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From Cultural Critique to Multimodality: Representational strategies and new notions of in-betweenness

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, a decade known in the field of anthropology as "the decade of cultural critique", significant transformations have taken place concerning the practice and epistemology of anthropology, widening its foundations with the inclusion of new research practices and methods. In this paper, I present some of what I consider significant methodological, theoretical and epistemological shifts in anthropology: they point towards a dynamic in-between space shaped within and across various arts and academic disciplines; they move away from the romantic ideal of the single-researcher model; they challenge us to problematize and rethink traditional ways and means by which anthropological research is conceived and materialized; they do not simply uncover new types of theory and practice, but also question the very separation between the two. And they open the path for a more systematic engagement with the aesthetics and forms of research.

Introduction

Since the 1980s, a decade known in the field of anthropology as "the decade of cultural critique", significant transformations have taken place concerning the practice and epistemology of anthropology, widening its foundations with the inclusion of new research practices and methods. Concurrently, what have traditionally been considered as anthropology's core methods, and even its central objects of interest, are now being contested by the social sciences generally, as well as the arts and other academic disciplines and some non-scholarly bodies. From the so-called "Web 2.0 era" of the late 1990s/early 2000s to the current era of social media, the network of relationships that frames and interferes in ethnographic encounters has been expanded. At the same time, under the influence of theoretical developments—from post-structuralism to theories of practice and phenomenology, as well as the feminist/queer movement and its critique of "the body"—dissatisfaction with the constraints of older models of thought have led to research questions which transcend logocentric models and focus on new theoretical and methodological research tools.

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[1] An earlier version of this article appears in Greek in Angelidou, A. and Astrinaki, R. (eds.). (forthcoming). *Αναζητήσεις για την Ανθρωπολογία στην Ελλάδα του 21ου αιώνα*. [Explorations in 21st century Greek Anthropology]. Athens: Pataki.

In this paper, I present some of what I consider significant methodological, theoretical and epistemological shifts in anthropology: they point towards a dynamic in-between space shaped within and across various arts and academic disciplines; they move away from the romantic ideal of the single-researcher model; they challenge us to problematize and rethink traditional ways and means by which anthropological research is conceived and materialized; they do not simply uncover new types of theory and practice, but also question the very separation between the two. And they open the path for a more systematic engagement with the aesthetics and forms of research.

The decade of the cultural critique

As early as the 1980s, American scholars such as George Marcus, Michael Fischer, Paul Rabinow, and James Clifford questioned traditional definitions of ethnography, offering a more expansive interpretation of its potential as a way to conduct research and collaborate among different fields of practice. Three landmark studies from the 1980s laid the foundation for subsequent debates and promoted new ways of approaching anthropological research.

In *The Predicament of Culture* (1988)*,* James Clifford presented ethnography as a "hybrid activity", which could variously appear "as writing, as collecting, as modernist collage, as imperial power, as subversive critique" (p. 13), and suggested reopening the "frontier" between "the avant-garde experiment" and "disciplinary science", a boundary which, as he suggested, restricted art's "analytic power" and ethnography's "subversive vocation" (ibid., p. 12).

By offering a critical overview of the basic historical, methodological, and theoretical developments that, from the beginning of the twentieth century, had contributed to the establishment and institutionalization of a "scientific ethnography" and its conventions, Clifford elaborated on howAnthropology had gradually distanced itself from the sort of creative approaches that could have opened up a less restricted and more dynamic understanding of ethnography. He identified elements of such a dynamic perception in certain parts of mid-WWII French ethnography, when anthropology had not yet lost touch with the worlds of art and literature (Clifford, 1988, p. 118). In that period, experimentation with techniques and forms inspired by Dadaism and Surrealism brought together artists, musicians, poets and anthropologists who dedicated themselves to problematizing western cultural categories, perceptions and stereotypes. Clifford rejected a clear-cut separation between art and science. He suggested revisiting, on the one hand, artistic surrealism as something belonging to the study of ethnography and a means of analyzing culture and, on the other, ethnography as the theory and practice of [surrealist] "collage, juxtaposition and estrangement" (Clifford, 1988, p. 10). He envisioned a more expansive way of thinking about ethnography and the possibilities it opens up in later modernity (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015, p. 420-421).

In *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (2016[1986], p. 37), G. E. Marcus and Michael M. J. Fischer described the twofold role assumed by Anthropology in the twentieth century: on the one hand, rescuing distinct forms of cultural life from the increasing westernization of the world and, on the other, using examples from different cultures, to self-critically reflect on and problematize Western assumptions that had tended to be taken for granted. According to the authors, this would require a transition from a mere interest in the description of cultural "others" to a cultural critique by juxtaposing other cultural realities with the western one in

order to acquire a better knowledge of both (ibid., p. 30). They believed that, as a form of cultural critique, a renewed and dynamic Anthropology should not only criticize but also suggest reforms in peoples' ways of life (ibid., p. 41).

In *Writing Culture* (1986), co-editors Clifford and Marcus problematized conventional forms of anthropological writing and the anthropological methods of their time. By presenting the epistemological difficulties that intervene in any ethnographic representation, they reinforced a more general debate about the form and methods of writing ethnographic texts. This specific work signalled the anthropological shift described as "literary", "reflective", "postmodern", or "post-structural" and, along with the aforementioned studies by Clifford and Marcus and Fischer, stirred up debate among anthropologists of the time. Some believed that they were finally initiating a long-overdue discussion, while others thought either that these new studies threatened the science, its rules, and its professional character, or that this discussion was not offering adequate political intervention and ignoring similar previous interventions, especially by feminist anthropology (see, e.g., Behar and Gordon, 1996).

Non-textual forms and multisensory experimentation

As was also evidenced in the title *Writing Culture*, the problem of how to represent the culture of "others" was focused on questions of power in ethnographic texts. As a result, at that "experimental moment in the human sciences", the idea of the text as the principal means of research, analysis, and experimentation for anthropology prevailed; earlier anthropological experiments with the visual were ignored, even though they had also touched upon issues addressed in the 1986 publication, such as the ethics, poetics and politics of representation (Kalantzis, 2012, p. 190). The scepticism about images—whether due to their realism which conceals their constructed character, or, for the opposite reason, due to their ambivalence which is considered to be incompatible with the transparent, seemingly objective analysis of rational academic discourse—is well known (Kalantzis, 2012, p. 190; Pinney 1992, p. 27).[2] Lucien Castaing Taylor (1996) attributes this scepticism to a "fear of the image" which subjugates visual representations to the ethnographic text, thus limiting their potentially multiple interpretations. Marcus himself, since Writing Culture's publication in 1986, has engaged in numerous research projects bringing together art and anthropology; he has also expressed disappointment that the influence of Writing Culture was primarily concerned with criticism of the authority of the ethnographic text and the conditions of knowledge production, with the aesthetic aspect of research ultimately neglected. Tending to aesthetics in research, according to Marcus, could lead to a reconsideration of traditional forms of thinking, rhetoric and practice in anthropological research and also to experimentation, which, however, social anthropology was not yet ready for at that time (Calzadilla and Marcus, 2006).

The dominance of the text, compared to other means of presenting research and analysis, whilst still pervasive, appears to be a paradox; there are numerous debates and attempts at experimentation within other fields of theory and practice, such as contemporary art and film criticism, wherein the problematization of representation, and the multiple methods to approach it, are of primary importance.

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[2] See Fischer (1995) for similar questioning and for an analysis of cinema *as* cultural criticism.

During this same period socially engaged artists have been influenced by the social sciences through a widespread and growing interest in politics, artistic activism and the possibilities afforded by artistic collectives. They adopted theories and used research tools such as interviews, questionnaires and field research to document events and social phenomena, criticize stereotypes, or simply draw inspiration for their work. The "ethnographic turn" in art in particular, as articulated in the 1990s, coincided with the tendency of artists, curators, and art theorists to adopt elements from anthropological theory and practice (Foster, 1996; Rikou and Yalouri, 2018). Social relationships are the raw material used by artists to highlight the sociopolitical and procedural nature of artistic production, which is no longer limited to clearly defined material artworks. Conversely, some anthropologists have also been influenced by and expressed an interest in art. From the 1980s onwards, anthropological interest in art has moved away from structuralist and semiotic approaches that tended to view art as a cultural language of visual forms and from theories which, until then, had focused on the aesthetic elements of the work of art. Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (1998) is a landmark study in which he advocates for a more dynamic and relational approach to art wherein art is perceived more as a system of social action than a system of aesthetics or signification. In this study, the question "What does a work of art *mean*?" becomes "What does a work of art *do*?"

Since then, other anthropologists such as Arnd Schneider and Chris Wright (2006; 2010; 2013) have contributed to experiments which transcend the methodological and theoretical research boundaries between art and anthropology, moving from an anthropology *of* art to an anthropology *through* art. Starting with the after-effects of the ethnographic turn in contemporary art—when artists began to adopt fieldwork as a research method—they present ways in which anthropological projects involving artistic practices and collaborations with artists connect the already established fields of the visual and the aesthetic with anthropology and art (on this topic see also Laine, 2018; Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015; Marcus, 2010).

On the other hand, anthropologist Ssorin-Chaikov (2013a; 2013b) suggested an analytical rather than aesthetic (interpreted as sensorial) approach. Inspired by the conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth, who turned away from the traditional work of art toward 'the idea' and 'the concept', he moved from involvement with the senses and experiences to "ethnographic conceptualism" (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015, p. 425-426). Other anthropologists (Sansi, 2015) have promoted collaboration between anthropologists and artists in the contexts of socially engaged art and a desire for political change. And other scholars who work between disciplines and fields of practice seek to develop new research modes and methodologies designed to address global and societal transformations and renew contemporary art's dialogue with various academic and theoretical discourses (e.g. Panopoulos and Rikou, 2016; Rikou, Yalouri and Lampropoulos, 2021; Yalouri, Lampropoulos and Rikou, 2019; Von Oswald and Tinius, 2020).

Today, the ever-growing anthropological interest in topics such as emotions, the body, and the senses (as early as Stoller, 1989; Csordas, 1994; Seremetakis, 2008[1994]; Howes, 2005), as well as dissatisfaction with older ways of thinking, have led to new research questions (see, for example, Pink, 2015); these go beyond logocentric models to highlight new fields of experience which turn from the interpretative and rational toward the sensory and affective. They attempt to tackle what Roland Barthes (1982) has termed "the third meaning", which "is not really a meaning at all, but a gap or hole or hermeneutic trap that interpretation itself causes" (Taussig, 2011), and which is

connected to the uncertain, the invisible, yet perceivable and felt, indicating a world that transcends that which can be clearly and rationally described (see, e.g. Akama, Pink and Sumartojo, 2018; Martínez, Di Puppo and Frederiksen, 2021). They do not hesitate to include personal experiences and emotions, which were, until recently, perceived as incompatible with rational scientific research. They introduce new subject matters, new cultural categories and concepts, focusing on "evocation" (see Tyler, 1987, p. 199-213), "action" (Gell, 1998) and "affect" (Stewart, 2007; Navaro-Yashin, 2009) rather than "representation". They emphasize the research *process*, calling attention to the importance of "thinking through making" (Ingold, 2013) and the engagement of researchers with materials and methods employed by artists and other practitioners. Moreover, they focus their attention on new forms of research planning (Hegel, Cantarella and Marcus, 2019; Pink, Leder-Mackley, Morosanu, Mitchell, Bhamra, Cox and Buchli, 2017), writing and acting (Ingold, 2013), visualizing (Crawford and Turton, 1992; Edwards, 1992), and producing knowledge more generally (cf. MacDougall, 1997, p. 288; Yalouri 2016).

Research fields such as those of Material Culture (e.g. Tilley, Keane, Kuchler, Rowlands and Spyer, 2006; Hicks and Beaudry, 2010), Visual Anthropology (e.g. Pinney, 2011; Pink 2021), Anthropology and Contemporary Art (e.g. Schneider and Wright, 2006; 2010; 2013), Digital Anthropology (e.g. Horst and Miller, 2012; Geismar and Knox, 2021), and Anthropology of Sound (Feld, 1982; Feld and Brenneis, 2004; Hirschkin, 2006; Levin 2010) investigate new paths to such fields of experience, bringing to the forefront tools and methods that used to be considered incompatible with the transparency, clarity and objectivity of analytical explanatory discourse. They recognize that photography (e.g. Edwards, 1999 [1997]; Kalantzis, 2019), drawing (e.g. Taussig, 2011; Ingold, 2007; Barry, 2006; Bonano, 2018; Kuschnir, 2016; Bowden et al., 2017; Theodossopoulos, 2019), walking and mapping (e.g. Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Irving, 2016; Powell, 2010), sound (e.g. Feld, 2012[1982]; Cox 2008; Feld and Brenneis, 2004; Blau, Amanatidis, Panopoulos and Feld, 2010; Panopoulos, 2018), performance (Calzadilla and Marcus, 2006), applied drama (Thompson, 2005; Sjöberg, 2008), and even stand-up comedy (Nielsen, 2017; 2018),[3] have the potential to constitute knowledge and act as a *means* of anthropological research. They challenge us to think *with* these particular forms, and not only *for* or *about* them, during our in-depth involvement with and participation in the sociocultural, sensory, aesthetic and political lives of others, as well as when attempting to represent and theorize sensory encounters in the ethnographic field.

And what about texts?

Scholars who use non-textual approaches to research in anthropology are sometimes considered to be "setting themselves up in opposition to texts" (Cox, Irving and Wright, 2016, p. 5). Attempts to transcend the dominance of the text, however, should not be perceived as offering an emancipation from it or, more generally, as a way of moving away from sociopolitical and theoretical quests. There is always a danger of losing the critical element and the sociopolitical perspective behind such experiments in anthropological research (Wolff, 2012).

Furthermore, the challenge of attempting to transcend the text should not be narrowly perceived as the product of a romantic stance, according to which science suddenly recognizes the possibility of

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[3] For stand-up comedy by an anthropologist, see also
https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=8oBn7wEmu34.

artistic creations overcoming the conventions defining academic texts. Nor should it be identified with the idea of "creativity" so ardently embraced by the eighteenth-century Romantics and continually glorified in our own time by the market and the arts alike (Stocking, 1996).[4] And nor should it simply refer to the search for forms of experimental practice, methodology and representation that become possible only through audiovisual technology. Yes, non-textual forms can potentially mitigate the obfuscation caused by specialist academic terminology. But they also can fall into the trap of validating traditional views of artistic creativity and technological progress, and simultaneously indulge in their own obfuscatory and elitist language. What is actually needed is an attempt to discover different ways in which the relationship between textual and non-textual means can be productively remodelled, not simply to produce new types of theory and practice in Anthropology but also to question the very separation between the two.

There are numerous examples of experimental writing in anthropology which transcend the conventions of academic texts. As pointed out by Darren Byler and Shannon Dugan Iverson (2012), as early as the 1920s and 1930s, many anthropologists were employing fiction writing in their work (see Mead, 1928; Benedict, 1934; Neale Hurston, 1937). This emergent tendency in the field of anthropology, however, was met with resistance. Consequently, several anthropologists distinguished their literary works from their anthropological works, with some writing anthropological novels under a pseudonym (e.g. Smith Bowen, 1964[54]). Meanwhile, anthropology went through different literary phases influenced, amongst others, by Geertz's (1973) call for a "thick description" to include elements of the cultural framework and the meanings attributed to actions, words, things, etc.[5] Particularly since the decade of cultural critique in the 1980s and the questioning of prevalent approaches to writing connected to anthropology's involvement in colonial programmes, experimental forms of writing and literary conventions were adopted by anthropologists as a way of presenting, analyzing, and discussing social issues. In light of these new perspectives, feminist anthropologists sought to encourage reflexivity and polyphony, to draw attention to marginalized groups and to uncover silences (see Wolf, 1992; Abu Lughod, 2008; Behar, 1997). Moreover, as early as the end of World War II, some anthropologists, such as Laura Bohannan, and authors influenced by anthropology, such as Ursula Le Guin and Barbara Pym, have indicated how a turn to literature could provide new forms of expression that would transcend the limits of the anthropological "discipline". Such a turn may expand the framework within which the relationship between writing and reality is examined (see Seremetaki, 1997[1994]; Stankiewicz, 2012; Watson, 2018).

Nowadays, different ways and types of writing—from the photo essay (Bourgois and Schonberg, 2009; Sutherland, 2016) to collaborative ethnofiction (Sjöberg, 2008; see also Augé, 1999; 2013); from "many-handed ethnography" and storytelling (Martinez, Berglund, Harkness, Jeevendrampillai and Murray, 2021) to poetry (Anagnostopoulos, 2021; Apostolidou, 2020)—have been adopted in anthropological writing. Literature itself has also turned to non-literary types of writing and to conventions inspired by the social sciences in order to depict and analyze social reality (see Corin, 2016; Nowak, 2009; Byler and Dugan Iverson, 2012).

A networked anthropology

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[4] This is a topic addressed by Liisa Malkki in the course she teaches on 'Ideologies and Practices of Creativity' at Stanford University. I thank her for sharing her fascinating syllabus with me.

[5] Geertz essentially adopts a radical logocentric approach since culture is, for him, similar to a text.

Other theoretical and methodological developments in anthropology have indicated the need to find new forms of anthropological research in an increasingly complex globalized and digitized modern world. The so-called Web 2.0 era further expanded the network of relationships framing ethnographic encounters while underscoring the new category of "prosumers", namely, those who are, at the same time, consumers-users and producers of social media and of the transmission of information through it (Toffler, 1980; Ward and Wasserman, 2010, p. 282).

Anthropological research is developing in an increasingly networked universe which has also encouraged experimental collaborations (e.g. Estalella and Sánchez Criado, 2018). Anthropologists are not the exclusive disseminators of the knowledge produced through their research, nor are their activities and publications beyond the control of the subjects they study. On the contrary, the data accrued from their research can be used in multiple ways and may escape their control completely, a fact that poses further political and ethical issues regarding human rights and copyright (Collins and Durington, 2015).

Digital platforms and databases, alongside new communication technologies and social media, present novel challenges to the writing, control, and dissemination of ethnographic information; they have largely transformed novelistic and cinematic narratives as the main type of cultural expression, often replacing them with digital—not necessarily linear—forms of narration and with databases which include texts, images, photographs, video and sound files. (Manovich, 2002; Horst and Miller, 2012; Geismar and Knox, 2021; Apostolidou and Daskalaki, 2021; Papailias, 2021; Petridis, 2021).

In responding to these new practices and types of narrative, anthropology needs to try these new tools, platforms, and applications for researching, writing and transmitting ethnographic knowledge, and, more generally, for reimagining the ethnographic archive—in various recombinations and remodellings of images, sounds and texts—to open up new sensory experiences and approach more wide-ranging audiences.

Towards a multimodal anthropology?

Writing for a section of volume 119 of the journal *American Anthropologist* (2017)*, at the time entitled "Visual Anthropology", Samuel Gerard Collins, Matthew Durington and Harjant Gill suggested renaming it "Multimodal Anthropologies". They chose this term to refer, on the one hand, to [the sort of] Anthropology that works across multiple media and, on the other, to [the sort of] Anthropology that is public and collaborative, working through multiple media platforms to reach their audience. The authors maintained that this new name "reflects changes in the media ecologies we engage with as anthropologists, changes that have broadened our perspective to include other forms of media practice, while remaining inclusive of visual anthropology" (Collins, Durington and Gill, 2017, p. 142).

According to the authors, Multimodal Anthropologies broadens the perception of anthropological research, highlighting the overall procedures that are involved in it and which expand beyond its complete, finalized product (an article, a book, an ethnographic film, a photo essay). Thus, they

encourage self-reflection on the multiplicity of procedures and the networks of knowledge involved in its production.

However, this was not the first time that the term "multimodal" had been used. It had already been used in the 1990s in different parts of the world and across research fields, such as ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in the United States (Goodwin, 2000) and cultural semiotics in Great Britain (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001). As far as cultural semiotics, in particular, is concerned, multimodal analysis emerged after a post-linguistic turn which, within the framework of more general developments in mass media, cinema, pop culture, art and elsewhere, highlighted the transition from an older, unimodal form of communication towards a multimodal one. In the unimodal form, the different "modes", namely the consistent forms of the resources (such as images, music, gestures, computation, texts) that a society uses and shares so as to produce meaning, correspond to specific tasks independent of one another (so in a film, images can promote the action, the synchronized sound can promote realism, the music can promote feelings and so on). By contrast, in multimodal communication, the different "modes" function interactively and, as a result, music may also codify action, images, and so on. (Jewit, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016, p. 2; Bubaris, 2017, p. 29; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 1-2).

"Multimodal ethnography" emerged as a term to refer to a research method in the social sciences as early as the mid-2000s. Specifically, in a publication discussing the experiences of children who had visited an exhibition at an interactive science discovery centre in Wales, sociologist Bella Dicks and her colleagues, Bambo Soyinka and Amanda Coffey, describe multimodal ethnography as "a new multi-semiotic form [of research] in which meaning is produced through the inter-relationships between and among different media and modes" (2006, p. 78). Drawing on the work of theoretical linguists such as Iedema (2003) and Kress and Van Leewen (2001), as well as using Marshall McLuhan's well-known phrase "the medium is the message", Dicks, Soyinka and Coffey accepted that communication develops across these two levels: *modes* (or "semiotic resources", such as writing, speech, images, gestures, facial expressions) and *mediums* (i.e. the specific material forms in which modes are realized, including tools and materials).[6] Their approach was criticized because it saw culture as a collection of recognizable representations which can be explicitly categorized into mutually exclusive groups, such as writing, speech, or image, and are perceived through different channels of sensory information which, according to the authors, are limited to the prevalent Western European model of the five senses. This model has long been questioned by anthropologists, on the one hand, because it is not adopted by all cultures and, on the other, because the senses (as well as the channels and the mediums of sensory information themselves) are not autonomous but closely interconnected (Pink, 2011; Howes, 2009).[7]

Given that the origin and theoretical tradition behind the term "multimodal" is connected to linguistics, social semiotics and media theory, and that the subsequent articulation and "operationalization" of the term in other fields, such as education, sociology and psychology, can vary widely, it is important to clarify the theoretical and methodological stance of those using the

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[6] David Howes (2005) has criticized the categorization by McLuhan and the classification of the senses as technological functions and, instead, has supported the understanding of the sensorial as an expression of social powers.

[7] Bella Dicks, in collaboration with Rosie Flewitt, Lesley Lancaster and Kate Pahl (2011), programmatically revisits these issues in a special issue of *Qualitative Research*.

term (cf. Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran, 2016, p. 1), especially at a time when the term "multimodality" is gaining ground in anthropology. It has been introduced and used systematically in *American Anthropologist* and in relevant discussions in the American Anthropological Association and the European Association of Social Anthropologists[8], in university courses in Europe and the US[9], in conferences[10], festivals[11], "confestivals"[12], workshops (Nolas and Varvantakis 2018) and other platforms[13]. It is also highlighted in the title of an experimental journal set up in March 2018, *Entanglements: Experiments in Multimodal Ethnography,* dedicated to multimodal ethnography and entering the field of social research to investigate the liminal space of multimodal research and its theoretical and analytical interconnections.[14]

Multimodality in anthropology tends to be identified with developments, tools and methods connected to visual and/or digital anthropology. However, if one wishes to maintain the dynamics and potential of "multimodality" as a critical anthropological tool to facilitate comprehension of practices and experiences, it is necessary to keep it open enough to include more general developments and changes within other fields of practice such as the visual arts, performance and design, as well as fiction, literature, and stand-up comedy. In this respect, "Visual Anthropology", which is replaced by the term "Multimodal Anthropologies" in the journal *American Anthropologist*, is not the only strategic field from which to attempt to analyze these developments. In any case, the term "Visual Anthropology" is itself problematic, given that the visual does not exist independently but always in relation to people's multisensory experience of the world (Howes, 2003; 2005; 2009). Indeed, this is a position which appears to be supported by the scholars writing in *American Anthropologist,* who suggest revising the term and who recognize the need to expand its definition to include other forms of media practice while maintaining those associated with Visual Anthropology, as well as the need to amplify scientific and epistemological boundaries (Collins, Durington and Gill, 2017, p. 142, 146).

The engagement with methods and skills drawing from different fields of knowledge is challenging, both in terms of the new ideas and different ethical and epistemological traditions which go against concepts and established terms with which anthropologists tend to work. Another key issue is how

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[8] https://www.easaonline.org/networks/multimodal/

[9] E.g. https://www.leidenanthropologyblog.nl/articles/multimodal-anthropology, https://www.anthropology.uci.edu/grad/phd/courses.php, https://anthropology.panteion.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=567&Itemid=921&lang=en

[10] https://distribute.utoronto.ca/groups/performances-of-public-anthropology-%C2%B7-performances-de-antropologia-publica/

[11] https://www.ethnofest.gr/

[12] See, for example, the confestival (conference + festival) Data-Stories: New Media Aesthetics and Rhetorics for Critical Digital Ethnography) which took place between 31/5 and 2/6 2019 in the city of Volos, under the direction of Penelope Papailias (director) and Konstantinos Diamantis (coordinator). The confestival combined theoretical papers with performance and projections of multimedia and multimodal ethnographic works (such as serious games, interactive multimedia documentaries, sound ethnography, etc.). https://datastoriesconfestival.weebly.com. See also Papailias (2021).

[13] https://www.anthrobombing.com/

[14] https://entanglementsjournal.org/about/

to create possibilities for more collaborative research models that transcend the dominant image of the lone researcher.

However, the opening up of borders between anthropology, art and other fields of practice does not imply that anthropologists should become artists themselves. Nor should they evaluate visual, sound, performative or other elements in their research in the same terms as artists and other practitioners do. Nor yet should they reproduce established standards of e.g. 'the professional photograph', 'the realist design', 'the clear sound' and so on. Rather, anthropologists need to seek forms and adopt aesthetics that remain true to their subjects' experience. Michael Taussig (2011) for example refers to his choice to include his 'hurried' drawings in his book despite the copy editor's failure to see what these might add to his text, because he recognizes that they allow him to preserve the more evanescent aspects of fieldwork which escape the written text. Similarly, Steven Feld (2012 [1982]) highlights the value of a 'double exposure' photographic image that might stereotypically be attributed to the incompetence of the photographer. He suggests rather that this image remains true to the Kaluli ontology, which connects them to birds in the context of transformative ritual.

Paul Stoller has aptly termed anthropologists "sojourners of 'the between'" (2009, p. 4), those who always find themselves between being-there and being-here, between different languages, cultural traditions and apprehensions of reality. At a time characterized by networking and mobility, and increasing interest in indigenous knowledge production,[15] it is important that Anthropology's multimodal turn maintains and encourages this "in-between" space shaped within different fields of theory and practice and between fields which, just like Anthropology, address research questions and invite problematization.[16]

It is this liminal, indeterminate and dynamic space that could act as a field of experimentation, providing new tools, theories and techniques, and as a framework for testing the epistemological, ideological and ethical limits of such experimentations. It should be clarified that the term "experiment" is not used here in its narrow scientific sense but rather because of its etymological proximity to the word experience (Cox, Irving and Wright, 2016, citing Turner) and to indicate a predisposition and a form of research that, instead of being limited to the representation or dissemination of pre-existing ideas and relations, is open to the unexpected, the random, the unlikely, the momentary and passing, the marginalized, to what is considered irrelevant, to the "joke". Such a predisposition activates and renders possible new subjectivities, relations and worlds, which can transform everything that is normally considered reliable, valid, and "serious." It creates new possibilities for reimagining anthropology, allowing it to be both representational and performative, both descriptive and inventive. It moves it from established modes of writing, representation, teaching and publication toward projects which experiment with unexpected forms, collaborations and audiences. It creates fertile ground for anthropology to act anew as a form of cultural critique in the modern world (cf. Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamón, 2019, p. 221). Along

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[15] See e.g. https://phone-and-spear.pubpub.org/

[16] A growing number of such initiatives within this liminal space are taking place specifically in Greece, for example at twixt lab (https://twixtlab.wordpress.com/), and at the Anthropological Research Lab of Panteion University (https://anthropology.panteion.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=392&Itemid=747&lang=el).

with enthusiasm for these new cultural technologies and techniques, there also comes a fear of turning them into a normalized and neoliberal way of thinking and acting akin to that embraced by the creative industries, thus turning everything into a fun game. While I do not wish to downplay such concerns, I also believe that they may derive from a stereotypical and perhaps romanticized view of 'serious' academia and academics, as well as from a stereotypical approach to games and pleasure themselves, which may not necessarily be 'shallow' and 'frivolous' but rather integral to an engaged and engaging process of research.

I take it for granted that prior to any attempt to investigate the interrelationships between different fields of theory and practice, one should take into account the internal diversity of trends and stances within each one of the fields themselves, which are not homogeneous but, rather, dynamic, relational and changeable (cf. Garrow and Yarrow, 2010, p. 5; Yalouri, 2016, p. 42; Yalouri, 2021). Therefore, alongside harmonic encounters and convergences that take place within the "in-between", epistemological and ethical tensions may also occur, and ultimately strengthen, rather than weaken, the boundaries separating these different fields of theory and practice (Grimshaw and Ravetz, 2015; Yalouri 2016 and 2021).

To conclude...

The era of cultural critique was associated with a "crisis of representation" in the social sciences, as it called into question the previous certainties about the possibility of objectively representing social realities. At the same time, it questioned the assumption that anthropological research is a process that exclusively refers to the anthropologist and the subjects of their research, highlighting the wider relations of power which determined ethnographic encounters.

Similarly to the 1980s, when anthropologists were influenced by the "post-structural turn" in Anthropology—whether they endorsed the theoretical agendas of Marcus, Fischer, Paul Rabinow, James Clifford and others or not—anthropologists today are asked to respond 'with epistemological humility' (Stoller, 2016) to new parameters that force them to both revisit the methods of anthropology and seek practices that better respond to new realities and allow an expanded range of representational strategies. These new parameters do not necessarily introduce new dilemmas but may highlight those which have always existed but may have been overshadowed over the years and thus remain unresolved.

Multimodal, experimental and collaborative ways of conducting anthropological research have been developed as a means to understand an increasingly complex social universe, which is both the object of study for Anthropology and its shaping condition. They force us to reflect on and respond to questions such as: Can we rethink our research tools and the concepts we use as though we were artists, performers or designers? Can we reconsider research and teaching themselves as forms of artistic (or other) performance of anthropological knowledge? What might be an interesting outcome of that, and who accounts for the validity of the outcome (see Strathern, 2006)? How can we, as social scientists, enrich and reshape such borrowed forms and approaches, and what can we offer in return?

Reimagining the forms and aesthetics of research is not solely a matter of method, but it can contribute to rethinking theoretical issues, ethics, epistemological traditions and long-established

canons. It can open new potential paths for anthropologies in/of the present and the future, to not merely represent cultural others but to act anew as a form of cultural critique.

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