In the spring of 1999, before 9/11—or the possibility of it—entered the public, political, and intellectual discourses, we, Neni Panourgia and George Marcus, sat talking about what had happened to the critique of anthropology, what critical thought had brought to the project of anthropology and ethnography, and what the theoretically systematic approaches to anthropology had produced in the last twenty years. It seemed to us that what we had come to understand as interpretive anthropology had engendered new, engaged, and sustaining modalities of making the translation process of cultural experience to textual representation possible. With its beginnings in hermeneutics and the continental tradition of inquiry and its commitment to the ethnographic project, interpretive anthropology, by incorporating and participating in the linguistic turn and the crisis of representation, opened up the space for the type of interdisciplinarity that is so characteristic of the field now and made anthropological questions accessible and relevant to neighboring disciplines. Microhistory and classics, psychoanalysis and philosophy, qualitative sociology, literary criticism, and critical legal studies participate in the emergence of this critical space where the aporias about the human condition posited by philosophy are encountered by anthropology and where answers, anchored in experience, are attempted through the ethnographic encounter. In Renato Rosaldo’s words, “Culture requires study from a number of perspectives, and . . . these perspectives cannot necessarily be added together into a unified summation,” but they can inform each other’s positions that produce fertile positionalities. Those different positions and positionalities, Sherry Ortner has pointed out, can be “located and examined in very different ways” that will, at the end, not only assume (as Ortner suggests) but show with certainty (we would add) that “human social life is . . . meaning-laden, meaning-making, intense, and real.”

It seems to us that since the publication of The Interpretation of Cultures in 1973, interpretive anthropology has been able to absorb and negotiate
the critiques that had originally been articulated about it, from its engagement with the political to the centrality afforded to the notion of culture at large. The project that we undertook in the summer of 1999 was one of translation on a number of different levels that bore within it the felicity of a specific location, Greece. The project sought to enable and facilitate the negotiation of a very specific topos, that of interpretive anthropology, within that very specific ethnographic locus. The resulting seminar that took place under the auspices of the Center for Neohellenic Research, one of the research branches of the National Research Center in Athens, brought together these interdisciplinary perspectives that have been inaugurated by interpretive anthropology, and resulted in these essays. As they appear in this volume, the essays move through this negotiated space of hermeneutics, social theory, and cultural theory, providing critical articulations on the synapses of how actors make themselves understood by the world at large. They are essays that propose new readings of texts that have long been discarded as exhausted, new approaches on political matters that have long seemed all too easily handed over to political science. They problematize the easiness with which the notion of “postcoloniality” has been reproduced as an ideology, and they engage in critical presentations of issues of epistemology that are commonly shared by history, anthropology, law, or classics.

In a reading of Theodor W. Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*, Edward Said, in his *Representations of the Intellectual*, picked up the question of displacement and writing that constitutes the backbone of the intellectual praxis, as it for Adorno interrogates the security and comfort of “private life.” Said reads Adorno as delineating the experience of writing as the only possible “at home” position of the intellectual, painfully celebrating an “in-betweenness” while warning against its iconization, which can become an ideology as any other.

Anthropology and anthropologists have long accepted this suspended existence of belonging neither here nor there, of leaving “home” as a result of the questioning of its safety and security as a location where subjectivity can be formulated singularly, in order to submit themselves to other peoples’ “homes,” becoming other peoples’ “children,” fictive kin, and friends, existing in Victor Turner’s “between and betwixt,” all the while touching the untouchable, in a way that makes Adorno’s understanding of the ethics of being ever so relevant: “For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live.” The anthropologist is asked of “nothing less . . . than that he should be at every moment both within things and outside them—Münchhausen pulling himself out of the bog by
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his pig-tail”—thus producing “a knowledge which wishes to be more than either verification or speculation,” just as Adorno wrote of the thinker in general. Translating thus the experience of being, of “I have been there” and now I am here, the momentary suspension of the comfort of home, or the acknowledgment of the illusion of home, the anthropologist is expected to produce a written product that will provide the means, for the readers, to enter the anthropologist’s experience of the (ethnographic) world mediatly while creating the impression of immediacy, and all the while retaining the position that the world is real, despite its symbolic mediation (to invoke Ortner’s reading of Clifford Geertz’s commitment to the reality of the world). It is only in this manner, Adorno concludes, in “abiding so insistently with the particular,” that knowledge can “widen horizons . . . [and] its isolation [be] dispelled.” It is precisely this relationship between the particular and the universal, the “on the ground” and the “in the world,” the here and the there, that the thinker, the critic, the anthropologist, the intellectual, strives to make apparent as much as the person “on the ground,” so to speak, each going about it in different manners but all trying to grapple with the same question. This is a question, Michael Jackson proposes in his Minima Ethnographica, that exists within the various parameters that bring the project of the trained intellectual (the critic, the anthropologist, the philosopher) to bear on the project of life of the untrained, but no less profound, thinker: “How do local and global worlds intersect, how can ethnographic studies of single societies enable us to say something about the human condition, and how is the lived experience of individuals connected to the virtual realities of tradition, history, culture, and the biology of the species that outrun the life of any one person?” It is to this question that the papers in the present volume try to provide windows into possible answers, frustrating the comfort of secure disciplinary borders, contaminating their respective discourses, becoming guests or cohabitants in each other’s intellectual homes.

We tend to make “homes” outside our home in many manners and registers—spatially, ethically, ideologically, in theory. We find ourselves “at home” in our home, in our discipline, in our ideology, in our politics. We are “at home in the world,” Michael Jackson offers in his At Home in the World, just as Adorno warns us, “today . . . it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home,” not to rest comfortably in our assumptions, in our disciplinary boundaries, in our politics and ethics, but to interrogate their certainty and interrupt their narratives, to be not necessarily homeless but at home in many different homes (to come back to Michael Jackson). Said reads in Adorno that he represents the intellectual as “a
permanent exile,” as someone who sits uncomfortably on the dialectical edge of the “old and the new . . . dodging both with equal dexterity.”

Interpretive anthropology set out in 1973, unprogrammatically and, as Geertz himself has admitted, unsystematically and ad hoc, to bring about some “muddles in the models” (to remember David Schneider), to explore the idea (and finally, show) that there was no danger lurking in contaminating the purity of disciplinary explanations and that if there was a danger, we were all the better for having come into contact with it. But it also managed, as Ortner points out, to make “visible the shared ways of thinking between anthropology and the humanities.”

George Marcus’s article sets the tone for the evaluation of the ways in which interpretive anthropology has produced a new generation of ethnographers, by offering a critical look at the current challenges to the way that the classic scene of fieldwork itself can emerge in the inevitable multisited contexts in which interpretive ethnographic research is negotiated today. This assessment, stimulated by an engagement with the ingenious interventions of research-based conceptual art projects, is a valuable means of thinking stochastically about the directions that the post-Geertzian anthropology has taken, a landscape that Marcus and the group of Writing Culture have helped map.

Eleni Papagaroufali’s essay is the one that draws directly from Geertz’s *The Interpretation of Cultures* in her attempt to interrogate the processes of somatization of experience. Papagaroufali uses somatization as an analytical concept to explore the hermeneutical intimacy that informs the relationships of body and organ donors to their lived realities. Positing the presentation of cross-cultural translation or interpretation as a “hermeneutic circle,” Papagaroufali problematizes the continuous dialectical tacking between natives’ “experience-near” and ethnographers’ “experience-distant concepts,” especially when entered from the spatially secure position of considering “experiences” as immediately and really lived, yet internally sensed and unselfconsciously practiced. The former, Papagaroufali argues, are experienced as located closer to one’s body, so to speak, whereas the latter are experienced as closer to one’s mind. To arrive at this, Papagaroufali imports the concept of a “carnal hermeneutics,” further complicating the implicit suggestion that the “symbolic means”—words, images, actions—through which both the ethnographer and her interlocutors represent themselves to themselves and to each other are as experiential as experiences supposedly represented. Yet the so-called immediate nature of experience is denied here. It is the always already nonimmediate character of experience (e.g., that of comprehending or writing about
Other cultural experience) that is responsible for its incompleteness and indeterminacy. Time, rather than space (near-, far-experience), determines experience.

This emergent experience constitutes a new somatic intersubjectivity, Papagaroufali points out: instead of “points of view” or “visions of the world,” participant cointerpreters, physically or imaginatively copresent, juxtapose, contest, negotiate, realize, socially informed embodied, and bodying forth, knowledge that traverses the space from silence to gesture to language, thus implicating Bourdieu’s habitus or dispositions. The move away from an ocularcentric analytical framework to a somaticized logocentricity conceptualizes “experience” as a hermeneusis in which mnemonics participates actively.

Shifting from concepts to dispositions implies that ethnographers and interlocutors produce knowledge as sentient agents, that is, through our always already socially informed senses and emotions rather than “minds.” And that knowledge becomes constantly embodied and bodying forth through past, present, and future practices sensorily and emotionally shared with persons, objects, and institutions—actual or imagined, seen or unseen or never to be seen.

Marc Abélès confronts the issue of the political in Geertz’s work by proposing a Geertzian study of the foundational institution of political modernity, the French National Assembly. He posits a main question, the interpolation of which frames the possibilities of studying the political as part of the ethnographic project. Is it possible to study the semiotic aspects of the state in occidental societies while exposing the ethnocentric conceptualization of politics? Abélès argues in his paper that what Geertz calls the “semiotic aspect” plays a central part in the political process when all the meanings of the “semiotic” are investigated. What emerges, among other things, is the theatricality of power, the strong association between governance, ritual, and symbolism, which folds into it the intricate relationship between orality and writing. Abélès situates politics as taking place in a global universe of simulacra, where the mimetics of the simulacrum encounters the mimetics of ritual. Abélès finds in Geertz’s Negara the inaugural moment for the study of political institutions as cultural performance, whence he examines not simply the institutional ritualization of the Assembly’s work but, more importantly, the processual aspects of this institutionalization in what he calls a ritual struggle.

Using “no man’s land” as a metaphor for an abjected space outside the recognized domains of the international system, here Northern Cyprus, Yael Navaro-Yashin studies subjective experiences under an authoritarian
regime. Inviting anthropologists of politics to “sense” the political that underlies contexts that would normalize disruption, the author gathers signs, in the spatial surroundings and subjectivities in Northern Cyprus, of a glossed experiential catastrophe. The study of subjection under a self-declared “state” unrecognized by the international system is matched here with the reflections of subjective experiences in the radically transformed space. “No man’s land” as metaphor does not isolate this particular context administered by an “illegal state” as a particular or peculiar space, but invites anthropologists to consider the “no man’s land” aspects of other contexts (within the domain of “legal states”) that they study. The paper can be read particularly as a critique of anthropologies of globalization and transnationalism that would reify mobility and ignore the immobilities and experiences of confinement that are produced by the very same international practices.

Looking at the myth of Oedipus as a fundamentally political text, Athena Athanasiou posits the question of how a text is reconstituted as political when read through the exigencies produced by feminism and deconstruction. Who is Oedipus? she asks. The skeptic and the hero, the infant and the sovereign, the Hegelian philosopher and the Freudian figure, autonomous and dispossessed—how do the multiple figures of Oedipus enact and inflect the aporias of modern Western biopolitics and biopolitical anthropology? Athanasiou encounters this question by thinking through the cleavages of heteronomy and autonomy, belonging and errancy, sovereignty and liminality, the soma of the masculine leader and the future of the polis. Her reading follows the disorder of Oedipus’s body as a topographic map that bespeaks the politics of bodily disorder. She enters into this inquiry at two critical moments that have remained absent within the Freudian appropriation of the myth—namely, Oedipus’s encounter with the Sphinx and the eruption of the plague. In discussing the horror of the pestilence and the mystery of the Sphinx, Athanasiou brings to the fore both of them as instantiations of the constitutive force of biopolitical alterity. Athanasiou reads the latter as a binding condition for corporeal affectability that assures the cohesion of the social body while at the same time leaving open the necessary possibility of disruption and dismemberment.

Neni Panourgia picks up the thread of biopolitics offered by Athanasiou and encounters Oedipus at the location where the articulation of the political and the existential erect a new discourse on ontology, namely, the rehabilitation camp. More specifically, she looks at the concentration or rehabilitation camp(s) for Leftists and Communists established in Greece.
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at the end of the Second World War by the democratically elected government of Greece, in an attempt to redefine the notions of the “human” (*anthropos*) in its contestation between the state and the Leftists, along with the new articulations of the “homeland” (*patrida*) and the “national” (*ethnikon*). In this process of rearticulation and reinscription of political ontologies, Panourgia finds the stigmata that explode this synallagmatic relationship between the state, the citizen, and life as a social category. The specter that haunts this relationship is that of Oedipus, as he becomes reanimated outside of the colonizing gestures of Freud and psychoanalysis that have taken over the total space of analysis of the psyche. Oedipus becomes paradigmatic in the case of the political as he becomes referenced now by survivors, now by the press, always as the figure that frustrates the certainties of interpretation.

James Boon’s essay foregrounds the distinctive combination of James and Lilly Frazer’s virtual cottage industry (in league with Macmillan) of publishing in self-conscious formats and translations geared to diverse audiences. He also dwells on coinciding notions of “arcades” in Frazer’s work and in Walter Benjamin’s—both deriving from Pausanias. Benjamin used Johann Jacob Bachofen’s translation of Pausanias, but Frazer relied on his own translation and rigorous on-scene research of archaeological evidence of the warehouse in Piraeus. Boon intensifies questions about Frazerian and Benjaminian notions of “the fragmentary” that open Frazer’s lengthy excessiveness to more serious and playful readings. Boon’s essay darts among disciplines and across times (from Walter Pater and Alfred Hitchcock to George Stocking and Slavoj Zizek), but in doing so, it ends up in Frazer, particularly as translated into French, and as enacting transgressive readings of seriocomic rites, including those of Bali (Boon’s own field area).

Boon produces the paradigmatic text not simply of how interpretive anthropology can be used in reading cultural texts but, far more importantly, of how Boon “does” interpretive anthropology. He does not engage in a dialogue with interpretation, but rather produces a text on Frazer that looks at the Frazerian text as a process of interpretation of Pausanias itself while recognizing Pausanias’s project as an interpretive one. Precisely because even textual interpretation, Boon reminds us, can never be confined to a text (or, alternately, a praxis is always as much gestural as textual) Frazer himself actually came out of his armchair to journey to Greece. Frazer was determined to retranslate and retrace Pausanias’s travelogue meticulously. In tracing the layers of Frazer’s *Pausanias*, Boon goes one turtle deeper by suggesting that today one could conceivably approach
Frazer as (1) a slightly later Bachofen (both retranslated Pausanias, Frazer correcting Bachofen’s version) or (2) a considerably earlier Benjamin. Much as Benjamin’s imaginative excursions among modernity’s “ruins” (via the work of litterateurs) recalled the “ancient labyrinths that Pausanias had entered,” so did Frazer’s forays among primitivity’s “ruins” (via the work of ethnographers). Boon engages the affinities adhering Bachofen, Frazer, and Benjamin to Pausanias (and to each other) to signal endless ironies of transhistorical cross-cultural rereadings.

By reading Pausanias through Frazer, Boon posits a number of disciplinary questions: What might Frazer’s disciplinary multiplicity mean, even today, for meaning-in-cultures? Can Frazer, Boon asks, help reinvigorate anthropology’s appeal among other fashions of critical consciousness? The method by which Frazer achieved such refraction of matter into sensibility is his style, which has often been misunderstood. Frazer’s odd and ample corpus, Boon notes, helps challenge any dogmatic separation of interpretive pursuits: anthropology, history, literature, classics, and so on. Boon suggests that we read Frazer in order to revisit and question some of the existing binarisms in anthropology, such as Frazer (bookish)/Malinowski (fieldworker); Frazer (derivative)/Tylor (“first”); British (empirical)/French (intellectualist); Boasian/Durkheimian.

Richard Martin brings about the painful point of interdisciplinary dialogue. Despite the fact that a lot has been said and written about the desire for fertile intellectual exchanges between the disciplines, Martin argues, in the case of anthropology and the classics, true interdisciplinarity and cross-fertilization remain on the level of desire and discourse. Martin goes to the epistemological hearts of the two disciplines and recognizes that despite the fact that the study of myth is central to both classics and anthropology, any dialogue between the two has been almost completely absent, with a few exceptions that Martin underscores. Sally Humphreys’ work on anthropology and the classics and her groundbreaking work on women in antiquity remain largely unknown within anthropology, as does the work by the late John Winkler. Humphreys’ work, in particular, remains the best overview of the ways in which scholars of Greek and Roman culture used and abused anthropological ideas, as she takes account of more recent work and renews the call for a more self-aware critique of methodologies in classics, aided by anthropology. Visiting specific epistemological issues, Martin goes further to problematize anthropology’s identification with fieldwork and the problems involved, and he suggests that we look at Albert Lord’s project on Homeric poetry and fieldwork
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Among Serbo-Croatian singers and at Gregory Nagy’s project on fieldwork among the Navaho in reimagining contexts for the lyric poetry of Sappho. The structuralist wave that hit classics in the 1970s and only subsided about 1990 took myth for granted, Martin argues, as a transparent concept and tool, and explored the way traditional tales interacted with Greek social life. Such work, however, should generate a new wave of interest in rereading, anthropologically, ancient dramas—a project that could, in turn, help the classicist toward unpacking a concept that itself has played a formative role in anthropological discussion. A similar genealogy of concepts demands to be written for other terms and concepts inherited by modern social science from ancient Greek sources.

Louisa Schein, through a layered reading of Geertzian culture, suggests a consideration of media’s participation in the process of cultural formation. Through E. Valentine Daniel and Jeffrey M. Peck’s translation of cultural texts into contextured texts, she raises two main issues: (1) the paradigm agonisms precipitated by the encounter of anthropology with cultural studies and (2) the interconnection between media and transnationalism. Schein argues that media produce a kind of transnational subjectification. Importantly, then, media products are not only about meanings harbored within the actual texts: media’s webs of significance are immanent in their social consequences and their relations of production and reception as well. In Schein’s analysis, desire, gendered relations, and erotic longings become the substance of transnational imaginings as they structure transnational mobilities. To get at how this works, Schein suggests, we need to turn back to meaning—toward the contents of the media texts that are implicated in a kind of transnational subjectification. By looking at cultural politics and media consumption in post-Mao China, especially among the Miao ethnic group of China’s southwest, Schein posits her central questions: How does media as text participate in the formation of a transnational subject? Is text to ethnography as cultural studies is to anthropology?

This sort of translocal subject formation is critical but cannot be bounded, confined to the dyadic articulation between media texts and viewer positionings. Eloquenty echoing both Geertz’s conceptualization of culture and Lila Abu-Lughod’s problematization of this same concept, Schein further problematizes location and textuality as determinants of media analysis. Looking at Miao and Hmong video productions of the homeland (itself a loaded and problematic term) Schein interrogates the desires, the identities and identifications, and the alliances generated by the reception of these images. Looking “thickly” at one of those videos
Schein references the distinctly gendered homeland desire of Hmong media in bying and participating in the construction of a complicated erotic subjectification.

Yet even as the Hmong sense of collectivity spans the globe, augmented by media messages, those same media messages may also play a role in refashioning the most intimate of interiorities. Transnational erotics, such as exist in Hmong media, remixes sex and space, revealing that physical distance and proximity are complexly intertwined in the contours of homeland desire.

The papers by Antonis Liakos and Kath Weston engage in a metacritique of their respective disciplines and epistemologies, interrogating the categorical questions that have been posited by history and anthropology, respectively, and the implicit and explicit hierarchizations of these categorical ascriptions. Who can speak for and about history and anthropology? What is a historical fact and what constitutes the object and subject of anthropology and history? What are the limits and delimitations of interiority and exteriority in the process of interminable construction of a discipline?

What do we have in mind when we talk of history and how has this understanding of “History” been formed through interdisciplinary discussions between history and anthropology? asks Liakos. The term *history* is a linguistic and cultural indicator of diverse ways of understanding social temporality. The conception of history and the meaning given to the term depend on the historicity each culture produces—something belied by the fact that in some cultures a corresponding term for history is lacking, since the concept of history and more generally the understanding of chronology belong to entirely different categories of social experience. What in Western tradition we call history exists as the “spring and autumn annals” or the “Tso tradition” in China, as “Rikkokushi” or the “six national Histories” in Japanese culture, as “Itihasa” in Hindu culture, as short histories in Arab and Islamic tradition, as the Bible in Jewish tradition, and as eschatology in Christian tradition. What we call history is strictly woven into each cultural environment, Liakos argues, placed between medicine and rhetoric, at the crossroads of two semiotic systems, investigation and representation. The type of writing that we call history is a product of modernity, a plant of Western culture, transplanted all over the world, obscuring and substituting for other forms of History. In this way, an epistemic rupture took place, which transformed all other histories into the prehistory of History.
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With a twist on Eric Wolf, Liakos examines the project of writing down the history of peoples without history that was undertaken during colonization by Western missionaries, officials, and scholars. Looking at the interpellations of colonialism and imperialist and capitalist expansion as part of a modernist project, Liakos points at the dialectical relationship between history, modernity, and the nation. With the establishment of national states, local histories were produced as national history, able to be recognized universally. The object of history, namely the nation, became the subject of history, and written history transformed the relationship between the nation and its past. In this way, history did not describe but produced changes. Why do people engage in reconstructing and writing history? Liakos asks. The posing of this question can only be framed by the acknowledgment of the need to treat history making as a field of social and cultural practice, that is, to view historicizing practices as anthropologists view other social and cultural practices.

By looking at the process of writing and experiencing history as an exercise in successive readings, Liakos suggests that the historiographic project becomes a communicative process, which includes the historicizing object, the process of narrativization, and the historicized object. Process and message are subject to and formed by history, and, at the same time, this same concept of history contains the character of a continuous movement in both directions that is impressed as much by the social structures as by the mentality and culture.

This dialectic between historicizing present and historicized past Liakos reads as a form of broader cultural communication. Readers of historical texts are authors of their version of history; history writers are readers of sources; archivists evaluate, collect, and organize sources according to their reading of the historical process. Expectations from historical texts arise from experience and practices in which identities, collective and individual, are formed. The fragmentation of universal history into national histories, the institutionalization of history and its employment in legitimizing political decisions, the diffusion of mass education, the display of history in museums and monuments, and the familiarization with history through the mass media provoke a widespread claim of appropriation of the past. The main acquisition of this process is the polyphony of history as well as the limits of value neutrality and historical cognizance. Liakos then approaches history as cultural semiosis, where semiosis retains its meaning both as notation and as a mimetic gesture or representation, and where through the notion of culture, the past is incorporated into the present structures of knowledge and the prevailing perceptions of time. In
an interesting approach to the problem of “culture” and “history,” Liakos enters into the discussion between Lila Abu-Lughod and Geertz on how “culture” is constituted and represented. Culture and history stand as representor and representment, as signifier and signified, Liakos argues. The cultural system is the context through which the meaning of history emerges. History and culture form a network of structural relations, a circle of reciprocal semiosis.

Kath Weston goes to the heart of the problematic of what constitutes “anthropology” and how interpretive anthropology names anthropological conventions, and she brings to the level of consciousness the discussions about the discipline that have become urgent with the intervention of interpretive anthropology and hermeneutics. Whatever interpretive anthropology’s shortcomings, Weston reminds us, anthropology never proposed to be a strictly rhetorical move. Interpretive anthropology has engendered a new respect for modes of presentation and modes of intellectual production, as well as widespread recognition of the inevitability that the ethnographer will have a hand in shaping and selecting data.

If nothing else, Weston suggests, interpretive anthropology has certainly become anthropology. These days, the phrase “real anthropology” seeks other targets when it does not dissolve into irony altogether. Are studies of television “real anthropology”? Studies of shopping? Postcolonial fiction? Migration in search of work? There is a certain nostalgia embedded in the phrase “real anthropology,” a nostalgia that references an earlier (not just more authentic) time in which anthropologists understood their work and went about it with an almost utopian clarity of purpose. “Real anthropology” is a backward-looking term, floated on beliefs (however vaguely or well substantiated) about the way things used to be for practitioners of the discipline, not only invoking an epistemological timelessness but also making suspect any attempt at naming this nostalgic engagement as such.

Embedded in the contrast between the more innocent time represented by “real anthropology,” and the seemingly wider range of studies that now fall within the field’s parameters is an element of mourning for the orderliness, the predictability, the constancy, presumed to characterize the discipline in days gone by. “Real anthropology” was, and remains, a disciplinary term, Weston reminds us. Its invocation implies that in contemporary times, when anthropology has stumbled from grace, a policing of the boundaries of the discipline is necessary in order to separate acceptable from unacceptable topics or methods of study. For there is also a political
and economic context to the debates about what is to become of anthropology.

Where have the current nostalgias tended to focus? Invoking Geertz’s critique of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Weston returns to anthropology’s time of scientification. At one time, appeals to the “science” in social science provided institutional leverage, Weston notes: anthropology is real science, hard science, and thus worthy of financial support. In recent decades, the unfortunate association of science with the reductionism of sociobiology has largely relegated interest in the theoretical contributions of math and science to biological anthropology.

In a celebratory gesture that includes both John Comaroff and Simon Robert’s formulation within sociocultural anthropology and David Scott’s colonial critique, Weston notes the historical reaction against modeling the discipline on “hard” science, which included a move to break away from systemic accounts, replicable generalizations, and rule-bound analyses, as well as the formal mathematical symmetries encoded in structuralist analyses. Weston identifies other “tundra zones” besides science, such as anthropology’s colonial history, where lightly equipped nostalgias cannot endure exposure. Further implicating the establishment of an epistemological nostalgia with the actual methodological and theoretical (ultimately political) quandaries that have beset anthropology, Weston drives to the unnamed tension within anthropological praxis, that of “native anthropology.”

As the ethnographers that well-meaning colleagues judge to be “natives” studying themselves, “virtual anthropologists” have no chance to become “real anthropologists” in the nostalgic sense of the term. As Parnourgiá has also argued elsewhere, the inability or unwillingness of “nostalgic anthropology” to grant “native” anthropologists the status of “real anthropologists” is not only part of an epistemological lacuna but also, and just as importantly, part and parcel of an unfinished colonial critique.

Maria Kakavoulia, in her afterword of this whole project, posits anew the question that launched the critique of representation, namely, the problematic relationship between visuality and knowledge, a question that goes to the heart of the anthropological project. The problematization that was articulated with Geertz’s “thick description” and the impossibility of ethnographic truth, echoed in Edgar Morin’s problematization of the reliability of the senses—both of which span the length of the anthropological problematic—become the focal point of Kakavoulia’s inquiry. Kakavoulia examines the interreliability of the social sciences on the terminology of sciences, which is based heavily on metaphors related to vision, just as knowledge and cognition are metaphorically related to notions
of light, “‘clear’ vision, enlightenment, sight, and insight, and so on.” Kakavoulia indicts the collusion of metaphors of visuality, noting that “observation” has become a root metaphor within social and cultural research and that an extensive vocabulary of “visuality” is instrumental for gaining access to and understanding practices of human communities; she turns to Michel Foucault’s problematization of the sovereign gaze as indicative of God’s omnipotent vision in the formulation of the panopticon.

Turning to interpretive anthropology, Kakavoulia finds a possibility for the dismantling of the weight of visualism for the production of knowledge, since interpretive anthropology, she argues, involves visual practices as both a source domain (seeing) and a target domain (objects to be seen). To what extent is anthropology’s self-critique based on forms of self-observation? She posits one further question, namely, To what extent have aspects of vision or visuality such as imagination captured the attention of anthropological study? as she calls for a systematic theory of visuality that would (1) address cultural ocular conventions, (2) explore the visual dimension of anthropological practices, and (3) inform cross-cultural research of power and its representational practices.

Since ethnographic narrativization is already a part of the methodologies used in revelations and explanations of “unseen” or “hidden” discourses, cultures, power relations, and so on, how is vision discursively embedded within anthropological or ethnographic narratives?

We are at a historical juncture where the critique offered by interpretive anthropology, with its insistence on meanings, at a time when in the public sphere and political culture meaning has come to mean mendacity, and where the phenomenology of terms is invoked as a handmaiden to deception—we are at a juncture where this critique needs to be reintroduced.