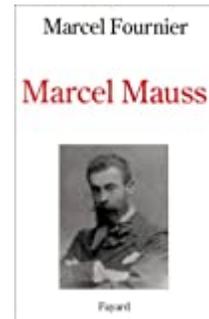


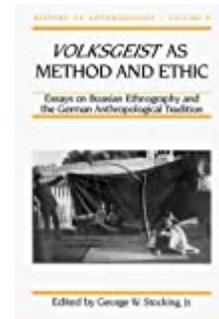
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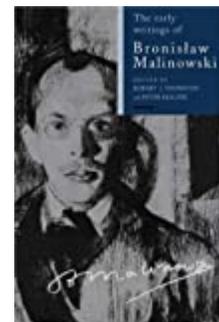
Marcel Fournier. *Marcel Mauss.* Paris: Fayard, 1994. 844 pp. FF 240 (paper), ISBN 978-2-213-59317-3.



George W. Jr., Stocking, ed. *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996. 358 pp. \$27.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-299-14550-7; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-299-14554-5.



Robert J. Thornton, Peter Skalnik, eds. *The Early Writings of Bronislaw Malinowski.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. xv + 324 pp. \$74.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-38300-4.



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The History of Anthropology In Writings, Lives, and Contexts

The three books under review—a broad, contextualized, collective work (of Boasian ethnography, and more), a monumental intellectual biography (of Mauss), and an accurate edition of early writings (of Malinowski)—are, in my view, some of the most interesting works in the field of anthropological historiography published in recent years. This is true not only because they enrich our knowledge of the so-called “founding fathers” of the most influential—although certainly not unique—“national anthropologies” (North American, British, and French), but also because of the challenges posed in their implicit theoretical assumptions, and the concrete result of their diverse but nevertheless highly rigorous methodological approaches, which they use to make and write the history of anthropology.

Following the order of publication, it must first be said that *The Early Writings of Bronislaw Malinowski*, edited by Robert J. Thornton and Peter Skalnik, has the unquestionable merit of directing the scholar’s attention to nine of Malinowski’s early writings, mostly unpublished and originally written in Polish. The book casts light upon the cultural and philosophical “milieu” which influenced Malinowski’s intellectual background. “Observations on Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*” (dated approximately 1904/5) is probably the most interesting chapter, as it provides new insights on the “Polish roots” of Malinowski’s anthropology.[1] Very little was known about the influence of Nietzsche’s famous book on the young Malinowski, and the influences it may have had on his notion of “charter myth,” which is interpreted not just as a simple original form but as a phenomenon always to be reactualized in the present. The second essay, “On the principle of the economy of thought,” is Malinowski’s doctoral dissertation, written in 1906 at the Jagellonian University of Cracow, under the supervision of Father Pawlicki. In this early piece, a 22-year-old Malinowski debates the principles of the scientific method by discussing and criticizing (among other things) the psychological theories of Richard Avenarius and the philosophical statements of E. Mach’s neopositivism, a discussion which would be incorporated into Malinowski’s later theoretical framework. The third and the fourth essays are book reviews of James Frazer’s most famous works: an unpublished short piece dedicated to *The Golden Bough*, and a seventy-page essay devoted to *Totemism and Exogamy*. In both articles Malinowski strongly questions Frazer’s work, especially with reference to his notions of economics, magic, and religion in “primitive societies.” Malinowski also refutes Frazer’s thesis on the origin of exogamy, and his notion of myth

as a creative, original form. The editors point out that Malinowski’s criticisms of Frazer disappeared in his later career. Here, he seemed more inclined to praise the work of Frazer, who became his mentor and the principal supporter in his academic fieldwork.

Other essays in this book (“Tribal male associations in Australia,” “The economic aspects of the ‘Intchichuma’ ceremonies,” “The relation of primitive beliefs to the forms of social organization,” “A fundamental problem of religious sociology,” “The sociology of the family”), were all written between 1912/1915, just before Malinowski’s well-known ethnographic expeditions in New Guinea.[2] Overall, they show his close interest in first-hand ethnographic literature—with a special emphasis on the Australian material of Spencer, Gillen, and Strelow—from which Malinowski built a critical revision of Frazer’s as well as Durkheim’s theory of totemism, refuting their evolutionist assumptions. These pre-ethnographic essays, which provide new insights on the primary and secondary influences of Malinowski’s early career (among others, Maine, Fustel de Coulanges, Bachofen, Lubbock, Letourneau, Spencer, van Gennep, Morgan, MacLennan, Rivers, Le Play, Tylor, Grosse), give detail to the basic role that economics played in his post-doctoral education. It is well-known that, before he became the pupil of Seligman in London, Malinowski studied in Leipzig for one year, under the “founder” of Voelkerpsychologie, Wilhelm Wundt, and the German economist, Karl Boecher.[3]

Marcel Fournier’s book, *Marcel Mauss*, has a chronological structure (as often happens in biographical literature), and is divided into four main parts. The first (“Le neveu de Durkheim”) offers an in-depth look at Mauss’ moral and religious education under the stern tutelage of his uncle, Emile Durkheim, in his natal provincial town of Ipinal. Next follows the “Bordeaux years,” during which Mauss attended his uncle’s lectures and many other classes, including those of Alfred Espinas and Octave Hamelin, whose teachings would mark his philosophical outlook. Mauss’ arrival in Paris, where he enrolled at the “section sciences religieuses” of the Icole Pratique des Hautes Itudes acquainted him with many other distinguished scholars, who would be influential in his subsequent career—among these, the Orientalist, Sylvain Livy (“le deuxieme oncle”), and his contemporary, Henri Hubert (“le jumeau”). Mauss’ relationship with Hubert led to a fruitful scientific collaboration (including their study on the origin and function of sacrifice [1899], and outline of a general theory of magic [1904]), but this close friendship ended prematurely with Hubert’s sud-

den death in 1924. Fournier passionately describes this period by drawing from the personal correspondence between the two scholars, archived at the College de France in Paris.

The greatest merit of Fournier's book comes perhaps from the way he casts light upon Mauss' early political commitment, an important theme throughout his life. This ranged from his close connection with the Dreyfusards' circles (of Charles Peguy), to his active work as a journalist on the socialist press (particularly at *Le Populaire*, *La vie socialiste*, and later on *l'Humaniti*), to his commitment in the workers' cooperative movement, and his active part in the "Comiti de vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes." Both the second part of the book ("Le clan tabou-totem," which covers Mauss' life until the end of WWI), and the third ("L'héritier," which brings us up to the end of the 1920's) are structured around Mauss' political and intellectual "double fidelity," as Fournier aptly called it ("Mauss entend demereur fidhle 'la fois 'la conception politique de Jaurhs et 'la mithode scientifique qu'a fondie Durkheim" p. 439). Part four ("La reconnaissance") retraces Mauss' career recognition, from his much sought after professorship at the College de France (obtained in 1931, after a tough academic struggle), to his immediately renowned ethnographic lectures at the Institute of Ethnology of the University of Paris. The Institute was founded by Mauss, together with Lucien Livy-Bruhl and Paul Rivet; under the patronage of the Ministry of the Colonies it provided the scientific background for generations of professional ethnologists in France. Fournier's book ends with a comprehensive bibliography of Mauss' writings, including his newspaper publications.

Issued after a long period of preparation,[4] volume eight of the meritorious History of Anthropology series, edited by George W. Stocking Jr., is centered on Franz Boas' scientific personality. However, apart from Boas' first essay, "The Study of Geography" (1887), only three of the eight essays deal directly with the famous German anthropologist. Drawing on personal documents dating back to Boas' childhood and his early years, Julia Liss' essay ("German Culture and German Science in the 'Bildung' of Franz Boas") traces Boas' family life and schooling before his preparation for the Baffin Land expedition. Ira Jacknis' ("The Ethnographic Object and the Object of Ethnology") and Judith Berman's ("The Culture as it Appears to the Indian Himself; Boas, George Hunt, and the Methods of Ethnography") contributions deal with primary ethnographic questions, such as the use of material culture and the rules under which ethnographic

documents are created from oral sources. Jacknis compares Boas' fieldwork, museographic conceptions, and the work he undertook as a Museum curator at New York's American Museum of Natural History. He outlines the contradictions that these different activities created for Boas' still uncertain professional and academic career. Berman researches the criteria which guided Boas' ethnographic production and draws from his collaboration with George Hunt, a privileged informant, cultural mediator, translator, and the co-author of the collected texts on the Indians Boas named "the Kwakiutl."

Thomas Buckley's essay, "The Little History of Pitiful Events" is about Boas' student, Alfred Kroeber, who suffered a moral crisis after an informant died during his research among the Californian Indians. It also concerns the anthropologist/informant relationship. The other essays, which taken together form more than half of the volume, investigate scientific and cultural perspectives in nineteenth-century Germany. Matti Bunzl's "Franz Boas and the Humboldtian Tradition" systematically explores the influence of the naturalistic, ethnographic and linguistic research undertaken by brothers Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt in different fields of German culture and science from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In an extremely well-documented essay ("From Virchow to Fischer"), Benoit Massin traces the history of physical anthropology in Wilhelmine Germany, calling to mind better- and less-known scholars, theoretical debates and anthropological institutions. Intimately tied and in some ways complementary to Massin's essay is Suzanne Marchand's history of German archeological studies in Asia Minor, her reconstruction (titled "Orientalism as 'Kulturpolitik'") privileges the discipline's historical approach, while relating it to the wider general political and ideological context of imperial Germany.

Even from this sketchy outline of some 1,500 pages of text, the diverse perspectives that characterize the books under review become clear. Thorton and Skalnik, who are mainly concerned with the theoretical aspects of Malinowski's articles, follow the principle that every author is subject to an intellectual development influenced by a more or less direct exposure to other texts which are not necessarily theoretical. In fact, they are keen on assessing how Malinowski became what he was at a much later stage (as opposed to giving us information about what he was at any given moment of his development), by drawing a comparison between his early and later scientific production and the authors who may have inspired him.

The editors rightly underline the most relevant aspects of Malinowski's biographical experiences (pp. 9-16), even if these are then left in the background, and are not quite connected to the critical considerations about the writings (pp. 16-64). Thornton and Skalnik reformulate Malinowski's idea (which even Malinowski borrowed, notably from Mach) that theory has primary importance over facts (or as Malinowski wrote in his *Diary* that "theory creates facts"). In the framework of historical research, this principle allows the theoretical stance a high degree of independence, but it also risks failing to provide satisfactory historical explanations—especially when the dynamic movements which drive (and are driven by) theoretical debates are not deeply taken into consideration.

The priority given to the theoretical aspect of Malinowski's writings leads the editors to argue that, "Malinowski's anthropology grows out of his application of a unique synthesis of the thought of Mach and Nietzsche to Frazer's ethnological projects" (p. 5). Without denying the unquestionable merit of this innovative contribution to the discipline, it must be underlined that the editors do not tell us very much about Mach's and Nietzsche's thought, or Frazer's ethnological project. The important sources and references for Malinowski's anthropology look more like well-known facts, rather than products of historical circumstances within the framework in which Malinowski interacted, and in which he shaped his ideas and most important concepts. There is a risk that Malinowski's early work may lack a much needed contextualization rather than an, albeit useful, explanation of his internal intellectual evolution, drawing from a comparison with his later scientific production (pp. 16, 38, 49, 56).

A completely different set of considerations is suggested by Fournier's *Marcel Mauss*. Here the historical framework in which Mauss' thought took form is widely extended over a synchronic axis. Fournier traces the development and background of one of the most interesting scientific personalities of the century in a fluent narrative style which uses rich documentation and blends the purely biographical side (in which Mauss' civil and political commitments stand out) with the scientific side. Mauss' profile, together with that of his contemporaries, is drawn clearly and fully, so that his actual scientific production is viewed in an enriched and in some ways transformed context. From now on no one will be able to consider the famous "Essai sur le don" (1925)—just to mention one of his writings that holds the critical attention of a great number of scholars[5]—without taking into account Mauss' socio-economic and political preoccupations be-

fore WWI. Fournier does not concentrate on a critical examination of Mauss' theoretical articles so much as he aims to illuminate their genesis (as exhibited in a brilliant essay on Mauss and Durkheim's collaborative work on the primitive forms of classification, 1903) and the scholarly context of their production. From this perspective, Mauss' interest in the worker's cooperative movement cannot be dissociated from his theoretical preoccupations (see p. 444). At the same time, Fournier devotes space to the institutional and academic development of ethnology (in which Mauss played a major role), as well as to the organizational side of scientific work. The formation of scholarly groups collaborating in cultural enterprises like *l'Annee sociologique*,[6] or the academic institutionalization of ethnological studies (p. 502 ff),[7] are important inclusions for a biography in which the scientific practice and the social dimensions of an individual's life are mixed and recreated in a given historical period. However it must be argued that the diachronic axis (i.e. the preceding historical context in which Mauss' biography is rooted) is almost completely left out of Fournier's work. We only need to look at the index of names in the book (which, incidentally, lacks a bibliography—the references are only listed in the footnotes) to notice the synchronic dimension of Fournier's contextualization. Certainly this must be a motivated theoretical choice and not simply an adherence to the rules of biographical narrative. Fournier seems to be drawing upon the metaphor of the "scientific battlefield" in his work, the locus of which centers around conflicts and ideological battles.[8] If his metaphor is useful for delineating the dynamics and logic of power from a synchronic perspective, it reveals itself to be less apt for showing the nature of the discursive formations that act and are together transformed into cultural processes.

When writing a book, authors speak "with" (meaning "together with" but also, and perhaps above all, "against") their contemporaries. At the same time, they also place themselves within a specific intellectual tradition, represented by a constellation of names. This genealogy is also shaped by extra-disciplinary contexts, parallel histories, theoretical and ideological discussions, traits of a certain epoch, method and research practices, places, institutions and worldviews, 'minor' traditions and characters, academic and personal incidents, etc. We find all this and more in Stocking's volume, which, in spite of the fact that it is a collection of essays (every one of each has his own independent life), preserves a certain degree of thematic homogeneity. Even in the contributions devoted to specific periods or aspects of Boas' biography (Liss, Jacknis, Berman), the authors work "around" Boas,

“back to” Boas, and even “over” Boas (Buckley), rather than centering merely on his life or writings. Paradoxically, I find the essays that do not deal directly with Boas’ work (Bunzl e Massin) the most helpful in revealing.

Stocking’s text offers a backgrounding in Boas’ early research. Bunzl, for instance, traces the roots of the dichotomous relationship between “Naturwissenschaften” and “Geisteswissenschaften,” which bring the neo-Kantian philosophical “milieu” to Boas’ work,[9] and stimulates an unresolved tension for anthropology rooted in the Humboldtian or even Herderian tradition. If Bunzl’s study can be said to be over-influenced by a (prejudiced?) ‘continuity’ and a neglect of analysis at a synchronic level, Massin’s essay (notably supported by Marchand’s) finds a balance between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ history, scientific debates and hegemonic ideologies, so as to produce a profound study of an extended period of time. (However it is unfortunate that he does not tell us much about the relationship between physical anthropologists and ethnologists in Wilhelmine Germany). Stocking—who only provides a short introduction for this collection—has been reproached for an inability to paint the “big picture, rather than ”vignettes.“[10] The model of “multiple contextualization,” which Stocking had previously adopted,[11] and which inspire the volumes appearing in the series “History of Anthropology,” suggests an in-depth analysis of a group of similar objects studied from different and non-hierarchical perspectives. This kind of historiographic enterprise is collective but not all encompassing (as it is always possible to add new insights), and it presupposes specific competencies on related fields that maintain their own relative independence. This is why it is so difficult to recreate a unitary framework where a social scientist’s research strategies, scientific findings, personal life events, and disciplinary and extra-disciplinary contexts all fit together harmoniously.

It is almost too obvious to mention that there is an ongoing, overlapping and intertwining relationship between scholarly works, lives, and contexts, which—although interesting to unravel—is hard to recreate and give form to. Likewise, it is obvious that the historiographical choices and options which guide the process of reconstruction of given historical objects or events may never be neutral. They show things that other choices do not, but above all they reflect the perspectives from which the author moves. Within the historiographical domain the introduction to Malinowski’s early writings, could be considered an extension of the discussion concerning the origins of the “realistic” style of Malinowski’s

ethnography, and all its related implications for ethnographic practice as well as the problem of representation and validity.[12] And, if Thornton and Skalnik, in writing this important page in the history of the discipline, do not have recourse to the “rhetoric of discontinuity” (which some postmodernist anthropologists have recently been reproached for [13]), they nevertheless aim to stress Malinowskian intuitions, the implications of which could be relevant for ethnographic research. Fournier, a sociologist by background and practice, is also concerned with showing Mauss’ vitality if not timeliness. In doing so he traces the lineage of scholars who are in debt to the Maussian intellectual tradition. In his “Epilogue”—which will appear interesting to those who appreciate the measured balance between documentary sources and interpretation which runs throughout the book—Fournier readily includes Pierre Bourdieu among the pantheon of Mauss’ heirs (p. 766-767), and the reader is tempted to wonder if his discourse on Mauss’ political commitment could also be a response to a strategy of legitimization of research perspectives. If one were to use the words of an old, but not yet obsolete, discussion, [14] it would seem that Thornton and Skalnik, as well as Fournier, should be situated in the “historicist” perspective, but not denied recognition of a need to illuminate their object from a “presentist” point of view. The same could apply to Stocking, even if he uses a slightly different strategy to pay attention to the contemporary needs of the discipline.

Originating from a project that Stocking has called “neopresentist” [15] (the realization of which attests to his progressive movement toward more nuanced theoretical assumptions, and in any case toward less radical positions than those expressed in the 1960s [16]), the “History of Anthropology” series, is above all a collective enterprise matching historians and anthropologists. Even in this eighth volume, there is balance between highly sophisticated historiographical practice and direct knowledge of the current questions raised inside the discipline (also thanks to Stocking’s daily association with the faculty of one of the most prestigious American departments of anthropology) which guarantees ethnographers fresh and original stimuli for thought. Instead of being interested in the writings of this or that author, Stocking’s volume is more concerned with how research practices (and styles of writing) are shaped within a plurality of cultural systems and contexts, among which there may be no direct line of communication, but rather historical dynamics and interpretative processes.

It may be stated that everyone’s ambition in writing the history of a scientific discipline is to call into

question stereotypes and fossilized ideas. These authors have accomplished that purpose. Thornton and Skalnik draw a profile of Malinowski which goes beyond the usual underlining of his skills as a field researcher, and gives us a mostly theoretical Malinowski, well ahead of his famous post-humous essays published in *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, and moving inside the epistemological questions raised in modernist currents of European thought. Notwithstanding his concern to remain faithful to his uncle's legacy, Fournier's Marcel Mauss distances himself from Durkheim, in that the former's political and civil commitment is not only reflected in his unsystemic scientific production, but also reveals itself as a constituent and undissolvable element. Boas' need to resolve the opposition between universalism and particularism (to use Boas' words, between the "physical" or naturalistic approach, and "cosmografical" or historical approach), rooted in the Humboldtian tradition (Bunzl), finds different solutions depending upon the biographical circumstances (Berman, Liss), as well as the academic events (Jacknis) in the researcher's life. But if, along with an urge for original documentary or revisionist purposes, the history of anthropology is to be useful a device for people doing ethnography—as I believe it should be—it seems that the "neopresentist" perspective provides more surprising insights. In this approach, discursive scrutiny and rigorous historical criteria are applied to the debates that are scientifically relevant to the anthropological scientific community. It is not by chance that Stocking's work has been taken into consideration by professional anthropologists to the point that it has become an object of reflection, study, and perhaps even historiography.[17] By way of a conclusion, I would like to add that, because of the great amount of documentation and information they contain, the timely archival work, and the bibliographical and critical apparatus they present, and because of their innovative, convincing and original interpretations (in spite of their diversity of intentions, methods and results) these three books offer a valuable contribution for all anthropologists, not just to those specifically interested in Boas, Mauss, and Malinowski.

Notes

[1]. See the proceedings of the conference held in Cracow (1984) to celebrate the centennial Malinowski's birth anniversary: Roy Ellen, Ernest Gellner, Grazyna Kubica, Janusz Mucha (eds). *Malinowski between two worlds. The Polish roots of an anthropological tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

[2]. On the less-known Malinowski's first ethno-

graphic fieldwork in Mailu see Michael Young (ed). *Malinowski Among the Magi. The Natives of Mailu*. London: Routledge, 1988.

[3]. See Francesco Aperi, "I popoli allo stato di natura non hanno economia: Karl Bucher e i suoi critici nella letteratura etnoantropologica", in Filippo M. Zerilli (ed). *Gli studi di storia dell'antropologia in Italia*. Preprints of the homonymous conference held in Rome (October 1995), pp. 3-14.

[4]. See George W. Stocking Jr. (ed). *Colonial Situations. Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*. History of Anthropology series, vol. 7, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.

[5]. See, for recent comments on Mauss' "Essay on Gift", *Retour sur le don*, In *Anthropologie et Societe*, vol. 19, n. 1/2, 1995.

[6]. See Philippe Besnard, "La formation de l'equipe de l'Annee sociologique", In *Revue française de sociologie*, special issue *Les durkheimiens*, vol. XX, n. 1, janvier-mars 1979, pp. 7- 31.

[7]. See Jean Jamin, "Le Musee d'Ethnographie en 1930: l'ethnologie comme science et comme politique", In Georges-Henri Rivihre. *La muséologie selon Georges-Henri Rivihre. Cours de muséologie, textes et témoignages*. Paris: Dunod, 1988, pp. 110-121; Victor Karady, "Durkheim et les debuts de l'ethnologie universitaire", In *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n. 74, 1988, pp. 23-32; Filippo M. Zerilli. *Alle origini dell'etnologia francese. Elementi per una biografia intellettuale di Paul Rivet*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Rome "La Sapienza", 1994.

[8]. See Pierre Bourdieu, "Le champ scientifique", In *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n. 2/3, 1976, pp. 88-104.

[9]. See George W. Stocking Jr. "The Basic Assumptions of Boasian Anthropology", In George W. Stocking Jr. (ed). *The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911. A Franz Boas Reader*. New York: Basic Books Inc., 1974, pp. 1-20.

[10]. See George W. Stocking Jr. *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Madison: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 3.

[11]. See George W. Stocking Jr. *Victorian Anthropology*. New York: The Free Press, 1991 [1987], p. XII.

[12]. See Han F. Vermeulen, Arturo Alvarez Roldan

(eds). *Fieldwork and footnotes. Studies in the history of European anthropology*. European Association of Social Anthropologists series, London and New York: Routledge, 1995 (see especially the Introduction, Peter Skalnik, and Arturo Alvarez Roldan contributions); Roger Sanjek (ed). *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

[13]. See Regna Darnell, "Deux ou trois choses que je sais du postmodernisme. Le 'moment experimental' dans l'anthropologie nord-américaine", In *Gradhiva*, n. 17, 1995, pp. 3- 15; Berardino Palumbo, "Introduzione: complessità e silenzi nell'attuale dibattito epistemologico in antropologia", In Berardino Palumbo (ed). *Prove, finzioni, testimonianze. Etnosistemi. Processi e dinamiche culturali*, II, n. 2, gennaio, 1995, pp. 4-19 (especially pp. 5-7).

[14]. See Adam Kuper, "Anthropologists and the History of Anthropology", In *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 11, n. 2, 1991, pp. 125-142.

[15]. See George W. Stocking Jr. *The Ethnographer's*

Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology. Madison: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 10.

[16]. See Maria Beatrice Di Brizio, "'Presentisme' et 'Historicisme' dans l'historiographie de G.W. Stocking", In *Gradhiva*, n. 18, 1995, pp. 77-89.

[17]. See James Urry, "Writing yourself into history", In *Anthropology Today*, vol. 13, n. 5, October 1997, pp. 1-2 (on "Historicism, Presentism and the Future of Anthropology: Papers in Honor of George W. Stocking Jr", symposium held in 1997 November the 20th at the American Anthropological Association's Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Publication of the abstracts of the papers, edited by Sandra Puccini, are forthcoming in the Italian periodical *Ossimori. Periodico di antropologia e scienze umane*, n. 9, II semestre 1996, pp. 10-11).

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