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Forum

Postmodernism, urban ethnography, and the new social space of ethnic identity

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The relentlessly self-reflexive ways of representing reality now fashionably termed "postmodern" are flourishing in an increasingly wide range of domains. In social theory, postmodernism has been used to characterize the diverse philosophical work of such Continental post-structuralist theorists as Baudrillard, Lyotard, Derrida, and Foucault. Commentators have identified a multiplicity of other postmodernisms in architecture, the visual arts, literature, performance, television, video, film, music, and fashion.[1] The term has entered the debate on urban form largely by way of the impact of postmodern architecture on the built environment of cities. It has entered the realm of urban theory by way of debates in urban sociology, anthropology, geography, and political science, on the interplay among global socio-spatial restructuring, the cultural transformation of cities, the formation of personal identities, and the politics of collective action.

In an otherwise skeptical article on postmodernism and urbanism, Sharon Zukin points out that postmodernism "sounds right" in urban studies because it intuitively resonates "with the fragmentation of geographic loyalties in contemporary economic restructuring and its expression in new urban polarities."[2] Yet Zukin's periodizing reading of postmodernity, along with that of David Harvey[3] and Frederic Jameson,[4] tends to treat questions of culture and personal identity as direct byproducts of new political-economic arrangements and their socio-spatial impact on the material form and social structure of cities. Indeed, thanks to Jameson and Harvey, the term postmodern is now often equated with the late-capitalist or "post-fordist" historical period and its putatively hegemonic regime of flexible accumulation.

While rendering contemporary cultural and political changes comprehensible within an essentialist, structural Marxist framework, these ways of reading the postmodern ignore a growing body of ethnographic studies which describe the ways that the everyday practices of ordinary people, their feelings and understandings of their conditions of exist-

ence, often modify those very conditions and thereby shape rather than merely reflect new modes of urban culture.[5] Current efforts in the debate on postmodernity to subordinate cultural processes to the master discourse of Marxist political economy also downplay the ontological and epistemological challenge which poststructuralist philosophy poses for all forms of essentialism. While "post-fordist" forms of economic organization, and the global restructuring of capital and labor may be related in complex ways to certain postmodern aesthetic and cultural practices, they are certainly not equivalents. The relationships, if any, among aesthetic postmodern styles, the so-called "post-fordist" epoch in political economy, and the movement of poststructuralist and deconstructive methods from philosophy to the social sciences requires careful specification.

The development of postmodernism as method of sociopolitical analysis and cultural critique is a principal concern of this essay. Yet, it is important to specify the boundaries of the postmodern at the outset, because the critique of the tyranny of totalizing social theory that follows is not well served by the current tendency to deploy "postmodernism" as a totalizing device which conflates and thus obscures the differences among the various postmodern*isms* now on the scene. Kirsten Simonsen[6] and Michael Dear,[7] assessing the implications of various "postmodern conditions" for the theory and practice of urban planning, have usefully distinguished basic differences between postmodernism as a *style* (as in architecture, art, and literature), as an *epoch* (as in Jameson and Harvey's critiques), and as a *method* (as in poststructuralism and deconstruction). The latter variant, which informs this essay, constitutes a revolt against rigid conventions of language and method in intellectual discourse and textual representation. It is extended in the analysis that follows into a deconstructive critique of the closed systems, grand narratives, and totality theories of modernism itself (e.g., liberalism and Marxism). The aim of my anti-essentialist critique is to cross some of the borders currently separating the literatures of postmodernism as a deconstructive method, urban ethnography as cultural critique, and ethnic experience in urban time-space in order to gain a better purchase on the politics of personal and ethnic identity under our present globalized conditions of existence.

Postmodernism and the remaking of social analysis

In the social sciences, advocates of postmodern methods for the conduct of social research are now actively engaged in debates with positivists, neo-Marxists, essentialist feminists, traditional ethnographers, and virtually all social researchers who seek to uncover general patterns in history or human behavior rather than recognizing the diversity of individual, group, and cultural difference.[8] The belief in the autonomization of the cultural imaginary from the realm of economic necessity is reflected in this new trend in social inquiry. Postmodernism as method has refocused attention from the macro-structural context of social life to the realm of the everyday, i.e., to micro-political relations of power, domination, resistance, and struggle, particularly as these articulate with issues of race, ethnicity, gender, ecology, and locality. When postmodern social scientists such as Stephen Tyler assert, with rhetorical flourish, that "discourse is the maker of this world, not its mirror,"[9] they condense the idea that the occasions, spaces, and modes of representation are themselves forms of power rather than mere reflections of power residing in the real, material "facts of life," and the "big structures,"[10] through which the power of class, capital, or the state are expressed. Hence, the focus on discourse as the space of the "self-production of society" shifts our attention from macropolitics to micropolitics, the social spaces where networks of power relations "subsisting at every point in a society"[11] are formed, reformed, and transformed.

This return to the "local" and the historically particular represents a growing skepticism concerning the Enlightenment project of rationality: the use of rules of thought to achieve propositions of universal or "global" validity.[12] In renouncing the enlightenment quest for foundationally grounded thought, which Lyotard terms "master-narratives," the postmodernist moment in social science stands in opposition to both liberal and Marxist political-economic reasoning. It calls into question the idea that there can be any firmly grounded master discourse of economic development, political liberation, or social change. Totality theories, including those rooted in neo-classical economics and historical materialism, are appropriately viewed as reductionist in that they ignore elements of cultural life that they cannot explain or marginalize them as exceptions, often in the "soft" areas of culture, art, feelings, or desire. Marginalizing or excluding cultural practices tends to deny their importance as historical modes of agency in society. In these ways, postmodern social research harkens back to Nietzsche's

insight that no totalistic system of thought can capture and "fix" a world of endless becoming.

In this spirit, the Gramscian quest for new forms of oppositional agency resonates in the debates in postmodern social science at the point where the literature on contemporary ethnographic practice articulates with that on the rise of new social movements.[13] This articulation calls to our attention the meanings of the social actions of heretofore "marginal" people, movements, and social forces. It suggests the need for closer study of the "marginal" in order to discern the formation of new "subject positions," grasp emergent counterlogics to the prevailing modes of domination in society, and give voice to the polyphonic patterns of accommodation and resistance to domination.

Given this attention to historical specificity, plurality, and difference, postmodern social analysis questions the projection of a universal, trans-historical subject such as the working class as a privileged repository of agency. Orthodox Marxism's emphasis on the centrality of the mode of production in shaping social roles and forming class structured subject positions de-emphasizes the domains of culture, emotion, and desire. The cultural mediation of signs, as well as people's everyday expressions of emotion and desire, even if distorted by the media images of consumer society, represent possible oppositional forces to capitalist reproduction that are unrecognized in the class struggle model of social change and reduced to epiphenomenal status in the periodizations of Harvey and Jameson.

Just as postmodernism as method resists efforts to reduce the complexity of human action to economic explanation "in the last instance," so too does it reject totalistic biological or psychoanalytical explanations of the wellsprings of human action. For methodological postmodernists the cultural mediation of material life is central. This is nicely illustrated in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, where anthropologists George Marcus and Michael Fischer embrace the central thesis of Marshall Sahlins's work, *Culture and Practical Reason*.[14] Marcus and Fischer share with Sahlins the anti-essentialist assumption that the ways in which human needs are satisfied through the exploitation of nature and social relations are constituted is by systems of signification that give cultural meaning to human action. Accordingly, they write: "There is … no such thing as pure nature, pure need, pure interests or material forces, without their being culturally constructed…. [C]ulture mediates all human perceptions of nature … understanding these mediations is a

much more important key to explaining human events than is mere knowledge of ecological and material limits."[15] In the view of "culture" developed in this essay, the languages people possess and the circuits of communication in which they are implicated are resources as well as limits. They constitute the terrain for the contestation, as well as the reproduction of cultural meanings, for resistance as well as accommodation to dominant structures of power and ideology.

This emphasis on the cultural construction of social agency through individual and group acts of accommodation and resistance to the prevalent modes of domination in society has significant implications for urban research. In urban theory, the focus upon new forms of human agency in the making and remaking of cities has brought an increasing number of urban researchers to a realization that the people participating in urban political and social life are actors "making choices within a structure of constraints that then modify that structure."[16] They are more than mere "actees" whose behavior is impressed upon them by structural forces and socialization processes.[17]

Following from this recognition, there has been a renewed emphasis in urban research upon studying the *locality* as the place where local struggles, and alternative discourses on the meanings of "global conditions" are played out.[18] This requires examining at close range but in rich contextual detail the specific historical conditions of these local sites of cultural appropriation and resistance as enacted in the everyday lives of ordinary men and women. Since consciousness springs from both people's material circumstances and from their perceptions and cultural understandings of these circumstances, an ethnographic approach is increasingly viewed as an indispensable route to knowledge of the ways in which consciousness is actually formed and how it changes over time and space. As cogently stated by Andrew Sayer, "Even where locality studies do seem quite successful in rendering political and other behavior intelligible, political economy without ethnography leaves the reasons for that intelligibility implicit: the behavior seems intelligible only to the extent that it resonates, not because we have articulated the constitutive structure of understanding or feeling."[19] In light of this renewed interest in the interplay between urban political economy and the cultural practices of daily life, how does the debate on postmodern knowledge address the epistemological and ontological question that Polanyi long ago termed "personal knowledge"?

At every point in the intersubjective communication of events and

meanings, postmodern social analysis problematizes knowledge and meaning. Ironically, despite the fact that the postmodern intellectual current eschews totalizing grand theories, postmodernism as method offers a totalizing critique of realist and materialist theories of representation. It problematizes both the text and the context. Epistimologically, at the level of textual representation, it questions not only what is *known*, the "out there" of historical reality, but also the *knower* or *story-teller* and the *reader* or *receiver* of knowledge. Ontologically, at the level of contextual interpretation, it problematizes the *subject* as a bounded social actor inexorably situated in a context that is itself historically contingent, and socially constructed. This immensely complicates the question of human agency.

If only because of the breathtaking sweep of this critique, the debate on postmodern knowledge deserves to be addressed carefully by urban researchers. To avoid misunderstanding, it is equally important that this often muddy and sometimes polemical critique of objectivity in the social sciences be synthesized and critiqued with clarity and parsimony. My discussion of postmodern social science is therefore intentionally presented in what aesthetic postmodernists would doubtless characterize as a linear, logical, and hence decidedly "modernist" form. My purpose is to broaden the debate on modernity rather than hastily to embrace or to denounce the postmodern moment in the philosophy of social science.

Questioning textuality: The challenge to realist representation

Postmodernism as method calls into question the possibility that any of us can know an "out there," a real object of investigation existing apart from the systems of signification through which the world is described and understood. This is done by explicitly challenging the notion of realist representation. In postmodern epistemology, even the apparently most direct medium of knowing, the camera's documentation of the "out there" is not a depiction of unmediated reality; rather photographs, like all other forms of perception, are filtered by "the discursive and aesthetic assumptions of the camera holder."[20] Likewise, the meaning of a story told by a historical narrative is produced by the frame of reference, often implicit, assigning patterned regularity to the flux of everyday existence. In short, *discursive practices* structure the flow of the "out there." No ahistorical, universalist, or essentialist entity, like "homo faber" or "homo economicus," can give unifying meaning to history.

This does not mean that the terrain of knowledge and meaning in the social and human sciences is reduced to pure subjectivity or the chaos of the living city. Rather, discursive practices are always embedded in social relations of power and ideology which readily authorize some representations of the "out there" while impeding others. For this reason, postmodern epistemology problematizes the *knower* as much as the known. Rejecting both the romantic notion of the transcendentally creative artist and the modernist notion of an intellectual avante garde capable of pursuing universal reason, postmodern social science fundamentally historicizes the process of "writing culture," questioning Enlightenment notions of authorial objectivity, originality, and authority. In treating knowledge as a social product, emanating from and limited by historically specific and culturally mediated discursive practices, postmodern epistemology rejects both the rationalist quest for general laws of history or human behavior and empiricist efforts to ground knowledge in the "hard facts" of an "external" material world.

The postmodern analysis of the "death of the author" is a curious move that tends to undercut what it inscribes. To debunk the autonomy and originality of the individual "author," as well as to challenge the positivist notion of social scientific verifiability, postmodern cultural critiques have used parody, meta-fiction, experimental writings of ethnographic "findings," and even what is termed "intertextual appropriation" (or direct copying, as in the case of the appropriated photographic images of Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, and Sherrie Levine, and Terry Gilliam's filmmaking in *Brazil*). Yet in thereby producing quite novel forms of creative expression, their challenge to authorial originality is undercut even as the challenge to scientific verifiability is reinforced.

Despite this apparent contradiction, there is an important lesson to be derived from the postmodern discussion of the constitutive structure of understanding. In historical as in literary discourse, even presumably descriptive language *constitutes* what it describes. The film *Brazil*, for example, selectively appropriates elements of earlier films such as *1984* and *A Clockwork Orange*, in constituting something new; it does not merely copy, and hence objectively *describe* what it appropriates, but creates new meanings by its juxtaposition of images and signs. Likewise, the "travel writing" of colonial discourse relied upon "description" to fix, construct, and hence master the colonized object. It vividly detailed the habits, customs, speech acts, and bodily practices of conquered peoples in order comprehensively to "know," and hence implicitly control, the colonial subject, thereby "enabling itself to transform

the descriptively verifiable multiplicity and difference into an ideologically felt hierarchy of value."[21] Interpretation, in short, is an unavoidable dimension of descriptive narrative. In this same way, the contemporary social historian selectively "presences the past" in writing a historical text; the cultural anthropologist selectively edits the tapes that give voice to his or her ethnographic subjects.

This constitution of meaning, however, is not an individual invention, but a social product. In the normal course of writing social science, the choices of an author are not made arbitrarily or *in vacuo*, but with some reasonably well-defined audience in mind. This audience is clearly the *reader* of the text, and the *receiver* of the communications imparted in it. Yet because the reader is at least implicitly present before-the-fact in the mind's eye of the writer, the text is at least implicitly a collaborative production.

Postmodern epistemology seeks to make this implicit social production of knowledge explicit. The postmodern project amounts to an almost Brechtian effort to elevate the reader or receiver into an active participant in the meaning-making process. A central purpose of the postmodern discursive style of irony, collage, pastiche, and intertextual appropriation is to make explicit to the reader the cultural structuring of narrative reality. These often all too obvious self-reflexive intrusions of the writer into the story being told are designed to let the reader know that we can only know "reality" as it is produced by cultural representations of it.[22] Because of the inseparability of knowledge and power, there are no value-free narrative choices. For postmodern writers and social commentators the distinction between social scientific methodologies and literary studies thus begins to blur, as do such intellectually limiting binary dualisms as the political and aesthetic, power and ideology, historical and self-referential knowledge, life and art.[23]

The more careful of the postmodern analysts of the social production of knowledge, such as literary theorist Linda Hutcheon, are quick to back away from the post-structuralist position (in my view wrongly) attributed to Derrida, that there is no material or social reality outside the text. Rather, in social scientific discourse as in literature, it is necessary to recognize that: "[a]ll we ever have to work with is a system of signs, and … to call attention to this is not to deny the real, but to remember that we only *give meaning to* the real within these signifying systems."[24] If symbolic systems necessarily mediate the material world and its historical context, how does postmodern social analysis inter-

pret the semiotic mediation between contextuality and social action? What can urban studies learn from this theorization?

Questioning contextuality: Constituting the subject, social action, and context

Postmodern theory challenges the Enlightenment belief in rational-actor models of social action, be they individuals cognizant of "universal reason" or collective actors conscious of material self-interests. Both liberal and Marxist theories of the subject are rejected as essentialist because both offer a reductionist view of the relationship between consciousness, agency, and social change. Both offer competing abstract categories – the "individual" and "class" – as carriers of a unifying and coherent capacity for universal, transhistorical, if not transcendental agency.

There has been much talk in the debate on postmodernity on the problem of the "decentered subject." Just what is meant by decentering, and who is the subject? How is subjectivity related to human agency? How, in turn, are acting human subjects empowered and constrained by their historical context? What can we learn from this debate about the social construction of personal and ethnic identities in our contemporary historical context in which local life has become globalized and the world has, in important ways, become a single social space?

In postmodern social analysis, the subject is decentered precisely because there are no clear-cut roles waiting for subjects to occupy in pursuit of their historical mission. Rather, there are a multiplicity of roles that people come to play in history. These produce a "self" experienced not as a single, completed identity, but as multiple, incomplete, and partial identities, formed in historically specific relation to the different social spaces people inhabit over time.[25] Viewed in this light, the constitution of personal identity is best understood as necessarily *contextualizing* and *historicizing* the subject in all his or her spatial particularities and temporal contradictions.

Postmodern subjectivity is thus inextricably implicated in *sociality*. The social production of subjectivity is embedded in symbolic processes of signification that give meaning to "subject positions" formed, to be sure, at the intersection of such structural categories as class, gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual identity, but always *emergent* within specific

"language games," and their discursive practices.[26] Accordingly, subjectivity is neither natural nor universal, but fragile, decentered, and emergent, like a candle in the wind, always in process of being formed, unformed, and reformed through communication and the semiotic exchange of signs. At the level of the formation of consciousness and agency, how else can we explain recent developments in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in which all that was deemed solid has indeed melted into air?

Chantal Mouffe has been especially clear in positing the connections linking the cultural mediation of subject positions, the "decentered" subject, the formation of personal identity, and the constitution of human agency. Personal identity, Mouffe insists, emerges out of sociality in highly differentiated social formations and complexly organized civil societies that now render its formation fluid and, in her view, radically open. In the contemporary context, neither liberalism nor Marxism offer an adequate theory of the subject, particularly as these theories fail to develop adequate explanations for the coalescence of subject positions into political action. In their place, Mouffe argues:

> |I|t is indispensable to develop a theory of the subject as a decentered, detotalized agent, a subject *constructed* at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there exists no *a priori* or necessary relation. Consequently no identity is ever definitively established, there always being a certain degree of openness and ambiguity in the way the different subject positions are articulated. What emerges are entirely new perspectives on political action, which neither liberalism – with its ideal of the individual who only pursues his or her own interest – nor marxism – with its reduction of all subject positions to that of class – can sanction, let alone imagine.[27]

Just as class and individualist theories of personal identity and collective action are rejected by postmodern theorists, so too are radically decentralist theories that give historical and ontological priority to "the community" as the ultimate source of coherent identity and social action. As Mouffe, once again clearly states:

> Many communitarians seem to believe that we belong to only one community, defined empirically and even geographically.... But we are in fact always *multiple and contradictory subjects*, inhabitants of a diversity of communities (as many ... as the social relations in which we participate and the subject-positions they define), constructed by a variety of discourses and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of these subject positions.[28]

These intersections are crucial elements in the processes of self, group, class, ethnic, and racial formation in any social system.

In the version of the cultural politics of ethnic and racial formation recovered in the analysis that follows, the presumed global cultural homogenization of what Frederic Jameson calls "consumer society" is strongly challenged. Like my past criticisms of the totalizing tendencies of various versions of modernization and development theory,[29] this effort to reshape social theory into a more fluid and flexible mode of social analysis rests upon a recognition of growing cultural differentiation and the multiplication of marginally situated forms of social agency as accompaniments of and potential modes of resistance to the homogenizing logic of global consumer society.

Viewed in light of the foregoing analysis of contextuality, the much heralded global context of urban life itself is not an objective structure existing "out there," but an intersubjective and contested set of understandings about material, cultural, and historical permissions and constraints. Defining the context of opportunities and constraints upon social action (e.g., defining "global conditions") is itself a continuous process of contest and struggle in which the historical practices of people are actively inserted as *articulations*, which mediate, and in turn modify, the permissions and constraints. Articulations do not merely voice new social identities; they also may alter the "rules of the game."

As I read contemporary "global conditions," the social relations constructed at the intersections of emergent subject positions have become significantly more complicated at the present time by a variety of structural changes in what has come to be termed the "modern world system." Class formation has been especially complicated and impeded by the combined and uneven effects of several interrelated global developments impinging on national and local social relations. These include the trans-territorialization of production, the restructuring of labor processes and the attendant fragmentation of national working classes, the globalization, speed, and instantaneity of mass communications, the end of the Cold War, global geo-political restructuring, the renewed acceleration of transnational migration, and the ethnic reconstitution of localities and regions now taking place on a global scale. These dramatic changes have affected prevailing structures of work, residence, and social intercourse at the level of the locality, impinging on peoples' everyday experience in urban time-space. They have reconstituted the opportunities for and constraints on communication.

504

The global-local interplay in urban life has thus become a driving force in both the structuration of cultural practices and the move to integrate the cultural analysis of the local practices of everyday life into research on the political economy of urbanization.[30] Andrew Ross, the co-editor of the journal *Social Text* nicely captures the complex and emergent character of this difficult move to interpret local practices in light of their changing global context. According to Ross:

> The comforts provided by the totalizing, explanatory power of marxist categories are no longer enough to help us make sense of the fragmented and various ways in which people live and negotiate the everyday life of consumer capitalism. This is *not* to say that the structure of multinational capitalism, with its new global grid of information and its new international divisions of labor, is beyond explanation, or without significance. On the contrary, it is to say that such an explanation cannot in itself account for the complex ideological processes through which our various, local insertions into the global economy are represented and reproduced.[31]

By my reading, the complex global changes I have just enumerated have created new material and cultural conditions conducive to the political production of a multiplicity of local "voices," including potentially oppositional voices to dominant modes of signification and power. Under these conditions, differences of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, locality, and region, and their complex interplay in discourses where personal and group identities are formed, have become incipient social bases of new discursive practices and hence of the emergence of new subject-positions. Although affected by the presently accelerated velocity and scope of international capital circulation, state restructuring, and demographic migration, these emergent discursive practices spring from interpersonal communication. They thus operate in and through *local* or at least *relocalized* conditions of cultural production. Yet the "local" itself has become globalized as transnational modes of communication, streams of migration, and forms of economic and social intercourse continuously delocalize and relocalize the social spaces of cultural production.

What are the political implications of these transformations for our understanding of the politics of personal identity and collective action? A good deal of postmodernist writing on "new voices" in both urban ethnography and the analysis of new social movements has assumed an explicitly oppositional political stance. For example, the originality of Laclau and Mouffe's approach, when compared to the literature on new social movements in general, is that they see identity as something

formed in discourse and hence reformed in political struggle. In Rousseauian fashion, they comprehend political process, as Rosenthal notes, as a problematic of "*identities put a risk*, rather than of a contest between actors whose identities (and hence 'interests') are already given...."[32] Nevertheless, because neo-Gramscians like Laclau and Mouffe assert an interpretive logic of difference – of *and-also* – as preferable to the dualistic logic of *either-or*, the epistemological and ontological argument of postmodern social analysis has been interpreted as a necessarily conservative political position by some feminist and Marxist critics.[33] By eschewing foundationalism and empowering personal identity, postmodernism though is said to depoliticize the collective struggle against domination. This is because the priority given by postmodernists to the plurality of the *different* over the duality of the *other* in constituting social relations of ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexuality, locality, and region rejects the political strategy by which the binary dualisms of capital-labor, center-periphery, male-female, and assimilation-ethnic purity, are converted into an either-or logic. In much Marxist and feminist discourse on power, the "marginal" is turned into the "other," whose only self-respecting strategy is to displace the center by revolutionary struggle.

Despite its tone of radical possibility, the postmodern discourse on the different, its critics claim, is for the most part silent on questions of political strategy even as it claims to be radically open to the multiplicity of voices by which opposition to domination actually emerges in history. In my view, because they have overlooked the political implications of the radical anti-essentialism of postmodern cultural theory, its critics have been too quick to jump to the conclusion that sociohistorically, postmodernism proffers an implicit political theory of pure tolerance or worse still, of anemic pluralism that fails to address adequately questions of contextual constraint and structural dominance.

This conclusion ignores the foregoing analysis of the social construction of context that is part of the stream of postmodern thought that has sought to interpret the meaning of contextual opportunities and constraints from the vantage point of Gramsci's theory of articulation.[34] Cultural theorist, Lawrence Grossberg, expresses this problematic relationship among subject, agency, and context in postmodern theory thus:

> The problem of interpreting any cultural text, social practice, or historical event must always involve constituting a context around it.... But contexts

> are not entirely empirically available because they are not already complet-
> ed, stable configurations, passively waiting to receive another element. They
> are not guaranteed in advance, but are rather the site of contradictions, con-
> flicts, and struggles.... In Gramscian terms, any interpretation ... [or] histori-
> cal practice is an *articulation*, an active insertion of a practice into a set of
> contextual relations that determine the identity and effects of both the text
> and the context. Articulation is the continuous deconstruction and recon-
> struction of contexts. These articulated connections are sometimes fought
> over, consciously or unconsciously, but in any case, an articulation is always
> *accomplished* ... and will always have political consequences.[35]

What are the political implications of this theory of articulation for our
understanding of power relations and the processes that change these
relations? By rejecting the notion of "historical necessity," and instead
focusing on the arena of cultural politics as a contested terrain, the
postmodern theory of articulation implies that people are never merely
passive instruments of elite domination, class hegemony, or natural
instinctual drives. Rather, as social beings, with capacities for inter-
action, communication, and the insertion of praxis into life, people are
social and political actors engaged in struggles with, within, and some-
times against their understood context. In "real life" relations of domi-
nation-subordination exist, but they are always complexly constituted,
and often actively contested.

For this reason, the postmodern quest to understand the social produc-
tion of culture has turned to the realm of the everyday and to the
methods of ethnography. The goal of this methodological turn is to gain
insight into how articulatory practices are actively inserted in the parti-
cular locales of everyday life and how these articulations, in turn,
empower or disempower their audiences.[36] Postmodern ethnography is
increasingly seen as an experimental project capable of giving voice to
these articulations. What is new, as the saying goes, about this approach
to ethnographic practice?

Urban ethnography as cultural critique

Postmodern ethnography seeks to involve directly the ethnographic
subject in the process of signification and the production of meaning,
to give "voice" to his or her view of the world. Stephen Tyler terms
postmodern ethnography a form of "cooperative story making," a quest
on the part of the researcher to recover and evocatively communicate
to the reader a local narrative about the life-world of the subject, a

story produced by mutual dialogue rather than imposed by an author-
ial script. This approach is intended to produce a "cooperative evolved
text" in which neither subject, nor author, nor reader, no one, in fact,
has the exclusive right of "synoptic transcendence."[37]

Because social reality is historically constituted, because there are no
master narratives except those constituted by us, the central task of
postmodern ethnography becomes the reexamination of the subject's
past, by engagement in listening and conversation in order to explore
new meanings and intentions. These meanings are not viewed as pre-
given "data" to be uncovered by the researcher; rather, they are socially
constituted and hence contestable representations of history produced
by intersubjective dialogue. In this mode of interrogation, one purpose
of dialogue is to enable the subject to become an active producer of
meaning rather than an object of the projected meanings of the re-
searcher.

In these respects, postmodern ethnography is both similar to and dif-
ferent from the earlier Schutzean phenomenological approach to the
social construction of reality and the ethnomethodology of Harold
Garfinkel.[38] Like these earlier approaches, postmodern ethnography
seeks to unearth the meaning of the social world through intersubjec-
tive conversations aimed at capturing the intentionality of human
agents within particular social contexts. Unlike these earlier ap-
proaches, however (which have been used in the social sciences to posit
an alternative social-scientific "micro" truth viewed as closer in texture,
concreteness, and proximity to "reality," than are generalizations de-
rived from various abstract, deductivist "macro" social theories of the
structuration of social life) postmodern ethnography makes no pre-
tense to scientific truth. Indeed, strictly speaking, it is not part of the
discourse of a separate language game called "science." Rather, in style,
method, and stance, it is an intentionally provocative, evocative effort
to transcend the modernist binary oppositions of micro versus macro-
analysis, structure versus agency, and science versus art in social analysis.

In its effort to bridge the gap between art and the social science, post-
modern ethnographic writing appropriates from the realm of literature
such expressive styles as rhetoric, metaphor, subjectivity, and narrative,
which modernism had radically separated from the discourse of
"science." The self-conscious goal of this appropriation is to produce
an evocative text that simultaneously gives voice to its subjects and
shapes the way the sociocultural processes presented in the text are
registered and made sense of by the reader.

508

As already noted, the reader's presence looms large in postmodern social analysis. The postmodern ethnographer views the researcher as a kind of translator, broker, or mediator between the world of social practice and the way the practices of everyday life are interpreted in the world. This view of ethnography as an interpretive human science and the ethnographer as a socially embedded storyteller is perhaps best expressed by James Clifford in his introduction to the influential book, *Writing Culture*:

> Ethnography is actively situated between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions *at the boundaries* of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and records, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion. It describes processes of innovation and structuration, and is itself part of these processes.[39]

Postmodern ethnography seeks to grasp and contextualize the complex, heterodox, and often contradictory elements of the ethnographic subject's past experiences and present conditions that combine in shaping personal identity. It views the social construction of personal identity as a socially contested, historically modifiable process. As argued above, in the contemporary period of globalization, analysis of the social roots of personal identity has been rendered more difficult by the ineffectuality or incompleteness of the "grand narratives" of the past in rendering meaningful the rapidly shifting boundaries of territory, community, and self. These foundational analytical frameworks reduced social complexity and transcended historical specificity by projecting a theory of consciousness and social action based either upon an ahistorical "individual" subject who is a maximizer of utility, or upon the universal subject's class position within the social relations of production. At the present moment, the decomposition of class structures within the borders of nation-states and their reconstitution as social relations of production operating on a global scale far removed from the immediacy of the subject's lived experience, have rendered the conventional grand narrative of class struggle especially problematic as a theory of consciousness and collective action. Likewise, the demograpic transformation of localities by the accelerated flows of transnational migration is modifying the social relations of community that had grounded traditional ethnographies in convergent social spaces of cultural production and place.

In this fluctuating historical context, postmodern ethnographers Marcus and Fischer offer us a useful opening for moving beyond the

theoretical limits of the binary categories of global versus local, struc-
ture versus agency, and modern versus post-modern historical epochs
in envisioning the formation of peoples' consciousness and identities.
In their characterization of contemporary "global conditions," Marcus
and Fischer depict a world still full of cultural differences but in which
most, if not all, cultural worlds have been penetrated by various aspects
of modern life. "What matters then," they state, "is not ideal life else-
where, or in another time, but the discovery of new *recombinant* pos-
sibilities and meanings in the process of daily living anywhere." [40]

Marcus and Fischer call their project anthropology as cultural critique.
They seek to unearth the recombinant possibilities of contemporary
life by studying the ways that in daily life people in various life situa-
tions appropriate, accommodate to, or resist the structural imperatives
and cultural logics of their own time and place. The identification of
various modes of accommodation and resistance to similar structural
constraints and forms of social control places the motif of power-domi-
nation-accommodation-resistance at the center of the project of post-
modern ethnography. Not only does the centrality of this motif mark
postmodern ethnography as different from traditional phenomenologi-
cal research, it also constitutes a useful strategy for uncovering new
opportunities and recombinant possibilities for daily living, discerning
new forms of oppositional practice, and mapping the actual complexity
and diversity of what, from the vantage point of grand theory, seems to
be an increasingly homogeneous world.

In the hands of an army of micro-sociologists, conventional ethno-
methodology has been used to wage war against the truth claims of
various macro-structural theories, whether classic formulations of
Marx or Durkheim, or the more contemporary functionalist readings
of Althusser or Wallerstein. By positing the context of social life as no
less a social construct than the narrative texts of peoples' everyday
lives, postmodern ethnography avoids this combative rhetoric of the
macro vs. micro reality debate in the social sciences. This does not
reduce the project of post-modern ethnography to the trivial pursuit of
idiosyncratic *petit* narratives. Rather, in the hands of its best practition-
ers[41] it asks the big questions to little people. By asking people first to
construct their understanding of the opportunities and constraints they
face in the world in which they live, and then to talk about the ways in
which they appropriate, accommodate to, or resist the forms of power
and domination, opportunity and constraint that they encounter, post-
modern ethnography does offer us something new, namely a chance to

overcome by a contextually situated *petit* narrative, the fruitless either-
or rhetoric that has too often marred the structure-agency debate in
social theory. By creating a non-scientific and hence non-"scientistic"
social space within which social researchers can exercise imagination,
freeing their thought processes from the imperatives of pre-theorized
conceptual categories, in short, by opening up science to art, postmod-
ern ethnographers posit a radically open and contingent spirit of in-
quiry, a highly tentative yet curiously courageous "vision quest" that
resonates well with the awesomely radical discontinuities we are all
now experiencing at the level of "global conditions." Moreover, by refo-
cusing ethnographic inquiry amidst all of this flux upon the power-
domination-accommodation-resistance motif, postmodern ethnog-
raphy gives us an intelligible starting point at the level of the constitu-
tion of subjectivity for understanding the complex dynamics of which
new subject positions emerge in and through, for and against such
presumably "global" phenomena as urban social-spatial restructuring,
transnational migration, the end of the Cold War, the break up of the
Soviet Union, and the bubbling cauldron of ethnic and racial conflict
currently being stirred by symbolic politics throughout the world.

Moreover, by their rejection of various grand narratives of the past, the
leading postmodern ethnographers clearly assume a critical rather than
a reactionary stance toward social history. Their position is reminis-
cent of architectural theorist Paolo Portoghesi's celebration of the
"presence of the past" in postmodern architecture. Making the past
present through selective appropriation, whether in an ethnographic
interview or in a work of art, is an implicit critique of the totalizing ten-
dencies of various modernisms, particularly their tendency to oblit-
erate the past in the name of universal reason. If Hutcheon is correct
that the postmodern attitude toward the past "is always a critical re-
working, never a nostalgic 'return,'"[42] then postmodern ethnography
can be viewed as an oppositional rethinking of the past, a critique of
dominant modes of historical explanation, a rejection of a historical
script cast as a series of over-generalized epochal patterns in favor of a
close scrutiny of the culturally specific nature of each past. The political
aim of this turn to historically specific social practice is to foster a
greater acceptance of heterodoxy rather than to make new centers of
domination out of "marginal" races, classes, ethnic groups, genders, or
sexual identities.

Postmodern thought has been frequently attacked from both left and
right as culturally relativist, if not nihilist. Yet, the political project of

post-modern ethnography can be interpreted as precisely the opposite. In Michael M. J. Fischer's words, postmodern ethnography constitutes a reaffirmation or rediscovery of the existentialist ontology, namely: "making our taken-for-granted ways recognizable as sociocultural constructs for which we can exercise responsibility."[43] As stated more lucidly by Linda Hutcheon, the basic assumption of postmodern analysis is that: "there are all sorts of orders and systems in our world *and* that we create them all…. They do not exist "out there," fixed, given, universal, eternal; they are human constructs in history…. The local, the limited, the temporary, the provisional are what define 'postmodern' truth…."[44]

Viewed in this light, postmodern ethnography constitutes an explicitly oppositional project. It denies that the researcher can position an objectified, scientific "self" outside of sociocultural processes. Yet paradoxically, it insists that the investigator can intersubjectively experience the lived contradictions of larger social systems as they are "imploded" into the social relations and everyday lives of the ethnographic subject.[45] The central goal of oppositional post-modern ethnography is thus multidimensional: the creation of an evocative "*petit* narrative;" an exposure of the concealed limitations of the "author's" vantage point; a critique of the often-assumed transparancy of the representation of "external" reality; and an acknowledgment that, in James Clifford's terms, interpreters of social reality "constantly construct themselves through the others they study."[46]

There is, of course, a danger inherent in the postmodern ethnographic effort to assume a subject position of tentativeness, if not authorial passivity in "recording" the pure, authentic voice of the "marginal" and the "different." Cultural voices are historically contingent, not timelessly pure. The temptation to capture the essence of a local voice, inscribed as a heroic challenge against the oppressive forces of modernization precisely mirrors the problem of exoticizing the "other" as a radically strange being that characterized colonial discourse. Commenting critically on the efforts of anthropologists (modernist or postmodernist) to evoke the "essence" of "Indian-centered" narrative, Susan Hegman powerfully derides such academic efforts to represent "authentic" cultural voices. Her critique retains the "postmodern" theory of knowledge by recalling that the subjects of ethnographic inquiry are as much embedded in historical time and space as are the ethnographers. In her words: "Contemporary Navajos are neither the shadow of a European nor … radically strange beings, but people working within multiple cul-

tures, value, and belief systems – adapting, inventing, preserving and defending where they see fit."[47]

The version of postmodern social analysis recovered here rejects foundational thought not out of a sense of nihilism, but out of a recognition that the abstractions of grand theory tend to ignore the historically specific localized conditions *and* global context of cultural production. Postmodern social inquiry, viewed in this light, is not a blueprint for intellectual despair. Rather it requires a provisionality premised on a willingness to cross border zones, consider the cultural improvisations that are part of daily life at the boundaries, and in these sites of intercultural production, critically rework the representations and intellectual constructs through which we have come to know the world.

The social production of ethnic identity

"Ethnicity" is one such provisional, historically conditioned social construct. Ethnic identity is not a thing outside the self imposed by "acculturation"; nor is it an automatic consequence of "descent." Rather it is a dynamic mode of self-consciousness, a form of selfhood reinterpreted if not reinvented generationally in response to changing historical circumstances.[48] As a deeply emotional component of personal identity, ethnic identity is socially constructed and reconstructed as people respond to the changing material conditions, semiotic codes, power relations, and relations among groups shaping a specific time and place.

Ethnicities are often conceived of as timeless essences, purified identities pitilessly torn asunder by the inexorable march of "modern times" and its various material driving forces (e.g., capitalism, market and production relations, the media, the bureaucratic state). Ethnicity, in short, is deployed as a trope for the "local" and the cultural presence of the social relations of various local ethnicities is about to disappear as the material superiority of the "advanced world system" engulfs and colonizes the life-worlds of marginal peoples. In the newer view of postmodern ethnographers, foreshadowed a decade ago in the insightful research of Sahlins and Rosaldo,[49] such exoticized local cultures have been reconceived as creative arenas of conflict, invention, innovation, and emergence in which local ethnicities, by their cultural practices selectively adapt to, appropriate, and resist the forces and practices of modernization and in the process both modify global structural and cultural processes and reinvent themselves. Clifford has called this

newer view of ethnic authenticity a "local present-becoming-future."[50] The implication of this view is that ethnic identity and difference are socially produced in the here and now, not archeologically salvaged from the disappearing past.

Ethnic consciousness, like all forms of collective identity, does not spring sui generis from "objective" conditions such as nationality, geographical origin, or racial attributes. Just as class consciousness does not arise automatically out of the mode of production (which is itself a socially and politically mediated legal construct), so too is ethnic consciousness a relational construct made possible through articulatory practices. Ethnicity is socially produced largely through group-level interactions. These establish the ethnic identify of a group by specifying its relations with other groups. Ethnic identity is shaped by contested rhetorical explanations of inter-group similarities and differences.[51] As a form of imagined community, ethnic consciousness is continually shaped and reshaped by the gestural, the ritual, and the semiotic exchanges of discourse.

It is crucially important to realize however, that, despite their currently fashionable invocation in the rhetoric of postmodern cultural politics, the play of "difference," and "marginality," and hence contests over the meaning of ethnic identity, also operate *within* various "marginal" sub-cultures. Marginal groups are not pure, monolithic, essentialist entities. Rather, differently gendered relations, generational, occupational, and local residential experiences, as well as divisions of labor operate within households and all social levels and among all social groups. This means that even within the same "ethnic" household unit the "implosion" of macro-structural social divisions, contradictions, and systems of signification are subject to interpretation by differently situated social actors. This tends to produce "a multiplicity of responses to a commonly perceived situation of marginality...."[52]

The stringing together of lists of different "marginal" voices in the literature on ethnicity and social movements, as well as in the field of literary criticism more generally – e.g., feminists, ethnic groups, gays, students, environmentalists – often obscures more difference than it reveals. Not only does such analysis treat each group as monolithic, thereby suppressing their various and multiple internal differences (e.g., the cultural heterogeneity of "Latinos" and "Asian Americans," the intellectual heterogeneity of various strains of feminism, the status heterogeneity of "whites," and the class heterogeneity of all the above),

514

it also posits, as one male feminist critic points out, one "vast, undif-
ferentiated category, 'Difference,' to which all marginalized or op-
pressed groups can be assimilated, and for which women [or "blacks,"
"students," or "immigrants"] can stand as an emblem."[53] Such concep-
tualization of difference simply evokes the list maker's oppositional
agenda rather than speaking in credible heterogeneous voices.

Frederic Jameson, a leading Marxist cultural critic of postmodernism,
is guilty of this transgression in *The Political Unconscious*, when he
speaks of the need to "reaudition" the oppositional voices of women's
and gay literature, black and ethnic cultures, "naive" and marginalized
folk; he further reduces these unique and internally divergent voices to
impotence by claiming that such "non-hegemonic cultural voices" need
to be reinscribed in terms of "the dialogical system of the social classes"
if they are to overcome hegemony.[54] For all his warts, Jameson at least
recognizes the centrality of political discourse in the social construc-
tion of consciousness.

Political discourse is a rhetoric of likeness and difference. It contests
representations of power relations based on differences. Yet which dif-
ferences count as salient determines who has "voice" and who does not.
Because of the internal differentiation among social groups, it is by no
means an easy task to fulfill the exhortation to let marginal groups
"name themselves" through their voices and everyday practices. The
"self" named in this way often represents a partial, selective recovery of
past understandings deployed in *internal* contests over group identity.

This is well illustrated by a recent intense racial controversy in Hawaii,
a state often held up as a model of peaceful racial and ethnic relations.
The controversy began when a white student at the University of
Hawaii wrote a letter to the school paper complaining of what he
termed "caucasian bashing" at the university. A university teacher of
ethnic Hawaiian descent, who directed the Center for Hawaiian Stud-
ies, wrote a rejoinder to the newspaper, citing examples of white
oppression of ethnic Hawaiians, who tend to occupy positions at the
bottom of the Hawaiian social structure. She chastised the student for
failing to understand the meaning of racism and suggested that he
should leave the state. When the student did precisely that, flying home
to Louisiana, the professor was criticized by some students and col-
leagues for abusing her position of authority. She defended herself with
the following articulation: "This has been my position for 15 years. I am
a nationalist. I am asserting my claim to my country." Her supporters
publicly defended her right to free speech.

This rhetorical exchange was not really surprising, confined as it was, to the individualistic terrain of rights discourse in the classical-liberal political marketplace. What was perhaps more surprising, and certainly more intriguing, from the standpoint of the social construction of ethnicity, was the fact that representatives of several of Hawaii's many ethnic groups, including ethnic Hawaiians, also strongly criticized the professor, accusing her of being "un-Hawaiian" by raising her issues so stridently. They argued that the "Hawaiian way" is to be circumspect, patient, and gentle, noting that the very word "aloha" alludes to human warmth. In response to this claim that quiescent solidarity was the essence of being "Hawaiian," the Hawaiian Studies director inserted the following articulation into the group discourse over cultural identity: "I am not soft. I am not sweet, and I do not want any more tourists in Hawaii."[55]

The effort to give voice to authentic marginal sensibilities is further complicated by the conflation of ethnicity, race, class, and culture often encountered in internal conflicts over group identity. This is vividly illustrated in the recent controversy between black film maker Spike Lee and poet Amiri Baraka (LeRoy Jones) over the right to interpret the meaning and legacy of Malcolm X. Lee has been shooting a film on the life of Malcolm X amidst considerable furor, largely generated by Baraka's preemptive assault upon Lee's entitlement to give voice to his version of Malcolm X. The black nationalist poet and playwright attacked Lee's credibility at a political rally in Harlem, proclaiming: "*We* will not let Malcolm X's life be trashed to make middle-class Negroes sleep easier." Baraka exhorted his crowd to write to Lee, warning him "not to mess up Malcom's life."[56]

Spike Lee's response, while granting the right of "anyone and everyone" to their own interpretation of Malcolm X's story, was equally vituperative in challenging Baraka's claim to be an authentic spokesman for Malcolm's legacy. In a column published first in *Newsweek* and widely syndicated, Lee, like Baraka, used the discourse of class to settle the presumably racial issue. "In fact," proclaimed Lee, "when Malcolm was alive, Amiri Baraka was down in Greenwich Village running around with Allen Ginsberg and living that 'Jungle Fever' beatnik-bohemian life style…." Responding to Baraka's characterization of Lee as a bourgeois liberal, Lee characterized Baraka as a limousine radical, stating that "after the … rally to protest the film, Baraka, the Black Marxist Revolutionary, jumped into a black limo and sped off down Lenox Avenue, past the lumpen proletariat of Harlem. And he calls me a

"middle class Negro!"[57] This rhetorical exchange clearly conflates race, class, and culture. Not only do both would-be voice givers imply that the essence of black racial experience is rooted in underclass status, they also suggest that black intellectuals who can lay claim to slightly more proximity to the lumpen proletarian experience have a greater entitlement to speak for "black people" than those above them in the hierarchy of social classes. Both of these would-be marginal voices fail to acknowledge the diversity of the experience of being black in America or the class and gender differences that are part of that experience. The controversy does reveal, nevertheless, some of the complexity of the seemingly straight-forward postmodernist project of giving voice to marginal sensibilities and constructing a political space in which racial and ethnic "others" can name themselves.

As can be seen from these examples, the formation and reformation of racial and ethnic identity comprise a fascinating vantage point from which to gain a purchase on the constitution of social subjects. In the remainder of this essay, I will add another layer of complexity to this question by entering the social space of popular culture. My purpose in this move is to illustrate concretely the interplay of immediate and mass-mediated communications, state structures and the commercial marketplace, power and the sign in the emergence of ethnic identity. In my view, the question of the emergence of a pan-ethnic "Latino" social identity is particularly germane to the postmodern project. The new social space, at once localized and global, through which transnational migrants from Latin American countries to the United States are constituting an existence which is both here and there, then and now, poignantly illustrates the need to dissolve the global-local dichotomy as an either-or construction of reality, reconstituting it in and-also terms. Transnational migrants from Latin America to the United States have already done so in their practice. It is time for social researchers to become attuned to the significance of this new social space of ethnic identity and cultural politics.

The new social space of "Latino" ethnic identity

In a very insightful recent essay, "Living Borders: Buscando America," Juan Flores and George Yudice have explored some of the ways that "Latino" identity in the United States is being negotiated and constructed through struggles over language.[58] Their analysis is important because it represents one of the first serious efforts to expand the

notion of the "public sphere" to include terrains such as the family, the consumer marketplace, and popular culture, heretofore treated as purely domestic, or private, or matters of taste. In my view, both the political enfranchisement of "Latinos" and their economic incorporation within consumer society are equally *public* terrains where linguistic conflicts basic to the formation of personal and group identity are fought out. This move expands the public sphere to include cultural, as well as political space, or perhaps more precisely, it expands the question of "what politics is about" to encompass cultural struggles over the constitution of ethnic identity.

The cultural politics of ethnic difference is multidimensional. It includes political conflicts over public policies designed to reduce the heterogeneity of Spanish-speaking nationalities now part of the U.S. social system to the manageable ethnic category "Hispanic" around which the state's social benefit and control systems can be more readily constructed. It encompasses, as well, the patterns of accommodation and resistance to mass-mediated images of ethnic and racial identity found in consumer advertising, the recording industry, prime-time television programs, MTV, and the representations contained in news reporting. Most importantly, from the vantage point developed in this essay, the cultural politics of ethnic difference also encompasses the emergence of new forms of ethnic identity springing from contests among voices at the margin and on the border.

Contested borders

The "border" is a powerful metaphor in postmodern social analysis. The "border tensions" of postmodernism as method have blurred boundaries between genres and disciplines, high and popular culture, theory and practice, and a host of binary oppositions – center-periphery, global-local, assimilation-ethnic purity – which validate or authorize restrictive cultural images of social actors, inscribing them in terms of fixed being rather than fluid becoming.[59] Modernist social actors were often viewed as stable, if not natural subjectivities rather than socially constituted and hence contestable representations. In *Culture and Truth*, Renato Rosaldo uses the metaphor of "border crossings" to challenge this view, envisioning the formation of ethnicity as a process of "intercultural borrowing and lending," and viewing immigration as a dynamic process of cultural heterogeneity, improvisation, blending, and creativity rather than as a timeless site of cultural loss.[60] The bor-

der metaphor also has been directly linked to the social construction of personal and ethnic identity in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*[61] a brilliant autobiographical quest for selfhood by Gloria Anzaldúa, a Chicana lesbian-feminist poet and fiction writer.

Both of these works recognize that the domain of popular culture has been an important channel through which *new* forms of "traditional" ethnic music have crossed borders to influence the formation of ethnic consciousness. Such new expressive forms are an important part of the process of ethnic self-naming and self-formation. Popular "Latino" musical performers like Ruben Blades and Los Lobos have reaccentuated heretofore "private" and local speech genres to underline, indeed culturally celebrate some everyday practices – e.g., the dress, speech rhythms, dialects, and patterns of inflection – of "Newyorican" salsa, and East L.A. ranchero rock – in the *public* domain of popular music and dance.

Flores and Yudice play nicely upon two of the distinctive "border tensions" of Latino salsa music that underline its multifaceted possibilities for expressing becoming. First, the music itself is positioned as music on the border of intersecting musical forms – pop, rock, jazz – loosely centered around Caribbean rhythms. The result is a new hybrid form of fusion music, which has implications for the emergence of new forms of cultural and political identity in the wider society in which a new form of pan-ethnic music has forged some common bonds among "Latinos" of different nationalities and historical experiences prior to their settlement in the United States. Flores and Yudice suggest that this is precisely what happened in New York City where "Latino" salsa music cut across not only musical styles, but also across all of the social classes and Spanish-speaking nationalities living in New York. A second border tension of salsa music (as well as other forms of "ethnic" music) stems from their structural location in the commercial entertainment world itself, resting as it does on the boundary between advertising bent on reaching and selling the "Hispanic" market and the culture of experience out of which a new "Latino" collective consciousness is emerging.[62]

An intriguing point suggested by this analysis is that the very acts of consumer capitalism of appropriating emergent "Latino" patois to sell products in segmented markets catering to ethnic "taste" opens up a new social space in the commercial sphere explicitly blocked in the liberal-pluralist political marketplace (where it is easier to articulate

individual rights than group needs) through which self-named "Latino" social agents can express and negotiate new cultural forms that act back upon the wider culture.[63]

In my view, once such subculturally familiar cadences (or "local narratives," if you will) become more widespread and familiar, they are capable of becoming reinscribed with a wider and more explicitly political content. The development of the popular musical crossover cultural politics of the "Latino" salsa of Ruben Blades is an interesting case in point. Blades entered the pop musical scene by way of local and regional stories celebrating the everyday cares, troubles, pleasures, and enjoyments of marginal subcultures surviving and affirming their vitality on the streets of New York City. Yet, having attained a measure of fame, the form that this has provided has given him the space to produce musical sounds that express wider, more "global," and more explicitly politicized themes, but still written in quite historically specific narratives. His work *situates the global in the local,* grounding the abstract narratives of peace, freedom, and social justice in the immediate conditions of everyday existence.

Ruben Blades's songs speak expressively to the present situation of Latino immigrants to the United States faced with pressures of discrimination, assimilation, and economic marginalization.[64] Blades has frequently crossed musical boundaries by joining with other pop musical stars including Sting, Elvis Costello, and Lou Reed, in mutual appropriations of media and messages. In "The Miranda Syndrome," written with Costello, the opening verse and chorus speak of the false promises of transnational migration.

> "The Miranda Syndrome"
> "She threw good money after bad.
> She bought a ticket to America, a Coca-Cola, and a magazine,
>   but in the final reel she knew she'd see Justice…
> In an office without windows they declared the world was flat
>   and decided to create a fool for the world would believe that.
> All for a song and dance and an edible hat.
> Carmen Miranda, won't you come home?"

Blades's voice frequently situates the emergent "Latino" self within the historical memory of the transnational migrant's immediate, albeit highly mediated, "global context." In giving voice to that identity, one of

Blades's main themes has been the construction of a Latino identity based upon opposition to the "global alliance" between the makers and shapers of U.S. foreign policy in "El Norte" and reactionary social forces in Latin America. Blades's song, "In Salvador," develops this theme while crossing yet another border by appropriating the rhythms of reggae music to evoke the links among violence, fear, and officially sanctioned political repression in El Salvador, which has been the chief driving force of Salvadoran migration to the United States.

In "In Salvador," Blades sings, "No one can protect your life..... Judges that condemn you have no names.... Men who kill have heroes that play soccer too, and argue with their kids about the world." Since death could come from any quarter, from "the gentleman that lives next door, or the guy who goes with you to work," fear is the basic force moving society, "the poker game that runs the town." Invoking the metaphor of global imperialism, Blades ends his reggae tune rhetorically: "Think they know in Rome what's going on?"

The musical form of "In Salvador" is as central to Blades's political objectives as is its blunt content. His crossover from salsa to reggae entails a direct challenge to the conventional binary opposition of form versus content in the social construction of reality. Blades has said that he turned to the reggae rhythm for this song because he associates reggae with political consciousness and because its simple musical form does not get in the way of its lyrics. "In Salvador," is Blades's reading of the contemporary global context of Salvadoran politics and society. As he explains on the jacket blurb of the album "Nothing but the Truth," which includes "In Salvador": "We hadn't even mixed the song when Hubert Anaya, the head of Salvador's Human Rights Commission was killed in broad daylight, as he was taking his kids to school. No matter what the official Duarte, or State Department propaganda says, the violence in El Salvador will continue unless a political solution is achieved. There can't be peace without justice."

In a related song, "Disappearances," Blades's condemnation of institutionally sanctioned political violence is further "globalized" by his collaboration with Sting, a master practitioner of the new global cultural politics of rock music, and by their joint incorporation of Argentina into a shared "Latino" anti-hegemonic motif. The main voice in "Disappearances," is the voice of a brother whose sister, Altagracia, has been missing for three days. The brother describes Altagracia's last journey from work to school, recalling the clothes she wore the day she disap-

peared. He evokes the frustration of his fruitless search for his sister, depicting the wall of silence he encounters at police headquarters and at the hospital. Blades and Sting then give voice to the following reading of the interplay between inside and outside, identity and difference:

> "Where do people who disappear go to?
> Look in the water and in the high grass.
> Why do they disappear? Because we're not all the same.
> When do they return? Every time our thoughts bring them back.
> How can we talk to the disappeared ones?
> With our emotions, from our insides."

Ruben Blades has tried to define the boundaries of an emergent Latino identity by downplaying differences among various Latin nationalities, calling attention to the difficulties faced by transnational "Latino" migrants to "El Norte," characterizing Latin America as a single social space, whose people's everyday lives are intimately affected by the power of the "global alliance," and forging a meaningful identity for Latinos through acts of opposition and resistance to the social mechanisms and forces comprising that alliance. A fundamentally different reading of "El Norte" and of the kind of identities that are being formed by the transnational migration experience can be found in the contemporary norteño music of the San Jose, California based musical group Los Tigres del Norte. Los Tigres offer an alternative construction that seeks to build upon the appropriations found in the daily experiences of transnational Mexican migrants in the United States, adding these to their past experiences to create an emergent Pan-American "Latino" identity rather than forging that identity in strict opposition and resistance to "the North's" structural and cultural oppression.

Norteño music is a polka-like, accordion-driven musical style reminiscent of Louisiana black cajun zydeco rhythms. It was originally indigenous to the border states of Mexico and of the United States from California to Texas. Once seemingly doomed on both sides of the border because of its association with the lowest strata living in the borderlands, under the influence of groups like Los Tigres, it has become popular to a much wider audience of Latino youth on both sides of the border, reaching as far north as Chicago and as far south as Central and South America. The music of Los Tigres directly speaks to the borderless or "transnational" identity of Latino migrants living in the fluid social space of the transnational migration stream. For exam-

ple, Los Tigres's 1988 grammy award winning album is entitled, "Gracias/... America/... Sin Fronteras (Thankyou/... America/... Without Borders). On that album and through such songs as "Vivan Los Mojados" (Long Live the Wetbacks) and "Tres Veces Majado" (Three Times Wet), the quintet extolls "Pan-American" solidarity. Yet Los Tigres' definition of "America" is much broader than the conventional appropriation of that term in the United States.

The key themes at the heart of the group's appeal are precisely those addressing: (a) transnational migration as a normal condition of everyday existence, (b) the transnational migrant stream as a new social space around which personal identitites can be constructed, and (c) the barriers that the politically constructed borders of nation states impose on the transnational migrants' existence and identity and that, in their view, ought to be resisted by cultural politics.

A recent Los Tigres concert in Oakland, California illustrates the interplay of these themes in the band's performance. As described in a review of the concert, the lyrics of Los Tigres del Norte's songs:

> consisted primarily of a compendium of nations, states, and cities in the western hemisphere, moving south to north, beginning with Argentina. As the bright stage lights ... focused on the crowd of some 4,000, mostly young Mexican-Americans and Mexicans, Jorge [the lead singer] placed special emphasis on the northern Mexican states, adding "*yo soy*" [I am from] to Michoacan, Jalisco, Zacatecas, Nuevo Leon, and Sinaloa. He ended the list with *de California yo soy*.[65]

This central theme of transnational "Latino" lives without borders is perhaps best condensed in Los Tigres' 1986 hit "Frontera International," in which they sing, "Border! International border! Open up so I can come across.... International Border! If we are all created equal/Why do you divide the land?"

The differences in tone expressed in the alternative efforts to construct socially a "Latino" ethnic identity by Ruben Blades and Los Tigres del Norte, their different stress on the driving forces of transnational migration (i.e., the twin push of political-economic repression and U.S. foreign policy versus the pull of forging a life and a self by crossing borders), and their different constructions of "El Norte" are in part explicable by important historical differences between Central American refugees and Mexican migrants currently part of the transnational migration stream, as well as differences stemming from the long histori-

cal trajectory of transnational migration between Mexico and the United States, as opposed to the contemporary globalization of transnational migration to encompass a multiplicity of more recent, often forced, migrant flows from the Central and South American and Caribbean countries. These differences illustrate that important internal differences continue to exist among the many nationalities that might lay claim to a "Latino" ethnic identity. Yet, the fact that both Blades's salsa and Los Tigres' musica norteño have made the turn to an explicitly cultural politics and are attempting to forge a new "Latino" identity that transcends the borders of the nation state, suggests that the growing interest in the globalization of culture is a question that is of more than merely academic significance.

Under contemporary historical conditions of globalization, social and cultural phenomena can no longer by analyzed and understood at the level of the nation state. Cultures, as socially constructed systems of representation and meaning, must now be conceptualized in all of their global scope and complexity. Contests over the representation of personal and collective identity and the categories through which identity is filtered (class, race, gender, ethnicity, and nation state) must recognize that the world is now a single social space.

Guillermo Gomez-Pená, a Latino writer originally from Mexico City, was recently asked to characterize his ethnic identity. His answer underlines the emergent multicultural character of that identity, the desire of various others to "fix" the fluidity of ethnic identity in "place" (thereby conflating geography and culture), and the necessarily contested character of all representations of ethnicity. As translated in a brilliant paper by Roger Rouse, Gomez-Pená suggests what happens at the level of individual consciousness when ethnicity is viewed as part of a global journey in a transnational migration stream and the world is viewed as a single social space: "Today, eight years after my departure," Gomez-Pená states, "I cannot answer with a single word, for my 'identity' now possesses multiple repertoires: I am Mexican, but I am also Chicano and Latin American. On the border they call me 'Chilango' or 'Mexiquillo,' in the capital 'pocho' or 'norteño,' and in Spain 'sudara'… my companion Emily is Anglo-Italian, but she speaks Spanish with an Argentinean accent; and together we walk among the ruins of the Tower of Babel of our American postmodernity."[66]

New frontiers

In this article, I have tried to spell out a way forward in urban studies and a remaking of social analysis that eschews essentialism without abandoning the socio-critical power of theoretical discourse. Many of the contemporary writers on social construction, in reacting against the functionalist logic of various structuralisms, have moved so far in a voluntarist direction[67] that they seem to have forgotten that once constructed human inventions act back upon their creators. Socially constructed borders, in their turn impinge upon, and in some degree either enhance or oppress human lives. In the case of ethnic identity, as Rosaldo states, the point is not to declare it socially constructed and stop there, "but to show in historical perspective how it was invented and with what consequences."[68]

This is precisely what I have tried to do with the Blades and the Los Tigres del Norte songs. They illustrate that historically particular narratives can be large as well as small, global as well as local; they show that the way to move beyond essentialism is to avoid reduction of social processes to single causes rather than to avoid historical narrative per se. Historically sensitive analysis requires attention to macro-structure as well as micro-motives, and their interplay in historically particular detail. Such analysis poses its questions neither purely locally nor synoptically globally, but at the boundaries and in the border zones where these social spaces intersect and emergent social subjects interpret and deal with their conditions of existence.

The distancing of grand theory from its subjects of inquiry objectifies and thereby masters. The crisis of the master discourse stems not from a rejection of theorizing per se, but from the loss of the legitimating power of the major narratives of modernism to compel belief. Such monocausal theories of domination are doomed to failure as blueprints for social analysis and political practice. By insisting on the centrality of sexism, racism, or class exploitation as *the* fundamental basis of oppression, without carefully examining the interplay among different forms of domination in different historical contexts, these alternative essentialisms hinder the kind of social analysis that facilitates the anticipation of emergent patterns of both conflict and cooperation among social forces and hence the political production of coalitions based on a fluid and flexible theory of identity politics. By insisting that only class struggle or sisterhood can transform social relations in general, such essentialisms fail to give due attention to the social production of

meanings that address the multiple forms of oppression confining his-
torical actors in particular time-space configurations – for example:
black underclass youth in Chicago, triply-dominated Latina cannery
workers in California, "new immigrant" men and women occupying dif-
ferent ethnic enclaves in the underground economies of the United
States and Europe, transnational Latino and Latina migrants forging
new borderless social spaces, and other emergent subject positions. In
so doing, they fail to comprehend, let alone anticipate, the emergence
of new social subjects, forces, and movements.

The postmodern anthropologists believe that new types of ethno-
graphic practice, experimental field methods, and writing strategies can
best expose the contours of the global systems of power reflected in
conventional representations of third-world "others" and their socie-
ties. Feminist theorists have correctly pointed out that the postmod-
ernist emphasis on culture as an emergent, contested communicative
process is not entirely new; that postmodernist ethnography's key
themes – that culture is composed of contested codes, that language
and politics are inseparable, and that constructing the "other" entails
relations of domination – have been around at least since Simone de
Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* first called attention to the boundary con-
struction of the woman as "other," by which Western masculine identity
was formed. The basic feminist complaint is that at precisely the time
that women and non-Western people have begun to form their own
subjectivity, speaking for themselves, postmodern epistemology under-
mines the ontological status of the subject.[69] Yet recent feminist writing
about difference has begun to reassess this initial move, itself becoming
polyvocal, stressing the diversity of women's experience, and the sali-
ence of race, class, ethnic, and other differences among women. Par-
tially in response to criticisms by women of color that the women's
movement spoke with a white, middle-class, female voice, the feminist
literature had begun to analyze the interplay of race, class, gender, and
ethnic identities and experiences in the social relations of different
groups of women (and men).

The related feminist and Marxist critique of postmodernism, which
faults it for lacking an explicit theory of agency and an agenda for posi-
tive struggle misses the point that the denaturalized critique of repre-
sentation at the core of postmodern social analysis is a necessary pre-
condition for any type of effective agency. The focus upon the process
of cultural production of politically and socially salient differences in
race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual preference are intended to

show, as art theorist Victor Burgin points out, that the meaning of such differences is "something mutable, something historical, and therefore something we can do *something* about."[70]

In the cast of the social construction of ethnicity that "something" is a greater capacity to mediate politically and socioculturally modify social relations within and among ethnic groups by creative symbolic action than is acknowledged by those who conceive ethnicity either in naturalistic terms, regarding *ethnos*, like *eros* and *thanatos* as a deep structural dimension of consciousness, or in essentialist terms as a component of personal identity so rooted in past historical memory that little can be done by human agency in the present to shape its character or temper the antagonistic posture of ethnic groups toward ethnic otherness and difference. This is an especially important insight to bear in mind as we think about the meaning of the contemporary resurgence of ethnicity as a political force manifest in growing racial and ethnic tensions in U.S. cities, militant ethnic nationalism in Europe, the ethnic war in Yugoslavia, the rapid dissolution of the Soviet Union, the tribal and racial conflicts in South Africa, and the ethnic unrest in various other tinderboxes throughout the globe. If ethnicity is constructed and reconstructed by articulatory practices growing out of contemporary conditions and power relations among social groups and the interpretive meanings people give to them, rather than out of some timeless or primordial dimension of human existence, then creative leadership by political and cultural elites and public intellectuals, as well as the everyday interventions of ordinary people into the flow of racial and ethnic discourse, do matter, perhaps more than we are now prepared to imagine.

The approach to urban ethnography and the social construction of personal and ethnic identity developed in this essay invites the notion of politics as a site of de-naturalizing critique. My focus on the social and ideological production of meaning through discourse views "culture" as the fluid and dynamic *effect* of representations not their source.[71] The production, reproduction, and transformation of signs, narratives, and images becomes a humanly created, and hence radically changeable structure of feelings and understandings. Hence, the politics of culture is neither the "master science," nor the "master discourse," but an unavoidable and unavoidably contested terrain of human becoming.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. See Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
2. Sharon Zukin, "The Postmodern Debate over Urban Form," *Theory, Culture & Society* (1988): 431.
3. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
4. Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 53–92; Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, H. Foster, editor (Bay Press: Port Townsend, WA, 1983), 111–125; Jameson, "Marxism and Postmodernism," *New Left Review* 176 (July/August 1989): 31–46.
5. See the ethnographies cited in Michael Peter Smith, "Urbanism: Medium or Out-come of Human Agency?" *Urban Affairs Quarterly* (March 1989): 353–358. See also Michael P. Smith, Bernadette Tarallo, and George Kagiwada, "Colouring California: New Asian Immigrant Households, Social Networks, and the Local State." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (1991): 250–268.
6. Kirsten Simonsen, "Planning on 'Postmodern' Conditions," *Acta Sociologica* 33 (1990): 51–62.
7. Michael J. Dear, "Postmodernism and Planning," *Society and Space* 4 (1986): 367–384.
8. For a sense of the flavor of these debates see, for instance, James Clifford and George Marcus, editors, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986); Frances E. Mascia-Lees, Patricia Sharpe, and Colleen Ballerino Cohen, "The Postmodern Turn in Anthropology," *Signs* 1 (Autumn 1989): 7–33; and Jameson, "Marxism and Postmodernism," 31–46.
9. Stephen A. Tyler, *The Unspeakable* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 171.
10. Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984).

11. Connor, *Postmodernist Culture*, 224.
12. Stanley Aronowitz, "Postmodernism and Politics," *Social Text* 18 (1987/88): 99–115.
13. Compare, for instance, George E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Culture Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*; with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London and New York: Verso, 1985); and Carl Boggs, *Social Movements and Political Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).
14. Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).
15. Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 142.
16. Leith Mullings, editor, *Cities of the United States: Studies in Urban Anthropology* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1987).
17. Michael Peter Smith, "Urban structure, social theory and political power," in *Cities in Transformation*, Michael Peter Smith, editor (Sage: Beverly Hills, 1984), 9–27; M. P. Smith, *City, State and Market* (New York and Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988); M. P. Smith, "Urbanism: Medium or Outcome of Human Agency?" 353–358; Robert Fisher and Joe Kling, "Community Mobilization: Prospects for the Future," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 25 (2 December 1989): 200–211.
18. See Philip Cooke, "The Postmodern Condition and the City," *Comparative Urban and Community Research* 2 (1988): 62–80.
19. Andrew Sayer, "The 'New' Regional Geography and Problems of Narrative," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 7 (1989): 256.
20. Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), 7.
21. Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory," *Social Text* 17 (1987): 6.
22. See Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 121.
23. Charles Bernstein, "Centering the Postmodern," *Socialist Review* 17 (6, 1987): 52.
24. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 230.
25. See Stuart Hall, "Brave New World," *Marxism Today* (October 1988): 24–29.
26. Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, passim.
27. Chantal Mouffe, "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?" in *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism*, Andrew Ross, editor (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1988): 35.
28. Ibid., 44; see also Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).
29. See Michael Peter Smith, *The City and Social Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979); M. P. Smith and Richard Tardanico, "Urban theory reconsidered: Production, Reproduction, and Collective Action," in M. P. Smith and J. R. Feagin, editors, *The Capitalist City: Global Restructuring and Community Politics* (Basil Blackwell: Oxford and New York, 1987), 87–110 for critiques of Weberian, Chicago sociology, and Rostowian variants of modernization theory.
30. See Smith and Feagin, editors, *The Capitalist City: Global Restructuring and Community Politics*; Sayer, "The 'New' Regional Geography and Problems of Narrative," 255–257.
31. Andrew Ross, "Introduction," in *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism*, Andrew Ross, editor (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1988), xv.
32. John Rosenthal, "Who Practices Hegemony? Class Division and the Subject of Politics," *Cultural Critique* Spring (1988): 29.

33. See, for instance, Sabina Lovibond, "Feminism and Postmodernism," *New Left Review* 178 (November/December 1989): 5–28; and Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*.

34. Lawrence Grossberg, "Putting the Pop Back into Postmodernism," in Andrew Ross, editor, *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism*, 167–190; Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; Mouffe, "Radical Democracy: Modern or Postmodern?"; Hall, "Brave New World."

35. Grossberg, "Putting the Pop Back into Postmodernism," 168–169, emphasis added.

36. Ibid., 169.

37. Stephen A. Tyler, "Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document," in Clifford and Marcus, editors, *Writing Culture*: 126, 129.

38. See, for example, the essays by Garfinkel and other devotees of ethnomethodology in Graham Button, editor, *Ethnomethodology and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

39. James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in Clifford and Marcus, editors, *Writing Culture*, 2–3, emphasis added.

40. Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 122.

41. I am thinking here, for example, of the works of Renato Rosaldo and Roger Rouse cited below in notes 49, 60, and 66, as well as the field studies discussed in Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*.

42. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 12.

43. Michael M. J. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory," in Clifford and Marcus, editors, *Writing Culture*, 194–233.

44. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 43.

45. See George E. Marcus, "Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System," in Clifford and Marcus, editors, *Writing Culture*, 165–193.

46. Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," 10.

47. Susan Hegman, "History, Ethnography, Myth: Some Notes on the 'Indian Centered' Narrative," *Social Text* 23 (Fall/Winter 1989): 145, 153.

48. Fischer, "Ethnicity and the Postmodern Arts of Memory," 195.

49. Renato Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting, 1883–1974* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980); Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

50. James Clifford, "Of Other Peoples: Beyond the 'Salvage Paradigm,'" in Hal Foster, editor, *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, Number 1 (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 128.

51. Dean MacCannell, "Reconstructed Ethnicity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities," *Annals of Tourism Research* 11 (1984): 375–391.

52. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 62.

53. Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, Hal Foster, editor, (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), 62.

54. Frederic Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

55. Richard Halloran, "Rare Storm over Race Disturbs a Melting Pot," *New York Times* (26 December 1990): A10.

56. *San Francisco Chronicle*, (21 August 1991): E1.

57. See Spike Lee. "Who Owns Malcolm X?" *San Francisco Chronicle* (21 August 1991): E1.51. See also S. Alan Clarke, "Black Politics on the Apollo's Stage: The Return of the Handkerchief Heads," (San Francisco: Paper prepared for delivery at

the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1990 September), for excellent examples of internally contested representations of "black politics."

58. Juan Flores and George Yudice, "Living Borders: Buscando America: Languages of Latino Self-Formation," *Social Text* 24 (1990): 57–85.

59. For a lucid discussion of related tensions, see Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Chapter 1.

60. Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), Chapter 9.

61. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/*aunt lute*, 1987); see also Sergio Elizondo, "ABS: Aztlan, the Borderlands, and Chicago," in Rudolfo Anaya and Francisco Lomeli, editors, *Aztlan: Essays on the Chicago Homeland* (Alburquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989); and Hector Calderon and Jose David Saldívar, editors *Criticism in the Borderlands* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1991) for other representations of the borders and boundaries of Chicano and Latino ethnicity.

62. Juan Flores and George Yudice, "Living Borders: Buscando America: Languages of Latino Self-Formation," 59–80.

63. Lest readers think that this terrain may be a less significant social space of ethnic formation than envisioned in the argument presented here, it should be noted that in the United States the influx of new minorities from Asia and Latin America has been accompanied by the substantial rate of growth in foreign-language radio stations and television networks. During the 1980s for example, the number of Spanish language network affiliates in the U.S.A. tripled, rising from 25 to 75. Moreover, on cable television three Spanish networks, Univision, Telemunde and Galavision, currently offer programming that is carried by over 500 cable systems. Catering to the 25 million Latinos now in the United States, these outlets advertise the services of local immigration laywers alongside their commercials for Pepsi Cola. On such foreign language outlets coverage of social and political issues often sharply contrasts with that provided on the mainstream networks. A case in point germane to the essay is the coverage of the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989. The major networks focused on the voices managing the invasion while the San Francisco based Univision station, KDTV, featured the voices of Panamanian citizens and aired an interview with the now-deposed Manuel Noriega. This same station won the Guillermo Martinez Marquez award in 1990 for programming on the problems faced by Latino immigrants in California public schools. Reflecting the transnational character of its vision, the station also won the prestigious George Peabody Award in 1986 for its coverage of the Mexico City earthquake. See Annie Nakao, "Foreign-Language Stations Booming, Influx of Minorities Creates TV Market for Asians, Latinos," *San Francisco Examiner* (15 September 1991): B1, B4, for additional examples.

64. Xavier Totti, "The Making of Latino Ethnic Identity," *Dissent* Fall (1987): 537–543.

65. Lee Hildebrand and Melanie Curry, "Songs Without Borders," *East Bay Express* (26 July 1991): 18.

66. Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism," *Diaspora* 1, 1 (Spring 1991): 8.

67. See, for instance, Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Eugeen E. Roosens, *Creating Ethnicity: The Process of Ethnogenesis, Frontiers of Anthropol-*

ogy 5 (Newsbury Park, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989).

68. Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, 27.
69. Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Ballerino Cohen, "The Postmodern Turn in Anthropology," 11–15.
70. Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1986), 108.
71. Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, 7.