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McCarthy, Cameron; Durham, Aisha S; Engel, Laura C; Filmer, Alice A; Giardina, Michael D; Malagrecá Miguel A. (Eds.) (2007). *Globalizing Cultural Studies: Ethnographic Interventions in Theory, Method, and Policy*. NY: Peter Lang

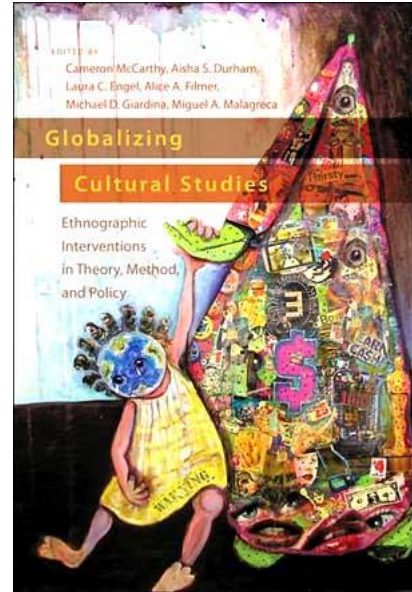
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Although the offspring of a graduate student-led (and dominated) initiative from the University of Illinois in the Fall of 2005, the twenty-five chapters in this book achieve a level of maturity in thought together with audacity in experimentation that often eludes those more established in the field. Browsing through the list of contributors of whom nearly all hail from the United States through birth or for purposes of work and higher education, I initially anticipated parochial texts limited in geographical scope and anodyne in interest to me, a postcolonial mongrel residing in the most globalized country in the world (Measuring globalization, 2005). I could not have been more mistaken for any reader of *Globalizing Cultural Studies* (GCS) would be swept off to unforeseen places, escorted along very painful paths to meet, perhaps even to temporarily occupy the moccasins of the silenced, the transgressed, and the unwanted. Apart from meaningfully learning more about these various social formations, one comes away being educated in that holistic sense of the term encompassing the cognitive, moral, and affective, which is surely is the chief goal of going to school. I now elaborate why GCS so effectively chastises educators of all stripes to take action and to seriously ponder if things could really be otherwise.

Divided into three major sections—globalizing cultural studies, rewriting cultural methodologies, and globalizing cultural policies—it is a collection that can be read “just-in-time” and in no particular order, which can be a huge bone of contention depending on how one looks at it. Because it is impossible to be evenhanded in sharing the contents of all 25 essays here, I therefore want to showcase a few which I felt had more successfully fulfilled the intentions of the book: To eschew the middle-aged, Anglo-centric male worldviews in cultural research while deeply problematizing ontology, language, subjectivities, and power in an increasingly globalized world. Two points to note: My choice is unavoidably culturally and temporally biased; if asked a year later, I am sure my line-up will not be identical. Another person could produce an equally defensible argument with a different selection too given his or her cultural-historical trajectory. Second, at no time do the contributors understand globalization to be a monolithic phenomenon. Indeed, what we are exposed to is an immense diversity (maelstrom?) of fluid identities, contradictions, third spaces and boundary crossings across time and space. For the newcomer to cultural studies, these can present an impenetrable façade of jargon and unnecessary complexity though I suggest one way of entry would be to savor the stories first, to be dialectically open to them while recognizing our preferred blinkers.



To begin our incursion into GCS, chapter 5 (“Writing Queer across the Borders of Geography and Desire”) uses combinations of autobiographical and auto/ethnographic writing to flesh out a life played out across Argentina, the US, and Italy. Alternating between concepts of the border, negative, and queer as key thinking tools, readers become engaged with a multiplicity of identities and politics against a larger backdrop of the impending liberalization of gay rights in Italy. What the author takes pains to highlight is how multifaceted or uneven this process can be; with territorialization comes reterritorialization. Heterogeneity and hybridity are truly the norm, which brings us back to addressing the reductionist categories most typically take as unproblematic such as race, class, and gender. Ultimately, the author pleads for inclusivity extending to all peoples from this perspective of transitory identities and sexualities. Minimizing the difference and distance between Self and the Other is similarly taken up in a reanimated vision of research in chapter 4 (“Masquerade as Methodology...or, Why Cultural Studies Should Return to the Caribbean”). According to the author, the metaphor of masquerade for doing research promises to be theoretically and intellectually sound and with sufficient political bite. Those familiar with popular cultural forms in the Caribbean will immediately appreciate the irreverent reworkings of essentialist notions where fun is poked at the untouchable and unspeakable. In this tolerated phantasmagoria—not very different from the gritty experiences of doing social research—the investigator moves away from the pedestal to become part of the performance, capturing partial glimpses now and then, adding to the event in (un)conscious ways, and thus blurring the lines between I and Thou. Masquerade is a disruptive research stance which is highly sensual and dynamic, positioning critical reflexivity at its center.

Displacing the omniscient researcher is one thing, what about displacing the research site(s)? This very concern is explained in chapter 17 (“Globalization and Multisited Ethnographic Approaches”) which builds on George Marcus’ influential call for multi-sited ethnographies—the careful tracing of people, events, and things wherever they might lead for greater validity and credibility in one’s findings. We are introduced to two significant locations (community-based organizations and popular cultural texts) where contemporary youth learn skills and identities that are unfortunately ignored or undervalued in formal school settings. In spite of my felt discomfiture as a teacher of teachers in my country, I found the case studies fascinating and required reading for those working in urban environments. With the unstoppable rise of urban centers everywhere, this chapter has implications for educational reforms and for erasing the aura surrounding learning

in/for the knowledge economy. That African American youth are overly represented among school dropouts is an enduring legacy arising from numerous past injustices: One horrendous episode is illustrated with archival material in chapter 13 (“The King of the Damned: Reading Lynching as Leisure”). Here, the purpose is to analyze the lynching of Black Americans as a sanctioned, even celebrated form of societal leisure. Applying Foucaultian philosophy about power, lynching as public spectacle was akin to modern reality television and affirmed the superiority of Whiteness and/or the State. These deeds which were not seen for what they were till recent times, caused the author to reflect on his emotional distance with this research project. Furthermore, it gave opportunity to re-explore his embodied subjectivity as a Black man in a society which once abhorred the color of his skin. Seemingly innocuous though no less violent forms of leisure are actualized every time one purchases and consumes coffee or chocolates save for fair-trade brands while I now regard strawberries as the *fruit of the devil*, “abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties” (Marx, 1987, p. 76, cited in Mitchell, 2003, p. 235).

Without doubt, the concept of identity is one of the lightning rods in social research and is handled very expertly with ironic humor in chapter 9 (“The Acoustics of Identity: Bilingual Belonging and Discourses of Trespassing”). The author describes her lived experiences as a White American capable of speaking Mexican at a native speaker’s level of competence and the uncertainties of being that it raises for herself and her interlocutors. Her conclusion was that the “acoustics of identity can be more compelling than the optics in assessing a person’s cultural, ethnic, and/or national identification or affiliation (p. 169).” This uneasy tension between an ownership or a performance model of identity was also shared by a fluent white American speaker of Navaho, standard English, and their creolized variants. Both women, through their successful discourses of trespassing cultural worlds, eventually found what the author calls “bilingual belonging.” There are definitely many other exciting chapters (e.g., on place, performance, diaspora, media, gender, resistance, ideology) to share but these few that I have described would give one a flavor of the buffet spread that is available for consumption.

How well does GCS as a whole achieve its objectives? Ever since globalization was made thematic over two decades ago by scholars in cultural studies, there have been anthologies or collections of studies stemming from specific locales such as the Asia-Pacific or South America. One might also legitimately claim that other authors offer more lucid and well-argued explanations of *how* to do ethnography in cultural studies (e.g., Gray, 2003; Willis, 2000) or *how* policy links with cultural studies (Bennett, 1992) or *how* human agency interacts with historical structures (e.g., Holland & Lave, 2001). In particular, I found textbooks by Barker (2003), Saukko (2003) and Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram and Tincknell (2004) equally inspiring and packed with insights to navigate that minefield which we call cultural studies. The value of GCS, instead, lies in the sheer number of how interrogations of global culture can be manifested drawing on the powerful auto/ethnographic spectrum of research tools. All these representations are existence proofs, concrete and intimate exemplars as opposed to abstract reifications if you like, of the possibilities of articulating things which normally should not belong together (e.g., micro/macro, objects, experiences, texts) and the resultant surprises in theory and practice that can ensue. In all honesty, GCS taught me to see what is happening around/to me with new lenses.

Paula Saukko (2003, p. 7) put it well when she wrote, “I would like to see more of the best and most beautiful new ethnographies that convey the subtle texture of a unique or ‘singular’ lived experience and, at the same time, make it speak for the ‘universal’, that is, to pinpoint some crucial dilemma of our contemporary social world.” I agree but would also suggest that the multiple configurations of lived experiences in GCS are quite worthy of (re)telling in of themselves without any need to hook them onto social theory for legitimacy (see Levering, 2006). Not that GCS has neglected to relate aspects of cultural life to politics in the first place for indeed it has undertaken this amorphous task very well. As the text on the back cover asserts, these chapters are really meant to be generative for the authors have consciously striven to demolish epistemological and methodological barriers, forcing us to re-examine our lives, our pedagogies, and our research in this age of truth with a thousand small “t”s. Given how we love to remain in

our comfort zones, educators would certainly do themselves and their students a service to heed the troubling messages contained within GCS.

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About the Reviewer

A long-time teacher-educator in Singapore, Yew-Jin Lee has interests in qualitative research and brings to his research concepts from discourse/conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, sociology, and philosophy. He is on the editorial board for the journal *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, which examines social issues such as poverty, race, immigration, and culture with reference to science education. A recent book written together with Roth, Hwang, and Goulart published by Lehmanns Media is entitled *Participation, learning, and identity: Dialectical perspectives*. He is currently editing a book on science education research in Asia to be released by Sense Publishers.

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