essays)—like ethnographies and as ethnographic registers of contemporary matters of concern evoking different cultural genres and modes of expression—provide ways to stage or dramatize conflicts, interests, behaviors, and imaginaries that make up the human comedy of actions that produce effects beyond the ken of the actors. These are effects on social relations, on cultural discursive shifts, on habitats, and on possibilities and constraints for future actions. Donna Haraway has called on us to not smooth over these effects and complexities with easy philosophical, hortatory policy agenda, glib contestatory criticism, or other feel good discourse, but to engage and "stay with the trouble" (Haraway 2016).

The arts provide interesting devices because they move between the material and the abstract, providing reflective and diffractive heterotopias and third spaces, not unlike ethnography itself. Ethnographic readings of artworks furthermore can push back against universalist philosophies of art, insistently ground-truthing, looking for the specificities that allow artworks to reflect upon, and contest, their sites of production, and then travel to, and bring perspective to, new contexts. Such ethnographically comparative work of juxtaposition carries more depth and bite than emptying artworks of their specificities, making them, in the name of universal truths, banal, vague, generalities that might or might not apply elsewhere. Application, whether in case-based law or in scientific experiments as machines intended to generate surprising new knowledge, is a play between specifics and principles, a third space of imagination.

Take, for example, a group show in 2015 by a number of artists showcasing work done at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI), a show called *Recyclables: Art and Nature's Revenge.* STPI is one of the nodes of the art circles of Southeast Asia's network, albeit closer to the art market high end of the network than to the community-based bootstrapping lower end of the network

for which Yogyakarta has become globally famous, and well as other loose networks in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Philippines that are also, if less well known, also bootstrapping regional as well as local social support systems for artists. I use the STPI show here as a triadic example of: (1) addressing matters of concern such as environmental issues, toxicities, and health; (2) drawing attention to a geographically grounded ethnographic arena of my current interest, such as the spectacular rise of loosely communicating contemporary Southeast Asian art scenes in Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Singapore; and (3) a material production site that itself fuses state-of-the-art innovation and recycling the old and traditional, while also recycling and reconfiguring Southeast Asian production venues and resources gained through the global exchanges and circulations of artists. This triad of interactions works to think art forms and tactics anew and otherwise.[21]

Well-known Filipino artist Ronald Ventura's artist statement for his STPI contributions, for instance, says the show "can be interpreted as *repatriating* what belongs to Mother Nature." He goes on to say, "We are constantly reminded of it. In the newspapers, on tv, and on the Internet. *The world is collapsing around our ears* sings Michael Stipe in one of REM's songs from the album Out of Time. The signs are all there. Global warming. Terrible floods. Strange Weather. Some species following the way of the dodo and becoming zoological footnotes. Diminishing resources. The only thing missing would be the signs in yellow-ochre-and-black telling us that the end of the world is nigh. Unless. We. Do. Something. About it" (Ventura 2015).[22]

Ventura continues, specifically regarding art making at STPI: "As we know STPI is concerned with 'pushing the technical and aesthetic frontiers of printmaking and papermaking.' And I see this institution as something where materials can be reused, recycled into something even better, more ecologically sound materials for making art. Working at STPI has made me re-evaluate my own artistic strategies" (Ventura 2015).

And Ventura goes on to layer his effort as "not just creating artworks that would resonate with the theme of conservation" but on a "meatier level" dealing with the psychological, philosophical, human behavior, and why "we do it all over again," presumably caught in repetitions that are, if not mindless, at least, unknowing, unaware, un-self-reflective, and destructive of our own lives and ambitions; but that could be otherwise ("Unless. We. Do. Something. About it"). I would like to understand the "it" as being the repetitions.

Before returning to Ventura's and the other artists' efforts in these matters environmental, material, and artistic (I will adduce here only three quick

examples), it is worth noting the global reach of recycling in the STPI facility, and also the nexus of facilities like this one that are the workshops of contemporary art. The importance of such craft- and technology-support institutes has been largely overlooked by anthropologists (and art and cultural historians) writing about art worlds. Another such important figure and venue in the United States is Donald Saff's Graphicstudio.[23] STPI provides residencies for artists with little or no prior printmaking experience. The resident chief printer, Japan-born Eitaro Ogawa, trained by Ken Tyler, helps the artists (often major Southeast Asian and East Asian artists), some seventy to date, realize their visions, experimenting together with new processes.

The equipment is all "recycled" from Ken Tyler's workshops in the United States.[24] The largest press at STPI is a 500 ton ("elephant") press adapted originally for Frank Stella's very large *Moby Dick* series. To create relief work that large, you need a lot of weight. So Tyler went to an automobile scrapyard and "recycled" and adapted one of the machines used for crushing cars. The new STPI facility in Singapore is on the river so it could be brought in by ship, but they had to tear down a wall of the converted and recycled 1920s warehouse to get it inside. Another recyclable in STPI's "state-of-the-art" tool kit are all two hundred or so of Ken Tyler's limestones, originally from Bavaria, that have just the right viscosity and consistency to absorb ink only in the top two millimeters.[25] The stones thus can be reused by grinding them down after use, shaving off one or two millimeters, almost like geological exfoliation. In the 1800s, plays, music, advertisements, and manuals were printed with *these* lithographic stones, writing on stone in reverse or mirror image. You can still see the last layer printed on, awaiting reuse. Next to the lithography press is an etching press, and nearby the acid room for etching. Aside from recycling and adapting machines, Tyler was insistent on having a paper mill on site, saying you cannot have a state-of-the-art printmaking facility without having a state-of-the-art paper-making capacity.[26] You need this to have full control of the fibers and the quality, and also to enable people not only to use paper in a two-dimensional frame, but also three-dimensionally. There is a batter machine for the long fiber cotton imported from the United States. Long fibers allow better control of the flexibility of paper for sculpture and for longer paper that will not rip. (If artists want other kinds of noncotton paper, e.g., mulberry or rice paper, that can be brought in. Similarly, while there is a woodcutting workshop in house, metal cutting is done outside.)

One of the times I visited in 2015, an exhibit of Korean-born artist Do Ho Suh's residency work, "I Am Your Conduit," was in preparation.[27] This

exhibit provided a nice example of how repatriation has exploded beyond its meaning in the 1980s in a world in which not only do lives and the processes of artwork such as Suh's become globally peripatetic but the very materials shift in ways that make us think about the material composition (as well as conceptual composition) of the world differently. Not all the works produced at STPI are large, but the ability to work in larger than usual paper-making frames and presses is an available affordance. "I Am Your Conduit."[28] Suh's work at STPI was done on the largest-size paper the STPI has been able to produce, too large in fact for any of the presses, and so a special screen was constructed, and a water press technique devised.

It was a globally distributed production process, as well as relying on a heterogeneous bricolage or assemblage of materials (US cotton, colored thread, gelatin, squeegees, tweezers, handcrafting, industrial presses, bugs). As I entered the work space, a woman was ironing one of the embroidered gelatin layers titled "I Am Your Conduit." It had come in a large roll from Korea, and the ripples needed to be ironed out. Each of the series is a one-off. Suh draws an image onto gelatin sheets, which are then shipped to Korea to a seamstress who stitches long colored threads onto it and ships it back. It is then attached to a big mesh screen with magnets, and then transferred onto a large bed of wet paper pulp. Lots of water is added, and it is hosed down. An ordinary squeegee is used to work the water into the paper pulp, embedding the colored threads into the paper, and dissolving the gelatin. (This process takes an hour.) Then the screen is peeled off, and what is left are the colored threads embedded in the paper, a "thread drawing." After an hour or two, paper is laid on top to stop the absorption of water, and the moisture is carefully vacuum-suctioned. The piece then takes about three days to dry. The limitation on size is the largest table that STPI has, which is in turn limited by the space of the building. (When Ogawa mentioned a thirty-meter-long panel, much to Ogawa's amused worry about how to do it, Do Ho's eyes lit up, and now says he wants to try a forty-meter-long piece.) Because of the water and the pressure, in the process of moving the color-thread-embedded paper, a lot of rogue threads can go off in different directions. So then up to ten workers sit with tweezers, picking out and repositioning threads. The morning of my visit, there were quite a few bugs, and we joked about where they came from: from Korea? "Hope they haven't carried along MERS [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, which was newly in the headlines originating with camels in Saudi Arabia]" "Oh, you mean literally bugs!" "Yes, literally bugs!" "Oh!" (laughter). "Does one ever just leave the rogues threads as is? These swirls are rather nice, fun." "Yes, they do, some of them; and you will

see in all of his thread drawings that they are not perfectly aligned. Do-Ho does doctor them. We do the first pick up of the bugs and everything, and then he will come and make the final decision. So it is never immaculate, there is always some movement."

Iconic of Suh's peripatetic journeys around the globe, the pieces in "I Am your Conduit" are striking fine multicolor thread images of a human head arched forward, in motion, and flowing lines forming robes or sometimes even walking legs, following underneath and behind.[29] Multiples create the motion of hair and wind streaming behind, of multiple heads of hair flowing upward in an elegant arch, of a running figure with hair afire, of trees with heads popping out of a bend in their trunks. Stairs and houses are other motifs, some done in this thread-embedded-paper technique, some as flat lithography, some as drawings, and some as the installations for which Suh is famed. These last are hanging, architecturally precise, three-dimensional constructions, in sheer nylon threads, of houses he's lived in. Most famous of these is his red hanging staircase and balcony. Another striking piece in blue is a brownstone façade with blue smoke strings coming out the doors and windows and a vaguely human shadow-like pile of multicolored threads on the ground behind the façade where the building once stood. A small human figure stands on the pile holding a cane, rust-red threads rising around him like smoke, an oriental halo, or flames.

Suh's work is not just syntheses of his Oriental painting and Western art training, but, in a way (as I've tried to describe elsewhere in a catalogue essay for a show in early 2016 by Indonesian artist Entang Wiharso and Australian artist Sally Smart) signs of postnational nomadic iconographies across Asia that retain elements of place, history, and biography (Fischer, 2017).

Returning to Ronald Ventura's *Recyclables*, he notes in his artist's statement, "There is irony here and a warning: For recyclables I have made hypothetical street signs that warn us of impending doom ("Point of No Return") . . . I have constructed burnt out trees ("Shadow Forests") something related to the phoenix rising out of the ashes. I have sculpted objects out of discarded materials ("Toxicity")—metals, boxes, paper and assorted scraps. A warning: to make art is to make objects that will make more toxins. Quite alarming. Dig the irony. . . . This is our Apocalypse and yet this is also our Eden" (Ventura 2015).

The most fascinating artwork for me in the joint show with Ventura of several former stpi artists' residency works was a series of stunning collages (lithography, screen print, acrylic, coated leaves on kozo paper) by Filipina artist Geraldine Javier that she called *Playing God in an Art Lab* and that in-

stantly made me think first of bioartists who work in actual tissue engineering labs (viz., Oren Catts and Ionat Zurr), and then Donna Haraway. One image in particular struck me as the perfect colors and assemblage for Haraway's new collection of essays that I was just reading in manuscript. I took pictures to send her, and then helped make the connections through STPI for permissions for the cover image that now graces Haraway's latest book, *Staying with the Trouble* (2016), in our Experimental Futures series at Duke.

The image is one of a set of sixteen that Tony Godfrey in the exhibit catalogue delightfully calls "sixteen creatures in search of their species." It is "obviously" a Pelvissomniumpapilio, since it combines a pelvis, bones of symmetrical oversized skeleton hands, seven vertebrae on a spinal column rising like chakras, and a *papilio* (Lat. "butterfly") head.[30]

*Somnium*, Latin for "dream," is also the title of Johannes Kepler's novel (written in 1608; published posthumously in 1634), said to be the first science fiction as well as first lunar astronomy book.[31] Godfrey points out not only that Javier's interest in anatomical drawings, recombinatories of forms of botany and zoology, and cycles of death and life, come from her training as a nurse, but also that Steven Jay Gould's observations about the fossils in the Burgess Shale provides an evolutionary visionary touchstone for Javier and a number of other artists. Gould had pointed out that "the Burgess had been an amazing time of experimentation, an era of such evolutionary flexibility, such potential for juggling and recruitment of characters from the arthropod grab bag, that almost any potential arrangement might be essayed (or assayed)," and more generally that evolution was not a mechanical process but one where all sorts of (unpredictable) combinations might occur (Gould, 1989, 184–85). Godfrey writes, "Geraldine's species morph and mutate, from human to insect to arthropod, and their substance mutates too, from leaf to bone, bone to wool, leaf to paper. She chose bits of human skeleton that resemble insect's structures—four hands, ribs, pelvis, vertebrae—and imagined new beings" (Godfrey 2012).

In Javier's world, death is often depicted as part of the seasonal and life cycle, but, as Godfrey puts it, "Geraldine has inverted the trope: for rather than the skeleton, Death, coming to dance with lovers, priest, knights or barrel makers and kill them, it is Death himself who is born, who grows and dies, collapsing in a heap of bones" (Godfrey 2012). All the more material for Javier to work with. Perhaps there is a resonance with *Death's End*, the novel by Liu Cixin described in the epilogue that deals with what comes after the Anthropocene.

### Future Sensing, Human Redesign, Ground-Truthing

I turn to the Anthropocene in the epilogue as a site for ethnographic work at the speculative edges of what we know today, an analogue to what Adriana Petryna calls "horizoning." The Anthropocene lies at the intersection of technology, disasters (natural and manmade), and "late industrialism" (K. Fortun 2012, 2014). It is a site of risk scenario building among planners and policy makers, as well as in speculative hard science fiction and in artworks. As with novels as teaching spaces for complex interactions, I am interested here in Asian hard science fiction and artworks as ethnographic registers of long standing as well as new imaginaries that anthropology can read for access to ways of thinking about forces beyond the individual's or local communities' control—whether because they are geological, as in earthquakes, or financial, as in the 1997 Asian financial crisis; whether matters of governance missteps at the level of the nation-state, or at the level of global capitalist coercive lending (Studwell 2014). Asia is a place where techno-optimism is widely ascendant, where new infrastructures, signature architecture, and social reorganization is moving at high speed, but also where some of the major recent disasters have occurred, such as the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 and the Fukushima Daichi nuclear meltdown in 2011. It is also a prominent site of contemporary imaginaries that collapse time into utopias and dystopias, precisely the kind of site that ethnography can temper by asserting the importance of working, documenting, exploring connections, finding alternatives, and social routing switches *in the meantime*, in the gaps and contradictions, and in analytic third spaces and parergon ethnographic experiments that can see the contemporary world otherwise.

Asia, of course, is not the only place where such ethnographic imaginaries are at work in emergent forms of life and third spaces. MIT—like STPI, and like the new experimental residential colleges at the National University of Singapore, or the new Singapore University of Technology and Design, established with the help of MIT—is such a triadic third space for future sensing (what's emergent), ground-truthing (what's grounded in contemporary capacities), and human redesign (the ethically contested arenas of prosthetic enhancement, genomic repair, and biological and medical regeneration).

Let me provide two final preliminary examples, one on Human 2.0 from MIT, and one on neuroscience and ethics from Tembusu College (one of the new residential colleges of the National University of Singapore).

In 2007, a conference was held by MIT's Media Lab called "Human 2.0: New Minds, New Bodies, New Identities."[32] As master of ceremony John

Hockenberry quipped from his wheel chair, I'd love to be upgraded to a Human 2.0. Hosted by Hugh Herr (who would show off his high-tech legs and ankles) and Hockenberry, the conference featured a series of primarily prosthetic enhancements to the physical human body and the built environment (smart vehicles, smart cities), many of which are no longer futuristic, ranging from artificial ankles to early Brain Gate insertions into the brain to help paraplegics direct their brainwaves to grab, lift, and sip from a cup; to smart, even driverless, electric cars that can store energy to be returned to the grid when not in use as described by MIT's William Mitchell. By then (2007) celebrity Stephen Hawking had already put into common circulation the ability to use eye movements to operate a computer. We are now accustomed to seeing war veterans (and other amputees, including athletes) with high-tech legs, often displayed modernistically as pure metal rods, sometimes encased in naturalistic or wildly painted casings. We have seen hand and arm transplants, even face transplants. The promises of brain-neural interface design to give back functionality to the impaired moves ahead slowly. The promises of individualized and comparative genomics (with all the attendant other "omics"—proteomics, iRNA regulation) and of gene and cell therapy (with not just recombinant DNA using enzymes to cut and splice at the test tube level but now also CRISPR-cas 9 to work at the level of cells) also slowly advance hopes of both medical regeneration and smoother interaction with our microbiomes, viruses, and other biological and ecological surrounds.

The space between the heady Media Lab–style demonstrations and the realities of daily life is a *third space of ethnography*, the space of exploring with the engineers the challenges of getting these prostheses to work and exploring with their users their flaws and complications in daily use. A charismatic course at MIT called "Assistive Technologies," initiated by the late MIT polymath professor Seth Teller,[33] continued by Grace Teo and William Lim, and now by others (Aidinoff 2015) works both sides by beginning with particular individuals addressing their needs both in engineering and in human interactive terms (engineering with and for whom?).[34] Leg prostheses often rub against the flesh, so the students worked with a wearer to design a soft interfacing, customized for the user, and adjustable (not a one-time solution). A blind-accessible modification to an otherwise inaccessible oven was created for an Italian American man who loves to cook for others (as well as for himself). Teaching students to learn to see, feel, and learn from someone differently embodied is as important a skill as the engineering: it is an ethnographic pedagogy. Instead of hackathons or other prototyping for imagined

customers at a commercial scale (with and for whom?), one begins with individual needs and makes these particular lives better, including learning along with them how to make the constant required adjustments and repairs over time, and only thereafter seeing if some of those ideas are scalable or could be worked into a sustainable business plan for profit or for a sustainable nonprofit, a cooperative perhaps, or skill exchanges and community networks. Sociological imagination is needed as well as engineering modeling, prototyping and testing ("design-build-test-deploy").

In 2013 at Tembusu College, an indigenously designed new residential college of the National University of Singapore, I helped teach a course in biomedicine and Singapore society with two hundred first-year undergraduate students. I organized a panel on neuroscience and ethics for the students. One of the presenters, professor Nitish Thakor, the director of the new SiNAPSE (Singapore Institute for Neurotechnology: Advancing through Partnership of Scientists and Engineers), from the Johns Hopkins University, and much earlier from yet another model cultural setting (ITT Bombay), challenged the students at my request to think about how they could evaluate what is only speculatively possible versus what is realistically feasible. In addition he asked them to ask themselves how they individually as ethical beings would draw the line between what one can do and what one should do, and why. It was a wonderfully raucous exchange, probing, trying to think beyond ethical inhibitions to ask why and where norms be drawn and on what grounds, with what precedent cases, beyond local conventions, thinking outside of the box, finding where the red lines should be, and how they move and are reconfigured with new experiences and knowledges.[35]

These too are third spaces of ethnography: working out recursively as real-life challenges arise rather than as apodictic philosophy. The calling of anthropology and ethnography is not what it used to be, but it is as urgent and necessary as ever, together with its transformed sister disciplines in the arts and humanities, sciences and engineering, in a world of emergent forms of life.

## Invitation

I invite you in the following chapters to follow me in my own trajectory through several generations of anthropology. I have been lucky to have been able to participate and feel the charisma (sense of calling, and of collective endeavor) of many anthropological engagements, beginning with my undergraduate days at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where I

was immersed in classical British social anthropology, and a return briefly to the Johns Hopkins University, where I witnessed the extraordinary conference The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man (Macksey and Donato, ed. 1972). I then went to the University of Chicago in the golden days of symbolic and interpretive anthropology (where Clifford Geertz was on the faculty, and Paul Rabinow was a fellow graduate student a year or two senior to me; see chapters 3 and 4) and in the time of the upheavals of the civil rights movement, the Great Society experiments in civil society invigoration, and the anti–Vietnam War protest movement. I moved then to Harvard during the controversies over sociobiology and recombinant DNA, returning briefly to the University of Chicago to participate in a seven-country project on social change and Islam. I was then recruited by George Marcus to join the Anthropology Department at Rice University, where we built a graduate program, ran the interdisciplinary Rice Circle, the Center for Cultural Studies (that I directed for six years), the editorial collective that produced the eight volumes of *Late Editions: Cultural Studies at the End of the Century* (edited by George Marcus), ran the journal *Cultural Anthropology* (under George Marcus's editorship), and wrote *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, as well as the SAR (School for American Research)-incubated volumes *Writing Culture* (edited by George Marcus and James Clifford) and *Critical Anthropology Now* (edited by George Marcus). During the Rice years, I also participated in the Benjamin Lee–led network based in Chicago called the Center for Psychosocial Studies and then the Center for Transnational Studies, which in turn was associated with the journal *Public Culture* (run by Carol Breckenridge and Arjun Appadurai), of which for a few years I was an associate editor. Following my six-year stint as director of the Rice Center for Cultural Study, in which the effort was to enliven the interface between anthropology and the humanities (including bringing to Rice people to teach in feminism, comparative religion, and film and media studies), I moved to MIT to explore the interface between anthropology and the sciences and technology, and served for four years as the director there of the STS (Science, Technology and Society Program), an exciting period when the program actually integrated historical and anthropological approaches on something like an equal basis (chronicled in Fischer 2003, chap. 9), with Lily Kay, Charlie Weiner, and Evelynn Hammonds among the leading lights on the collaborative history side (Lily pioneering serious historiography of contemporary science, Charlie constantly keeping alive the social justice and ethics side of STS, and Evelynn bringing race and diversity issues to the MIT agenda). I was also welcomed warmly into MIT's lively Anthropology Program (with James

Howe and Jean Jackson trading the duties of chair for many years; see chapter 5). I was also integrated into the Harvard Friday Morning Seminar on Mental Health and Medical Anthropology run by Byron Good and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, and into teaching with them at the Harvard Medical School and with Byron in anthropology. There I reengaged with Tambiah (see chapter 6), who had also overlapped with me at Chicago. Arthur Kleinman had helped found both the Friday Morning Seminar and the journal *Culture*, *Medicine*, *and Psychiatry*, which Byron and Mary-Jo then ran for many years, and through both Kleinman and Byron I had important interactions with Veena Das (see chapter 7 and 9). It was through Byron and Mary-Jo's NIMH training grant, which brought two postdocs a year to Harvard, that I met Joe Dumit, who became my closest colleague at MIT's STS Program and continues as coeditor of the book series Experimental Futures, and João Biehl and Adriana Petryna (see chapter 12), former students of Paul Rabinow, both of whom I once tried very hard to hire at MIT, and who have since become close and prized colleagues. Another important presence in the Cambridge, Mass., STS scene is my colleague and friend Sheila Jasanoff, whom we also tried to hire at one point and who has helped train a number of our graduate students. Also important over the years, both in visits to Cambridge and elsewhere (including at the SHOT [Society for History of Technology] meetings in Singapore in 2016), has been Bruno Latour, whose wit and always good humor is an inspiration, and whom I invited not only to speak in the MIT STS program (one of the largest turnouts for an STS public event) but also to do an amazing masters class with my social theory graduate students in which he displayed a Socratic technique of leading students though a mazeway of thoughts that constantly caught them having to rethink from new angles. In recent years I've been welcomed in Singapore (see chapter 12) by Greg Clancey (a former student at MIT), Ryan Bishop (a former student at Rice), John Philips (see chapter 8), Margaret Tan Ai Hua, Prasanjit Duara, Tan Tai Yong, Alan Chang, and Lily Kong to the National University of Singapore's initiatives in STS, and by Edison Liu, Bing Lim, and Huck Ng to the Genome Institute of Singapore.

My own fieldwork and ethnographic work in the meantime has slowly drifted eastward from once upon a time in Jamaica to Iran, India, and now Southeast Asia, and points in between and on the other side.

Please join me in my conversations with my friends (I don't always agree with them, you'll see, but they are friends nonetheless), and with the delights of anthropology, for which I can think of no better motto than the epigram from the late important Singaporean playwright Kuo Pao Kun I placed on

the dedication page. At MIT most everyone is, or aspires to be, the leader of a lab or group. James Howe, in self-defense, put up a sign on his door, "The Howe Group." In that spirit, I dedicate this volume to my MIT students under the name "The Fischer Lab" or "The Lab in New Approaches to Ethnography, Contemporary Social Theory, and Emergent Forms of Life" (ETL: Ethnography, Theory, Life). This is only half-facetious, because I do recognize a distinctive anthropological STS style, tools, discourse, and conversation in exploring emergent forms of life through multiscale, multilocale ethnographies on social issues of global importance among my former (and present) graduate students, many of whose works I use as exemplars in the following pages. Join us.

## Cover Image

The cover is a woodcut by Yoshitoshi that I call "Pen and Sword," that hangs in my living room alongside the samurai that I used as a cover image for *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice*. Both serve me as constant meditation images. "Pen and Sword" is, of course, a traditional image of a samurai committing hari-kari, removing his armor, and weapons, and taking up a pen to write his farewell. In my interpretation, it is the pen that is the stronger legacy, and one that deals with the demons of the world, imaged in the approaching tiger in the upper left corner, held at bay. It is an image of the emotional intensity of the struggle to make the writing, the ethnography, come out right.

## Opening Keywords

Keyword refrains are suggested, at the beginning of each part, as guides, traces, shadows, openings and indexicals of theory building—a short-hand analytic weft to the ethnographic woof. Keywords here are not efforts to create new neologisms, but on the contrary to attend to and focalize refrains in the everyday speech, refrains, and engagements with others, across languages, across vocations, and across disciplines. Keys open up locks and puzzles, doors and windows, languages and behaviors (shiboleths, cues, codes). They are also music signatures. Read quickly as you would expressionist brush strokes or scan a score; later return, picking up the stitches, following the transversal connections. The index will provide a search engine for more detailed views of the stitching. But the idea of keywords here is to open up discourse for the twenty-first century, not to lock down definitions; to point to substantive

issues, sites for new knowledge building drawing on the experiences of the multitudes, and building new worlds flourishing at many scales, pluralistically, of many forms and types, guided by visions and practicalities.

*Ethnography in the meantime* is a self-cultivation of attention like breathing in yoga. Attending to such breathing brings awareness of temporalities and recursivities, tonalities and tunings, time signatures, historical horizons, and changes in worldly references, articulated sometimes as past, present or future, at other times as familiars (what we have always been) and "others," transformations (what we will have become, could have, or might yet, become).

Times appear out of joint, cameras out of focus, and pens run out of ink (chapter 11); we need new keywords, new analyses, new framings, new platforms or media, as well as new observations, transferences, and hospitalities (chapter 9).

Past twentieth-century schools of thought and methodological tools also remain critical and in contemporary use, if often tweaked for unexpected new contexts—on functionalism or the rule "you cannot change only one thing"; structuralism or the language-like systematicity of how we think; critical theory or questions about how the taken for granted is shaped by political economy and socialization; interpretive anthropology or the value added to the cultural by mutual interrogation across linguistic, cultural, and vocational divides about the meanings of words, deeds, and things; and the postmodern or the postings across different formations of the modern, see Fischer 1997. On "religion," "kinship," see briefly in chapter 1. For broader historical and philosophical background and important legacy keywords such as the four *natures*, analytical approaches for *cultural analysis*, *personhood*, and the *body* as experimental shifter "between beastial and divine" drawing on experiments like those of Stellarc or technologies show-cased at the MIT Media Lab's conference Human 2.0, see Fischer 2009.

Here are a few key words from the prologue to illustrate, in order of the sections.

*Anthropology in the meantime and spaces for experimental ethnography*: third spaces, emergent forms of life, unforeseen social ruptures, experimental time, peopling of technologies, relays of experience;

*Colloquy of essays*: essay as *parergon*: dialogue and friendship; cultural genres, rhetorics, logics; vernacular philosophies; materiality of oral, written, filmic, and performance ethnographic practices; reverse and spiral temporalities; historical horizons as complex social formations and cultural references;

social commons, flourishing of the human condition in its plurality; future imaginaries.

*Perfect pitch*: theory emergent from the ambrosia of everyday churning; added value of interpretation and speculation through comparison, juxtaposition, and internal contestation; address, tact, and tone.

*For and with whom*: pluralization, prepositions, points of view, multi-locale, multiscale, diasporic feedback and transcultural flows, psychosis of transplantation, linkage of small worlds, intensities and shibboleths, looking for the unsaid and unarchived, ethnographic aesthetics (modes of seeing, apperceiving, seeing anew, seeing for epistemological form); ethnography in corporations with new forms of deliverables; ethical plateaus; anthropologist as figure of speech indexical for cultural and social analysis; ethnography as taking the time for assessment and evaluation.

*Parergon for the humanities*: emergent transnational ideolects and dialects; translation; pebbles in the way of theory; lively languages; the work of art.

*Tone and tuning*: potency of ethnography setting off reverberations, parallels and contrasts; longitudinal and regionally comparative ethnographic work; advocacy, ethics, and contradiction; contradictions, social oscillations, paradoxes and aporia; detachment, critique, zen exercises; hospitality-hostility.

*Temporality and recursivity*: polyphony and dialogue in ethnographic writing; stepping into streams of representations and social actions; different effects of different material forms of communicative action; public sphere versus public culture.

*Repatriation and work of art in biosensible and maker space worlds (Parergon for STS, science, technology and society studies)*: repatriation as biosensibilities and ecological attention (you cannot change only one thing); scaling and partially globalized processes, up close and across multiple contexts; artworks as cultural registers, as probes for sites of production, circuits and conduits of travel, with different production of meaning in different contexts; loosely linked art worlds, recyclables, breaking the hegemony of Western art theory; theory from the Global East; Asian imaginaries; bugs and affordances.

*Future sensing*, *human redesign*, *ground truthing*: anthropocene as site for ethnographic work at the speculative edges of what we know today; Human 2.0. East and Southeast Asian imaginaries; science fiction, painting, film, literature juxtaposed with ethnography.

**Prologue**

1. "It is necessary," Negri notes (*Political Descartes*, 147n106), "to insist on the plasticity of Descartes's image of *malin*, the *malin genie*. The image is both historically and ideologically rich. . . . '*Malin*' appears in Descartes as both noun and adjective: '*les malins*,' '*les esprits malins*' are all those who, out of pure wickedness, are opposed to the communication of truth." The problem at this historical juncture for Descartes becomes "not whether Galileo is wrong or right. The problem is how truth can live in the world" (143). It is one that has renewed relevance in today's world.

2. Dismayed by the failures of the revolutions of 1848 and the reactionary accession of Louis Bonaparte, Marx describes the centuries-long movement toward a bourgeois revolution and then a proletarian one as having moved "backward," hopefully to clear the way for future movement again "forward." In Paris the uprising of 1848 was more an artisanal one than a proletarian one, and a real industrial working-class culture, which Marx tried to educate and organize, would not develop for another quarter century.

3. See M. M. J. Fischer, "Ask Not What Man Is But What One May Expect of Him," chapter 6 in *Anthropological Futures* for a contemporary reading and interpretation of Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. On the notion of ethnography operating in third spaces, see also M. M. J. Fischer, *Emergent Forms of Life*, "Introduction."

4. Urban planner and geographer Mike Douglass, noting that urbanization is occurring at an unprecedented speed and scale in Asia, sees Seoul, under mayor Park Won-soon, as a model of progressive change, using such key tools as participatory budgeting to get funds into local communities, operating a mobile mayor's office that moves around the city to engage in solving community-specific issues together with local residents, appointing citizen mayors in different localities, shifting subsidies from developers to distributive justice measures, creating one thousand village communities across the city, emphasizing cultural spaces, business, and social enterprise

cooperatives, and many other innovations (Douglass, "From Corporate Globopolis to Progressive Cities" [2017], "Creative Communities" [2016], "From Good City to Progressive City" [2016], "Globopolis or Cosmopolis" [2009]).

5. I am reminded by the work of Orit Halperin and Gökce Günel (2017) to *perhaps* differentiate the experimentalism of anthropology from that of the often MIT-trained designers of new urbanisms in places such as Abu Dhabi, South Korea, and, in my ethnographic work, Singapore, which Günel and Halperin describe as propagating a logic of "demo projects," where "ever more speculation, algorithmically managed, to derive value from the possible, never realized futures," and where "cities, the site of performance and demonstration associated with democracy and the 'demos,' terms first emerging with the idea of the polis or city, have now become a literal 'demo' as in prototype, [and] . . . the inhabitants . . . test subjects" (9). The equivocation *perhaps* is that much anthropology and humanities also invokes a kind of self-legitimating catastrophic threat (an often nostalgic or romantic antitechnologism that expects or at least prepares for the worst from technology) parallel to the utopian legitimations Günel and Halperin describe for these speculative, experimental, eco-urbanisms. Günel and Halperin rightly criticize these latter logics for a tendency to "evacuate differences, temporalities, and societal structures." By contrast, differences, temporalities, and societal structures are essential, critical, pleasurable, and resourceful for anthropology, even if they can also become instrumentalized as fodder for yet further advertising in the logics described by Günel and Halperin.

6. I draw upon Walter Benjamin's figural language here: of the dialectical image—always a double image—juxtaposing past and present, aspirations and banal realities, and providing a montaged disjunction, jarring, or fissuring of consciousness, rupturing the flow of naturalistic time, producing flashes of enlightenment, recognition, or re-orientation. The dialectical image is "the image that is read—which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability [*das Bild im Jetzt der Erkennbarkeik*]." Benjamin, *Arcades Project*, [(Convolute N, 3, 1), 463], or, in Freud's terms, its *Nachtraeglichkeit*.

7. Thanks to George Marcus for this phrase as a possible title for this volume. My original title, which reviewers liked, was *Anthropology Emergent from the Chrysalis of the Twentieth Century*, to resonate with the previous volumes, *Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice* and *Anthropological Futures*. All these titles are variations on the same theme.

8. Smartness is perhaps to be defined as increasing sensitivities or sensibilities: we distinguish dumb devices as passive, smart ones as responsive, able to pass information from one place, or state, to another. Hence there are degrees of smarter and smarter devices and infrastructures, sometime too smart for robustness, safety, privacy, or other values that need to be included in the balance.

9. Thanks to Michael Watts ("Specters of Oil," 166) for this paraphrase and rearticulation of Henri Lefebvre's three categories of space in Watts's review of the cultural archive of oil's representations. Watts focuses especially on photographer Ed Kashi's "ethnographic visual practice" ("working slowly and carefully, immersing himself in the local context," relying on the help of Nigerian locals) as features of his "critical and alternative photography" (174).

10. Small-worlds hypotheses are popularly known as the likelihood that any two persons will require only "six degrees of separation" to establish a relationship to each other. Experiments tested this originally by mailing letters between people who were presumptively geographically and socially distant to see if the letters reached their target and in how many steps or hops. Frigyes Karinthy, Stanley Milgram, Manfred Kochren, Ithiel de Sola Pool, Benoit Mandelbrot, and Michael Gurevich were among the early mathematicians and social scientists who first explored this topic experimentally and mathematically.

11. One might think here of hegemonies or modes of trying to make one's class position's worldview appear natural, just the way things are; and, alternatively, the sociological observation that underlings often know their superiors better than the latter know them. Transparency of chains of administrative decision making or of commercial supply chains may be of ideological importance, despite the fact that the technologies of these chains exist in part to obscure any such transparency; and yet ethnographic or investigative journalism can sleuth them out, and good history can do the same after the fact, if written records are themselves available. Such sleuthing often requires attending to the working experience of many small worlds along the chains.

12. See Steven Tyler's brilliant essays in *The Unspeakable: Discourse, Dialogue, and Rhetoric in the Postmodern World* (1987), and his earlier *The Said and the Unsaid: Mind, Meaning, and Culture* (1978).

13. On "ethical plateaus," see M. M. J. Fischer, *Emergent Forms of Life*. This will be explained further on.

14. In development work, Development Alternatives International (DAI) was formed by anthropologists and remains one of the most well-regarded such consultancies, based in its methods of long-term commitments rather than short "project time" cycles.

15. I take the phrase, of course, from Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Our age is no longer that age, the subject, in part, of chapter 10.

16. The Necessary Stage's production of *Actor Forty* (premiered in Singapore in February 2017) in Mandarin and other Chinese languages (Hokkien, Cantonese, etc.), performed by the superb actress Yeo Yann Yann, is a bravura example. A one-woman play requiring many situational changes of sociolinguistic language codes and localizations (speaking to a Cannes Film Festival awards ceremony, to a Hong Kong director, to Malay-Chinese reporters, miming Singaporean and Malaysian television soap operas, singing Singapore state-building songs), *Actor Forty* was scripted by Haresh Sharma and directed by Alvin Tan, neither of whom speak Chinese. The script was translated through a number of script revisions by Quah Sy Ren (a bilingual playwright and essayist) and bilingual dramaturge Melissa Lim, with help from various dialect speakers. Even non-Chinese speakers living in the region can recognize many of the subtle changes as the role switches from introspection to varied addressees. The character is an actress turning forty, surprised by becoming unexpectedly pregnant, who negotiates her daily decisions and roles in life. The play is, as well, an

ethnographically rich portrait of a transnational life, located in a Chinese language lifeworld, with English-language abilities, that many professionals inhabit today.

17. See reviews in *Variety* by Markland Taylor, http://variety.com/2003/legit/reviews /the-children-of-herakles-1200544099/; *The Boston Phoenix* by Carolyn Clay, http:// www.bostonphoenix.com/boston/arts/theater/documents/02650464.htm; *The Theater Review* by Kermit Dunkelberg, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/tj/summary/v055/55 .3dunkelberg.html; *Didaskalia* by James T. Svedensen, http://www.didaskalia.net /reviews/2003/2003_01_04_02.html; and the dissent in the *New York Review of Books* by Daniel Mendelsohn, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2003/feb/13/the -bad-boy-of-athens/. I am not suggesting the plotlines align or that there is a direct allegory between Athens and our current situations, but the symbolic and psychologi-cal logics often do align: Iolaus trapped in his wheelchair, attempting to rise and fight, suffering the indignities of infirmity, age, and exile; the idea of sacrificing a child, a virgin, to ensure a victory; the virtuoso performance by the same actress playing the young frightened girl, transformed into willing ritual victim; and the old grandmother twisted in vengeance and rage demanding death for Eurystheus in violation of Athens' rules for treating POWs, signaling as so often in Greek tragedy, that the psychosocial consequences carry over generation to generation; the mysterious power of rituals both to heal and incite, signaled by the double aulos/flute and chanting in minor key; the cold rationality of the aggressors who think themselves more powerful; the diplomacy of the Athenian leadership finding a way between ruin and principle; the questions of the crowd, the public of the agora, the courtroom's cross-examinations and those of the parliamentary committee.

18. I vividly still remember the stagings of *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabbler* at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Mumbai in the 1990s produced and directed by Alyque and Pearl Padamsee, and starring their daughter, Raell Padamsee. There have of course been many other productions.

19. Ong says, "I was interested in a rewriting of *King Lear* from the point of view of Goneril, and Kishida's plays always investigated characters such as Japanese women who, in order to resist patriarchy, became violent and demonic. . . . She [Kishida] also disrupted established power hierarchies by writing in vernacular Japanese, disregarding the classical literary language" (Ong, *Lear Dreaming*, 247). Noh theater, he suggests, is both a very conservative art form, and a Samurai art linked to Shogun culture, and ap-propriate to the authoritarian wielding of power (246). A Sumatran Randai performer from a matrilineal culture is used to perform the community storyteller, he says, because "I thought it was important to have a group of artists . . . who saw the mother as the most important element in their culture," and the Randai form "embodies a didactic theatrical form through which morality tales are passed on to the members of a community" (246).

20. On the importance of Durkheimian thought in Indochina, see Bayly, "French Anthropology."

21. http://www.stpi.com.sg/download/171115stpigreybooklet.pdf.

22. Ventura, *Recyclables*. http://www.stpi.com.sg/assets/artists/2012/RonaldVentura /RV%20Catalogue.pdf.

23. In 2016 the Farensworth Museum in Camden, Maine, dedicated a fascinating show to Donald Saff's collaborations with Jim Dine, Nancy Graves, Roy Lichtenstein, Philip Pearlstein, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, and James Turrell.

24. Tyler was the son of Romanian and Hungarian immigrants to Indiana, where the father (original surname Tyira) worked in steel mills and also was a stonemason. Ken Tyler trained at the Art Institute of Chicago, worked in a steel mill briefly, served in Korea, and did lithography at Indiana University with Garo Antreasian and the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles. He then experienced a catalyzing collaboration with the artist Josef Albers.

25. Lithography is said to have been invented in 1796 in Munich by Alois Senefelder, who could not afford to print his plays by the more expensive copper engraving, and so developed this cheaper alternative.

26. I become attentive to paper since working with printmaker Eric Avery (M. M. J. Fischer, "With a Hammer," 2000).

27. Suh is the son of Suh Se-ok, a master of traditional painting, and did BFA and MFA work in Korea before continuing studies at the Rhode Island School of Design and Yale. He now lives in New York, London, and Seoul.

28. Do Ho Suh, *I Am Your Conduit*. Catalogue. STPI, 2011. http://www.stpi.com.sg /assets/artists/2011/DoHoSuh/FINAL_DO%20HO_catalogue.pdf. https://ocula.com /art-galleries/singapore-tyler-print-institute/artworks/do-ho-suh/i-am-your-conduit/.

29. Do Ho Suh, *I Am Your Conduit*. https://www.artsy.net/artwork/do-ho-suh-i-am -your-conduit. https://www.google.com/search?q=Do+Ho+Suh,+%E2%80%9Ci+am+ your+conduit%E2%80%9D.&biw=1280&bih=557&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa =X&ved=0ahUKEwj_3eScnZfPAhXFFz4KHSEND0AQ7AkIPw.

30. It could possibly be a Vertebraesomniumanisoptera: "isoptera" means only sym- metrical wings but is usually used for termites with quite differently attached wings. Another of the Pelvissomniumpapilio (B) has a pelvis shape of green leaves humorously attached immediately below two golden-bud or robot-helmet-like heads, and actually looks like large eyes or a Fledermaus mask, below which is a long stem ending in a small rib cage and posterior insect-like segment and two wisps of legs or antennae in the wrong end (or maybe the whole thing is moving downward). In another variation, a magnificent three-segment insect with four sets of five finger-bone structures ending in arrow-like brown-black leaves all in gold and red looks like a Japanese samurai. It is classified as a Manussomniumcrustacea.

31. The book began as Kepler's dissertation to defend Copernicus on the motion of the earth, with the frame story added later, including a fictionalized version of his own life as an assistant to Tycho Brahe.

32. For more on the conference, see http://www.media.mit.edu/video/view/h20 –2007–05–09–1.

33. For Seth Teller, see http://ppat.mit.edu/fall2015/index.html.

34. My wife, Susann Wilkinson, sat in on the course with Grace Teo and William Lim in 2014, and I went along to the class project demonstrations, and to a show at the Boston Science Museum by Grace's start-up company, Open Style Lab. The following year, in fall 2015, I invited Grace to my "Social Theory" class for first-year graduate

students, precisely to expose them to an ethnographic method for practical use, and was pleased that Marc Aidinoff took the opportunity to interview Grace further and develop a quite insightful paper on the class pedagogy. Open Style Lab is based at the International Design Center at MIT, part of the MIT-Singapore University of Technology and Design collaboration (of which I am a member). As a Singaporean, Grace also was a great interlocutor on Singapore, and a teacher for Singaporean students who came to MIT for short course training. http://videolectures.net/designdis-ability2015_teo _design_dis-ability/; and https://vimeo.com/125575256.

35. See M. M. J. Fischer, "The BAC Consultation."


## Chapter 1. Experimental Ethnography

1. Malinowski 1935; Firth 1957.

2. Evans-Pritchard 1940, 1951, 1956; Allan 1965; Dumont 1970; Gluckman 1945; Karp and Bird, 1987; Werbner, 1984.

3. Bateson 1936; Leach, 1954.

4. Turner 1957; Obeysekere, 1981.

5. Mauss 1925; Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940; Lévi-Strauss 1949; Maybury-Lewis 1979; Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1950; Schneider and Gough 1961.

6. Richards 1939; Colson 1979; Wilson 1941. This tradition continues on from the 1940s generation: Fischer and Barfield 1980; Fisher 1995; K. Fortun 2001; Goodell 1986; Maybury-Lewis, ed. 1980; Ramos 1990/1995; Tambiah 1957, 1986; Taussig 1986; and many more.

7. Maybury-Lewis 1965, 1974; Bohannan 1953, 1954; Descola 1996, 1998; Cassagrande 1960.

8. Redfield 1930; Lewis 1951; Malinowski 1922; Weiner 1976; *Women of Value*; Evans-Pritchard 1956; Johnson 1994; Hutchinson 1996.

9. Morreira 2016.

10. Bateson 1958; Freeman 1983; Rosaldo 1980; Tambiah 1980, 1992.

11. In 1972, Curtis and Hunt's *In the Land of the War Canoes* (1914) was restored by Bill Holm and given a soundtrack recorded by Kwakwaka'wakw singers, including three who had been actors in the original film. Similarly, Curtis and Hunt's photographs of dancers in ceremonial masks from 1914 would provide materials for brilliant reanalysis by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1982) of the masks, the myths behind them, and the ecology and exchange relations those myths articulated. Franz Boas and George Hunt's series of shorts done in 1931 (with 16-millimeter film, and wax cylinders for sound recording) were also reworked into a full film by Bill Holm in 1972. Similarly, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's film *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (1925), with its rare footage, is now nicely juxtaposed with Garthwaite's history of the Bakhtiari (1983). Robert J. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), still a classic, is pedagogically usefully counterpoised to Philip Kaufman's *The White Dawn* (1974), based on true events and probing cross-cultural conflicts (coscripted by James Houston, whose book [1971] was based on Inuit oral histories told to him, the third film to be shot in Inuit locations, and the first to use actual Inuit dialect); and to Inuit