

Interview with Clifford Geertz

Neni Panourgiá and Pavlos Kavouras

Introduction

The interview with Clifford Geertz has a long history. It was originally conceived as part of a profile on Geertz for the Greek independent television program *On the Paths of Thought*, which has hosted such profiles of world-eminent thinkers and artists in various disciplines. To that end, a first interview was given by Geertz to Professors Konstantinos Tsoukalas and Neni Panourgiá in February 1999 at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. A second interview was graciously granted by Geertz to Panourgiá and Professor Pavlos Kavouras during the 1999 seminar in Hermoupolis. (See also the article "Conversations in Hermeneutic Anthropology," *Anthropological Theory* 2, no. 2 (2002): 341–354, which includes interviews with James A. Boon, Michael Fischer, and George E. Marcus.) The finalized profile, as broadcast by Greek National Television, includes portions of both interviews, but the text published here, transcribed by Thomas Abowd, is based on the interview conducted in Hermoupolis.

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Neni Panourgiá: Professor Geertz, your name is closely associated with interpretive anthropology. How would you translate this perspective to students in anthropology?

Well, when I am asked, I point to the work that has been done. This is a good question because I came into anthropology without any anthropology. As a graduate student, I had not had any. I went to a college where it

was not taught; my own training was in philosophy and literature. When I got to Harvard as a graduate student, I had to find out what anthropology was, and I largely did it the way students should do it now: by reading classic texts and figuring out what it was all about.

Here is one funny story that will probably only make sense to other anthropologists: I went into Widener at Harvard, which is an enormous library with tons of anthropology books, and I pulled off the shelf George Murdock's *Social Structure*, which was about as foreign as anything—I almost quit because it is all statistical tables—but I soon found out that that was not the case with anthropology as a discipline. But I think that it is important to just plunge into it because anthropology does not have a set of theories and practices that you can learn in an abstract way. It is not like surveying, where you can learn how to do it and then go do it. In anthropology, you have to learn to do it and do it at the same time. First you read, and then you do a little bit of it, and you tack back and forth between reading and doing, and that is how you get it. You can go and get a general characterization—you can do that—but that doesn't help anyone.

Pavlos Kavouras: We have the terms social anthropology, cultural anthropology, and ethnology, all expressing the study of humanity. Is this differentiation in terminology simply a matter of national/historical development, or does it reflect a significant theoretical, epistemological, or practical divergence?

It is in part simply a difference of different traditions. Social anthropology comes largely out of the British tradition, which concentrates on kinship and social structure. Cultural anthropology comes out of the Boasian American tradition and cultural analysis of Indian groups. Ethnology is the old European term. Ethnology now, even if you hear the word every once in a while, does not really exist anymore, at least not in the United States, and I don't think it exists in general any longer. But there is a distinction between social and cultural anthropology that is more than historical and national. It does have to do with the notion of what it is all about. And you still see polemics on both sides; there is a new book out by Adam Kuper that is a general attack from the British position on the American one. They don't like the idea of culture; they don't like the idea of meaning; they are much more into social structure. Remember the famous statement of [A. R.] Radcliffe-Brown, "Social structure is as real as a seashell"? I mean that's the kind of strict empiricism. Now it does not

really sort out that way, because there is a reading of that kind of anthropology in the United States and there are cultural and interpretive anthropologists in Britain and Europe. So there is a difference in view, but it is not a difference in the profession. We are all doing the same thing; we just differ a bit about how to go about it.

PK: How would you describe, thickly or not, the scope and method of interpretive anthropology? Is it a discipline or a perspective? Obviously the key term here is interpretation. Does the notion of interpretation produce a difference between a natural science and an interpretive paradigm in the study of social and cultural phenomena? And does "interpretation" remain monadistic? If we can have not one but many interpretations, does that mean that we can or do have many realities?

Well, it is a perspective, not a discipline—that I would certainly say. Radcliffe-Brown's most famous book is entitled *A Natural Science of Society*, as you remember. And I think that his notion was—it sort of follows on from Bertrand Russell—that you get natural laws, you examine them empirically, and you get social laws of one kind or another. In interpretive anthropology or even anthropology more generally, we don't have much confidence in our capacity to do that, and what concerns us mostly is trying to understand how people themselves regard their lives, what they want to do, and what they are all about. So interpretation in my view is fundamentally about getting some idea of how people conceptualize, understand their world, what they are doing, how they are going about doing it, to get an idea of their world.

Again, an example would be kinship. In the British tradition, you are concerned with kinship and kinship terminology to get a systematic characterization of them. In interpretive anthropology, you are much more concerned with how people thought of their mothers and fathers and brothers—how people saw themselves and how they think the gender issue works out. But I do think it is a perspective—as you say—rather than a discipline. Anthropology has a slight habit of fractioning itself, so you get economic anthropology and political anthropology and so on. The American Anthropological Association now has more than fifty different subgroupings all called something or other. And to me, at least, interpretive anthropology is a perspective and a way of going about it that I have just tried to explicate—not a sort of thing in itself, not a subdiscipline.

I don't want to parody the other side, but I tend to. They think that there is a correct description. They think that you can say that this is the

way it is. But interpretive anthropology believes that you can have two interpretations of the same thing. Now that does not mean that all interpretations work; some interpretations are better than others, and we can talk about how you go about one or another, but that is another issue. But you can have multiple interpretations in the field of a particular system and they all have an appeal. Interpretive anthropology draws much more on the literary and philosophical traditions as opposed to the scientific tradition that social anthropology tends to draw on. And so it is used to the notion of there being multiple interpretations of the same "text." Just to give you an example, in *Hamlet* there are two major interpretations that have been in the field, one of which is the Freudian interpretation. This is the story of Hamlet, a man who can't make up his mind, the Oedipal complex. Then there is another political interpretation, the one that Francis Ferguson is most famously identified with, where the key quote is "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." Both of those readings are possible; you don't have to choose between them; you can't really unify them. You just live with both of them. You can read the play in both ways, and I think that is true of most cultural institutions of major importance. I've done a lot of readings of Bali, but there are others who have done other readings, some of which are not very good, but others are equally okay because there's no final place to stop. You just discuss these things. Sometimes these questions disappear because people get bored with them. Some don't work anymore. But there is no sense that we are all going to finally zero in on one final interpretation on something like "Javanese society" or "Moroccan society." That just isn't going to happen—not in this tradition anyway.

NP: You have often drawn an intellectual genealogy of interpretive anthropology that references the genealogy of hermeneutics. The terms hermeneusis and interpretation produce the same meaning in Greek. Would you like to expand on this genealogical affinity?

It starts with [Friedrich Ernst Daniel] Schleiermacher and so on, and then it continues on with [Hans-Georg] Gadamer and people of this sort, which rests on biblical criticism but is secularized. And I, at least, have learned a great deal from that tradition, but it's not mine. I mean I do not come out of that tradition. I mean I come out of a different kind of tradition that is Anglo, which is the study of meaning by [Charles S.] Pierce and a philosophical tradition of a different sort. There are some problems in the German tradition that we do not address and we are not concerned with, the

truth and reality of these things, to the same extent that biblical criticism was. But the techniques we tend to borrow are not from the philosophical disciplines but from the literary disciplines; there is a whole literary tradition of hermeneutics. So there are lots of different interpretive things. The thing that the Germans did, and they deserve credit for this, was that they did methodologize it a bit—they did reflect on the process of interpretation. And you don't get much of that in the Anglo tradition, and indeed there is something of a resistance to overconceptualization of the tradition, of which Wittgenstein is a good example.

PK: How does interpretive anthropology differ from other interpretive approaches in the social sciences?

I don't quite know the answer to that. I don't know what interpretive sociology is or would be. Anthropology is a great "invader" of other people's turf—we do politics, we do sociology—so it is hard to distinguish anthropology in those terms from other disciplines. The only way you can distinguish it is in the kinds of work that has been done in the past. In some ways, as far as the U.S. is concerned, interpretive sociology is largely parasitic on interpretive anthropology. But [Max] Weber was concerned with the relationship between scientific law on the one hand and moral kinds of issues on the other, and actually interpretive anthropology is very heavily Weberian. So is he an anthropologist or what? The real opposition might be between Weber and [Émile] Durkheim. In the early twentieth century, when these people were practicing, these fields were not crystallized or professionalized the way that they are now; so was Durkheim an anthropologist or sociologist? You could argue either way. He was both. He did studies of Australian totemism, and he did studies of suicide in France. And the same thing is true of Weber, who did studies of economic change and political organization, but he also did studies of religion in China, so that kind of crystallization is posterior, is after the establishment of the interpretive tradition.

I would think that this fragmentation has remained stronger in anthropology than it has in sociology or in political science. But they are all from the same source, and the professional divisions are very recent, post World War II, and somewhat American in some ways. Cambridge did not have a professor of sociology for the longest time, and there was a big struggle over this, and Talcott Parsons went over and spoke, and when they finally got one it was Jack Barnes, who is an anthropologist. Again, in Britain, you don't get that distinction the way you do in the United States. So we

who do interpretive work are all descendants of the same ancestors, but now that we have been divided up into professional cliques, you get these different terms.

NP: You mentioned the fact, and it is apparent in the corpus of your work, that you were not originally trained in anthropology but in literature and philosophy. This interdisciplinary training has framed the way in which you have been formulating the theoretical questions that have guided your research. Are there any landmarks in the history of American interpretive anthropology? Who were your theoretical interlocutors?

First, about when it was formed. It started in the 1960s and early 1970s. There was a group of us. Talcott Parsons is not an interpretive anthropologist, but he made it possible to talk about meaning and symbols and structures, and that was extraordinarily important. But there was also a group of people who all emerged at the same time, more or less: in the U.S. and Britain particularly and in France, with [Claude] Lévi-Strauss's students. Mary Douglas and Victor Turner, myself and David Schneider, even [Edmund] Leach in England and a number of other people. I think the first real move toward doing it in the United States was at Chicago in the early 1960s, when I first got there. And we really did try to change the way things were done. Chicago was in the British tradition then, but it was run by a very marvelous man named Fred Eggan, who was very open to anything; he said, okay, you want to create a revolution, create one. And we restructured the curriculum around notions that we brought with us from different places. Victor Turner was there later, not much later. There emerged something called "symbolic anthropology" at that time, and that is what a lot of people still call it. And it sort of crystallized then, and the reaction against it came largely from what are called cultural materialists in the U.S. We drew from [Margaret] Mead, [Edward] Sapir, [Ruth] Benedict, and we were continuing the kinds of concerns that they had and the reaction against it, the empirical traditions, the positivist traditions, and then comes the emergence of sociobiology. Marshall Sahlins went from one side to the other in a famous flip-flop. He wrote a critique of Lévi-Strauss and then went to France and became a structuralist, but an American-style structuralist because he was concerned with interpretive work. So there was a generational effect, and then we produced students. We introduced a curriculum, an introductory graduate curriculum, that was called "Systems"; it started with Weber and then talked about cultural interpretation. We tried also to reconstruct the history of anthropology,

not seeing it so much through [Edward] Tylor but through George Stocking, through the neo-Kantians. So that is where it started, and there was a second generation. And then there was a split where the postmodernists felt, and still feel, that some of us did not go far enough and wanted to be much more critical. And so you get the emergence of people like [Michael J.] Fischer and [George E.] Marcus, who want to take it further in ways that some of us are wary about. So you end up with someone like me who is in between two wings. On the right I am told I am not "scientific" enough, and on the other side [I am criticized] for not being "radical" enough. But that's what makes it an active field. There is something intrinsic about interpretive anthropology that makes consensus impossible. I mean if we had consensus we'd be dead.

NP: How do you situate yourself in the historical trajectory of interpretive anthropology? Moreover, how does your main ethnographic work relate with your contributions to the field?

There are some things that are different about my career than most people's. First, I had no anthropology until I came to graduate school, so I came to it very, very late. I also came to it out of an essentially humanistic tradition. But I came to it with philosophical motives, which is rare, I think. Nearly everyone else in the field was trained as an anthropologist from the beginning. The other unique thing about my career is that I spent very little time in wholly, completely anthropological environments. In graduate school I was in what was called Social Relations, which was a new and innovative field and department that was interdisciplinary. So the things around me were not physical anthropology, linguistics, archaeology, but also sociology, clinical psychology, and so on. So I spent one year at the center and then one year at Berkeley, and there I was in an anthropology department proper. Then I went to Chicago, where I taught half in the anthropology program and half in the new nations program, and I spent ten years building the "revolution" that I spoke of earlier, with compatriots. I then went to the Institute for Advanced Studies, which was a general school of social science, where I was the only anthropologist. So unlike Victor Turner or David Schneider or Mary Douglas, I have always kind of been self-marginalized; I have never really been "inside it."

As for my fieldwork, I went first to Java as a graduate student on a collective project. I spent two and a half years in Java, and I came back and began to write. And there was a division of labor: my wife Hilley worked on kinship and family, and I worked on religion. So I came back and wrote

a thesis on religion and then began to develop an essay on religion as a cultural system. That came out of a great summit meeting that was held at Cambridge in the mid-1960s. David Schneider was there; I was there and gave the "Religion as a Cultural System" paper; Marshall [Sahlins] was there. There was this moment of self-recognition when we were going to have this "hands across the sea." It was an amicable meeting and was an attempt to get the two traditions together. Then I went back to Java; then I went back to Bali and Sumatra. I looked at religion and rethought what I had written on. Then there was a big upheaval in Indonesia, and I felt I could not go there with young children, so I went to Morocco instead, to understand the other end of the Islamic world. I then worked on Islam in Indonesia and Islam in Morocco and tried to look at the differences and similarities. There is this very stereotypical view of Muslims that they are alike and that they all go around with knives. People know that Spanish Catholics and English Catholics and American Catholics are not the same, but when it comes to Islam, they think that they are all the same. So I spent time writing *Islam Observed* and other things, trying to get that sense of a differentiated notion of Islam. Then I went back to Java, and I've since then been working back and forth and doing something that is not commonly done, which is comparing two cultures not my own. There has been this tendency to compare a "them" and an "us," and in the U.S. that means Americans and others, and I wanted to compare two societies that did not include the U.S., Morocco, and Indonesia; I wanted to take two societies that were *both* different from my own background and compare them. These two societies have some similarities—Islam, for instance—but they are different places. So I'm interested in looking locally but also comparatively looking back and forth.

PK: You have written extensively on the construction of the "self" and the notion of the "persona" (rather than on people as social subjects). What are the theoretical, methodological, and epistemological advantages that you see in this disjuncture? In other words, how does such an analytical focus help make better sense of the interpretive aspects of human expressions?

Again, that is a place where fieldwork really did have an effect. Because the first time I began to think about this was in Bali, where the distinction between the persona and the self, the creatural self, is strongly emphasized. Balis have a highly dramatic way of presenting themselves, of seeing themselves. I began to think of how Balis understand the notion of time and self, of the way that etiquette took in the persona, a persona that

denies the creatural side. It makes people seem like they are all actors in an endless pageant where individuals replace others as personas just go on. You can see this in the Javanese social system, too.

NP: How does your approach to the making of the self (maybe we could call it an interpretive social poetics) account for such interpretive dualities as self and other, sameness and otherness, identity and alterity, or, especially, the dialectics between difference and otherness?

Well, that is a somewhat Western formulization, and that is not the way that the Javanese or Balinese would think of it. Otherness is differently conceptualized in all three of those societies. But the sharp contrast between self and other is much more muted in Java. Etiquette suppresses it; you are not supposed to let your feelings show directly. You try to reduce difference; certain differences are accentuated, but differences of kind are not. In Morocco, gender is a huge marker and there is gender separation—this is a little bit stereotypical. In Java, it is not that there are no differences, but gender is very much minimized. And in Morocco, differences of status are not emphasized. In Java status is more important, but gender is different; the clothes that are worn in Java are very much the same between men and women. Most of the heroes are androgynous; most of the gods are androgynous. So they try to minimize as much as they can gender differences and accentuate as much as they can status differences. It is a different kind of pattern. Everyone creates their own notion of what is other.

PK: Let's think about the concept of the self in interpretive anthropology: text and context, textuality and intertextuality, text as process and product, text as performance. How does the self encounter the text? How does the concept of intersubjectivity modify—if it does—such an interpretive encounter?

Interpretive models are not only textual. Some are textual, but again there is the dramatic model—I use the theater model sometimes. So I don't want to identify textual things with interpretive models. Not to evade the question, but that is first. Secondly, it is an analogy. My own use of it comes from Paul Ricoeur, who uses it as an analogy: the idea that you can read texts. And there I do think, if you go back to the persona notion, that people understand one another in a sense textualizing, in making them into some sort of story, like "X." That's just like "him" to do that, "it's just like us Javanese to be polite," and so on. There is always that kind of

story about people as individuals but also individuals as classes, as personae. So, that kind of textualization of others goes on all the time. We create texts with one another. The text is never created by one person—that is the intersubjective part—it is always created in the context of other people. I mean, this little world we are in right now has to do with me, but also with you and the production that we exchange and so on, and that is how I construct the notion of what I am all about. So in that sense it is a textualization thing and it is intersubjective. You can't make yourself alone. There are all sorts of collective representations of selfhood as in "this is what it is proper to be, to act, whatever."

NP: On the poetics of text-as-performance and the poetics of performance-as-text: how is the rhetorical dimension of such discourses researched and accounted for? Is there a "self" outside of performance and is there a "persona" outside of a "self"?

Interpretive anthropology is very practice oriented, so texts are performed. That is why I say what I say about text analogues. I've read the cockfight as a text. Now that's an action, and I textualize it perhaps, but I've tried to look at it as a Balinese text. I have tried to see how the Balinese make sense of this. So behavior is read by the people who are involved in it. The Balinese cockfight means something, or so I argue, "this is what I argue is going on here, that masculinity is at risk, and so on." And after I wrote that, I got messages from all over the world because cockfighting is one of the most widespread sports in the world, and I had not realized that. And it means something different in different parts of the world. And so it is not a written text, and you don't ask literal questions about it as if it were a written text, and the differences between it and written texts are worth keeping in mind before you go overboard.

NP: Interpretive anthropology has been charged with a lack of focus on power, especially political power, a criticism that has drawn heavily from Foucault's formulations on power and discipline and [Antonio] Gramsci's formulations on hegemony, and Marxist understandings of ideology. Would you like to address this issue of power, discipline, and hegemony in terms of interpretive anthropological analyses?

Well, it may be true that it has not dealt with this—I would argue that it has—but that's a fair question. The real question that is really important is, can it handle questions of power and hegemony? and so on. I must say that I don't see why not, and I have tried to do it in various ways. But the

dangers that I think people see is aestheticization and yielding to hegemony and hegemonic views. If you look at some of the work that people have done, it seems to be at least somewhat concerned with power. The notion that it aestheticizes everything seems to me not correct. And certainly it isn't intrinsic to it. I don't see why, again, in the same way that the textualization of the self does not destroy the creaturality, the textualization of power does not change the nature of the Balinese state, which is all about power, warfare, and domination. But the thing that has made that charge more cogent and more current is Foucault's theory of creating subjects and creating domination. So there is not a question of dealing with power but how power should be conceived and whether a disciplinary view of power, which is essentially what Foucault has, is really a valid one. And so it is really not a question of whether one deals with power or one doesn't but how one is supposed to deal with power. I don't think that interpretive anthropologists neglect "real power," whatever that is. Real power is power that is effective, and we can talk about that. Whether we deal with it in a Foucauldian idiom or not? No, we don't. By and large we don't. We have a lot to learn from that. But this is where the criticism has come from, people who want to look at power as a disciplinary force.

NP: How can (or should) the anthropological "self" be situated toward its object of study? Is reflexive ethnographic practice a poetic epistemological breakthrough or a rhetorical ploy?

Well, there is a phrase by David Hoffman, the painter, who said that "our big mistake was to describe the world as though we were not in it." And anthropology did that, including me, and I mean we all did it for a while. But I spent two and a half years in Javanese society, and to describe this Javanese town as though I were not there, I mean it is just false. Now the textual problems of doing that are there, they exist—that is, how you construct a text, whether you do it in the first person, whether you do it by reflexive considerations, whether you do it otherwise, there are all kinds of ways of approaching it. But I think by now, everybody of the interpretive tradition, all recognize the need to include themselves in the world they are describing. That's what we do. Maybe sociology can pass out questionnaires and go hide behind the screen, but anthropologists do not do that. Most of my work has been done by talking to people, living with families, going to the market, walking around, and to make you believe that I got all of this from some information-production machine just does not make any sense. What I mean is that this would be a misdescription

of what we are doing. And here I would be quite adamant. Now reflexivity can be overdone. Books are authored, they are signed, and it is not by our subjects—we have done enough harm to them; we should not make them coauthors of our books. *We* write them and *we* should acknowledge that we write them. Here's a story: When I went back to my town in Java after twenty-five years, the last of my books to be translated into Indonesian was a social history of this town that just came out when I was there. I had changed all the names (as you usually do), and one of my old informants had Xeroxed the text, wrote in all of the proper names, and distributed them to the people there, and so when I went around to talk to them I had a lot of discussions about this. It was great fun—they would pull out the pages—it was great fun.

NP: Over the past twenty years, we have experienced an epistemological fragmentation: an ever-growing corpus of work by anthropologists who come from countries that have traditionally been the object of the anthropological project (and have been called anything from "native" anthropologists to "insider," "indigenous," "at home," and so on) but have participated in the international production of anthropological knowledge (through publications, teaching, and so on), and they are gaining a more active intellectual profile. Subjects and objects of study, subjectivities encountering objectivities. Is it possible to do without the classical epistemological dichotomy of subject-object? Is it possible to avoid or manage alternatively the dialectic between making sense and power?

Well, when I came into anthropology it was largely "Western." In a generation, and partly due, I think, to interpretive anthropology, the first American Indian anthropologists began to emerge, and then there was a group of people from Sri Lanka that became quite eminent, so the whole field has been differentiated. And the other thing that came with this reflexive thing is the notion of the "situated observer," that is, the notion that we don't stand on the moon, we stand somewhere. Sometimes we come from our own society, sometimes not, but wherever we are, we are situated. And so the attempt to cast away all personal identity when you are writing about this stuff is problematic, and so that has an effect on those who are writing about their own societies. There is a lot more work by Americans on American society than there used to be, and I think that the whole notion of the situated observer has made this whole thing much more visible. You don't get to sign just your name anymore, you have to sign your identity, and that is here to stay—it is just never going to go away, especially as anthropology itself differentiates and becomes more cosmopolitan. When I first did work in Indonesia, there was maybe one really

good anthropologist; there are now fifty or sixty. In Morocco there were even fewer—there were none—and today still there are not very many, but there are some (including one teaching at Princeton as you know). So the whole field has changed that way, so it is less a matter of “native” versus nonnative—that is not how I usually phrase it—but as situated observers versus people who try to claim that they are looking at things from the sky. But where one stands always has to be foregrounded, or signaled in some way, to make the account readable and interpretable for someone who is reading it. So (I always go back to literary models) just as the narrator has changed in fiction writing—you now have personalized narrators, unreliable narrators, and so on—all this has flooded into anthropological work. I think you also begin to include a critique of your own work in how you write it, so that people do not take it more seriously than it is worth taking. So the framing of the question as “native”-“nonnative”—even in quotes!—is not the way that I would frame it. If there is a conflict, it has to do with the fact that interpretive anthropology fully accepts the reflexive, situated narrator and social anthropology does not do that. I mean, everything is supposed to look the same to everybody for them.

I tend to be skeptical in general about terminological solutions to problems of this sort. It is a problem of building texts, of trying to create a text in which the author is visible and identifiable and can be seen. You are writing a book; I mean, it is not being written by god. But I tend to deal with these problems in terms of writing. Another concern that also emerged out of interpretive anthropology is the concern with the actual literary form of modern anthropological work. And I think that—in so far as we have to solve these problems, or at least face them honestly and directly—it's going to be through both borrowing and inventing literary devices. But I myself tend to do it not terminologically but rhetorically. But my works are constructed differently—they are not all the same kind of form—and I think that is true in general of people who write in the interpretive tradition. And again it is more like a literary analogy than a scientific one, where you want to hold the observer constant, unchanged, and unfeeling, and “un” everything else. There you don't have any kind of literary textual problem; you try to suppress any kind of rhetorical dimension to the text. And in interpretive work you try to maximize the visibility of the text.

NP: Finally, let's look at the practice of anthropology from the perspective of technological globalization. Does doing ethnography from a distance indicate a

return to "armchair anthropology" or a matter-of-fact reformulation of a century-old prerogative? Interpretation is always already post- and metafactual. How does (can) an empirical reality totally mediated by technological simulation inform the interpretive process?

Well, I don't see any reason you can't do it from a distance. I've never been much interested in doing it at a distance, but there have been miraculous works done this way; I mean, I still think that *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* is an amazing work for someone who never went to Japan. So you can do it. It is not something that I do. We are much more involved in the technological world—you know the work of Bruno Latour, beginning to try to think about objects as part of interactions with human beings—and we are much more implicated in technological culture, day by day. We are now connected through nonhuman interlocutors. So it is no longer possible to regard technology as simply a background or a framework on which society rests. It is integrated into the interpretive structure of reality and is not just regarded as an instrument or a tool but as an actor in society. Day by day everything is much more implicated in technology. Everything that we do. There was a blackout in New York the other day and it changed everything. So we can't regard technology as just a passive structure. That's a real change. And I think that change has been recognized, but how to describe it or discuss technology as actors, technological instruments as actors, is the question, and we are just beginning to learn how to do this—some of us inside anthropology and some outside. But I think again that interpretive anthropology is much more hospitable to this sort of thing than any other and that you get involved in science wars because the old positivist tradition is stronger in the natural sciences than in the social sciences. So the whole notion that technology is a passive factor is changing entirely—it is an active force. Of course, it has always been an active force but not so much as now. In a tribal society, you can regard technology as a tool so you can build a canoe so that you can sail and fish. But in modern society it is really not possible to regard technology as external to our lives.