I. ON METHODOLOGY

2

Research as an Experiment in Equality*

Perception of an object costs
Precise the Object's loss—
Perception in itself a Gain
Replying to it's Price—
Emily Dickinson

"THAT'S WHAT THEY USED TO MAKE US SING"

In September 1974, carrying my tape recorder, I drove into Greve, a small town in the Chianti hills of Tuscany. I was there not as an independent researcher, but as an appendix to the machine. My task was to locate an acknowledged speaker of "pure" dialect, tape him for thirty minutes, and hand the tape to a team of linguists who were doing a dialect atlas of central Italy. It was all very easy—until I sat down with Alfredo Crimi, my informant, in front of the microphone and a glass of wine, and he asked: "Well, what shall we talk about?"

I was stumped. As long as he spoke dialect, the linguists didn't care what he spoke about. So, doing what comes naturally, I asked Crimi to tell me about his life as a tenant farmer on a big estate. While he talked, I asked him an occasional question about aspects that interested me. He gave details freely, but was unresponsive whenever I tried to elicit a judgment, an opinion, or a criticism.

After the required thirty minutes of tape were filled, I mentioned that I was interested in *improvvisatori*, the folk poets who make up and sing improvised stanzas on any subject, from contem-

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porary politics to ancient chivalric poetry. They are found throughout central Italy; but Tuscany is the fountainhead of the tradition, and I had never collected there. Crimi said he knew one, and took me to his place.

When we arrived, the poet was at work in his orchard. His name was Ferdinando Bandinelli, but his friends called him "Dante." He waved and greeted us: "Hello, comrades!" He didn't know me, but somehow the fact that I was with his friend defined my politics. For the next two hours, the two men reeled off stories, songs and poems about unions, politics, strikes, and the Communist party. When it was time for me to leave, Crimi asked the poet, "Aren't you glad I brought this gentleman over? You see, he never asked me about priests." It seems that, while I was "studying" him and his answers, he had been studying me and my questions, and had found out which side I was on.

This taught me that there are always two subjects to a field situation, and that the roles of "observed" and "observer" are more fluid than it might appear at first glance. It was the same lesson I had learned from another experience four years before. In June 1970, in the hill village of Labro, on the border between Latium and Umbria in central Italy, I met Trento Pitotti and recorded his repertoire of folk songs. Trento was by far the best folk singer I ever met, and he knew many ritual, religious, and lyrical songs. He also sang some "topical" songs, music-hall style, from the 1930's and 1940's. Only one blemish marred my delight and the "perfect" tape I took home that night: two of Trento's topical songs (both interesting and previously uncollected) were unmistakably Fascist.

I liked him anyway. So a year later, when I happened to be driving past Labro, I dropped by to say hello. We talked a while, and it turned out that, far from being a Fascist, Trento was a politically active Communist. He had been a factory worker in the steel mills of Terni twenty miles away, and lost his job in the layoffs of 1953, when the company seized the chance to get rid of most Leftist and union activists in its workforce. Since then, he had never been able to get another job and was making a scant living as a cobbler, waiting to be old enough to collect a pension. I asked him why, then, he had sung those Fascist songs. "Well," he said, "you asked for old-time songs, songs from when I was young. That's what they used to make us sing in those days."

Trento didn't know me, when I first recorded him. His life experience had taught him that he would be safer singing religious, ritual, sentimental, humorous, or conservative songs to an outsider

who didn't look or talk like working-class and who had said nothing about himself. I had thought I was not supposed to "intrude" my own beliefs and identity into the interview, and Trento had responded not to me as a person, but to a stereotype of my class, manner, and speech. I had been playing the "objective" researcher, and was rewarded with biased data.

This chapter is an attempt to correlate the lessons I learned in field work about the relationship between the researcher and the "informant," with the lessons taught by Italian anthropologists, cultural organizers and political thinkers who have recognized and discussed the political implications of equality and hierarchy, sameness and otherness in field work and in the study of people's culture. The identity and role of "militant," "native," and "organic" intellectual have been crucial concerns in these studies, and in my own experience.

AN EXPERIMENT IN EQUALITY

An inter/view is an exchange between *two* subjects: literally a mutual sighting. One party cannot really *see* the other unless the other can see him or her in turn. The two interacting subjects cannot act together unless some kind of mutuality is established. The field researcher, therefore, has an objective stake in equality, as a condition for a less distorted communication and a less biased collection of data.

Equality, however, cannot be wished into being. It does not depend on the researcher's goodwill but on social conditions. The very need for anthropological research in Western societies implies the recognition and observation of otherness in subjects who are not on the same social and political plane with the observer. As long as informants who belong to oppressed or marginal social groups hesitate to open up to members of the elite, every field worker will be involved in a complicated game of hide and seek. Ernesto De Martino, the scholar and Socialist activist who first created an anthropological awareness of southern-Italian rural culture, once wrote:

> Reopening a dialogue between two human worlds which long ago ceased to speak to each other is a difficult enterprise, and it causes many burning humiliations. It humiliates me to be forced to treat people my own age, citizens of my own

> country, as objects of scientific research, almost of experimentation. It humiliates me when they take me—as they have—for a revenue agent or for a show business entrepreneur traveling through Lucania in search of musicians and singers. It humiliates me to be compelled in certain villages to avoid the local Communists, to dissimulate even with them, because otherwise the priest would never tell me things I need to know.[1]

As De Martino points out, not only the observed, but also the observer is diminished and alienated when social conditions make equality impossible—as is the case in most field work experiences. And it is a fact that a great deal of information did escape him, because of the forced dissimulation involved in doing research in the country's poorest and most forgotten region, Lucania.

The field interview, therefore, cannot create an equality which does not exist, but demands it. The interview raises in both parties an awareness of the need for more equality in order to reach a more open communication. As long as the unequal hierarchy of power in society creates barriers between researchers and the knowledge they seek, power will be one central question raised, implicitly or explicitly, in every encounter between researcher and informant. Dealing with power openly makes a field interview an experiment in equality. Gianni Bosio (the founder of a radical tradition in the study of Italian folklore and working-class culture) put it this way:

> Cultural work defines its identity against the logic of assimilation [to the dominant social relationships] by creating the means for its own independent survival. Cultural work cannot help but turn into political struggle for the self-defense of culture; and political struggle becomes in turn the highest form of cultural work.[2]

A JOINT VENTURE

Trento and I became friends, and he introduced me to Dante Bartolini, a distant relative of his who was also a local poet, singer, and storyteller, as well as a symbolic figure of the anti-Fascist Resistance of 1943–44.

From under the coal heaps in his cellar and from the back of his memory, Dante dug out words and music to songs, poems, and

stories he had composed or learned in his life as a farmer, steelworker, underground anti-Fascist activist, guerrilla fighter, herb doctor, hog killer, barkeeper, and all-round village wise man. He in turn introduced me to other comrades.

Amerigo Matteucci was a construction worker, mayor of the tiny mountain village of Polino, and a fantastic improviser of highly political verse in traditional forms.

Pompilio Pileri, an innocent-looking, frail, blue-eyed man in his 70s was a former shepherd who had never owned his own sheep, who was impishly charming as he accompanied his friends' singing on the *organetto* and dramatically imposing when he performed his long song about the hardships of a shepherd's life. Luigi Matteucci, a farm hand, had (like Pompilio) never learned to read or write, but could outsing anyone (except maybe Trento himself). Their valley, the Valnerina, was the rural backdrop to the great steel mills of Terni, and the blend of rural traditional forms with urban industrial politics made the Valnerina singers and storytellers unique.

For many years, frequent visits to Valnerina were a very important part of my life. I often took friends and co-workers with me to initiate them to this living tradition of working-class culture growing out of traditional folklore. We helped Dante and his comrades put together a program of their songs and stories and arranged for them to travel in Italy and abroad as conscious messengers of the dignity of their culture and the role of their class.

Sometime during this period, a local student who had joined me in the collecting work discovered in the archives of the University of Perugia a set of tapes which these same individuals had recorded in the late 1950s for a team of university anthropologists, conservatory ethnomusicologists and state radio technicians. These tapes contained none of our friends' political repertoire, though that material was all created before the tapes were made. Instead, they had sung only rather innocuous folk songs of love and ritual, old ballads, *stornelli*, and a few satirical pieces about local events.

This was due, in part, to the technological and academic array of the research team. In the 1950s, the radio (a state monopoly) was openly anti-Communist; so Dante and the others sang only "politically safe" material. Also, Italian folklorists had always been more concerned with the recovery of past traditions than with contemporary folklore, and even the very progressive scholars who made those tapes were influenced by this approach.

Other historical patterns were also at work. In the 1950s, workers were still smarting under the setbacks they had suffered in the post-war years. Several of the informants themselves (including Dante and Trento) had lost their jobs in 1953, and were having a hard time finding new jobs in the face of open political discrimination. No doubt they felt they had better keep their protest songs to themselves.

But when I met them in 1970, things had changed. The Left and working people in general had won dramatic gains in 1969, when a season of strikes and revitalization of the unions from below again made labor a central force in Italian society. Dante and his friends were much more secure financially, less easily blackmailed, and more confident, even eager to show their political identity in public. Also, the fact of recording was no longer a strange and intimidating experience: they had cassette recorders in their homes, and my own equipment was much lighter and less obtrusive.

This episode taught me the historically conditioned nature of field work. A changed political climate allowed the Valnerina singers an ampler exercise of free speech in 1970–72 than in 1958–59, and I was able to collect important material which had escaped researchers better professionally qualified than I but who were unable to interact in a mutual fashion with them. It was the same question with which Ernesto De Martino had struggled a generation before.

I wonder—again in view of the historical grounding of field work—how the Valnerina singers would react were I to meet them now for the first time. No doubt the legitimacy of their Communist affiliation had been established, and they would have had no qualms about voicing it. On the other hand, the present crisis in industrial (and therefore, working-class and Communist) culture would perhaps make them relate to those songs differently, as part of their history rather than of their immediate experience.

THE SOUTHERN QUESTION: REGION AND CLASS

> . . . I entered those peasants' homes—wrote Ernesto De Martino—as a "comrade," a seeker of men and of forgotten human histories; I went as one who is intent on observing and verifying his own humanity, and wants to join the people he meets in working toward a better world in which we shall all be better—I, the seeker, and they, the found. Our being to-

> gether as comrades, our attempt to meet within a common history, had never been experienced before in ethnological research . . . A passion to know those aspects of the present which remind us of a recent or distant past can only exist as part of the passion for transforming the present into a reality more worthy of human beings.[3]

This famous quote describes the interaction of scholarship and political involvement that characterized the best Italian anthropology in the late 1940s and 1950s. Social sciences in general had been viewed with hostility by fascism because of their latent critical potential. On the other hand, the best humanist, non-Fascist tradition—as represented by the historian and philosopher Benedetto Croce—dismissed them as "pseudo-sciences."

According to Croce, history alone can perceive the individual event in its inherent uniqueness, and is, therefore, the only true social science, while the search for patterns and the comparative approach of sociology and anthropology is only "positivistic naturalism." Croce's vision of history, besides, focused on what he described as the "ethical-political" dimension: mainly the history of elites and institutions. While it liberated Italian culture from romantic and positivistic residues (and valiantly contrasted the anticultural impulses of the Fascist regime), Croce's historicist approach was certainly not conducive either to a systematic interest in folklore or to a recognition of the specific historical presence of the "lower" classes.[4]

After World War II, the contact with American culture, in the context of a renewal and modernization of Italy's intellectual life, brought about the discovery of sociology and anthropology. The American and American-trained social scientists who began to work in Italy in those years found, in southern Italy, an ideal testing ground for theories on peasant societies and modernization. The South was approached more as a "problem" in modernization and uplift than as a culture in its own terms. An unstated but recognizable assumption seemed to be that the backward, underdeveloped condition of the region was, to a large extent, caused by flaws in the culture of its people. The role of "applied" social sciences, therefore, was mostly to gather the data and prepare the ground for policies brought in from above and outside. While individual researchers (such as Edward Banfield, Frederick Friedmann, Robert Redfield, and Tullio Tentori) often did work of very high intrinsic

merit, they hardly interfered with the basic subordination of the South to the North, with its class system, and with the perception of the region and of its people in the dominant culture.[5]

In those same years, however, several Italian intellectuals were individually looking at the South not only as a problem in cultural and economic development, but also as a source of cultural diversity and wealth. The encounter with a "Third World" within a supposedly advanced Western nation (the "Indies of our own," as De Martino phrased it), the discovery of the otherness within ourselves, conferred a highly political charge to a small and sometime peripheral but extremely active (and, in the long term, influential) group of intellectuals.

Carlo Levi's classic book, *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (Turin: Einaudi, 1945) had opened the way. A northern, Jewish artist and intellectual exiled by fascism to an isolated mountain village in Lucania, Levi discovered there a world "beyond" everything. There is a mystic quality, as well as an artist's aesthetic vision, to Carlo Levi's South, its remoteness, its distance, and its impermeability to history. Levi is fascinated by the otherness of an apparently unchanging world which exists within his own and yet has hardly anything in common with it. On the other hand, he was in Lucania as a political exile; as such, he was able to see its people also as citizens like himself, endowed with the same rights, and deprived of them by the same oppressive system that persecuted him. They might not be part of "history" as defined by Benedetto Croce, but they certainly were not to be classed as outside humanity.[6] Simply by being there, with all its remoteness and otherness, Lucania showed that the values and principles of high Western culture were not as universal as the idealistic school of thought sometimes seemed to believe.

The most important contribution of Ernesto De Martino (himself a Southerner, a disciple of Benedetto Croce, and a Socialist organizer) was toward a redefinition of the relationship between history and the people which Croce's theory had excluded from it.[7] De Martino inherited from Croce the belief in the primacy of history, and saw himself primarily as a historian. On the other hand, the influence of Marxism and the example of Soviet folklore science made him aware of the need for a history that could account for the presence and role of the majority of mankind. While he shared Levi's deep emotional involvement with the rural South, De Martino's appreciation was not motivated by its otherness from history, but by what he conceived to be the new role of the southern rural masses (and of Third-World peoples) *within* history. "All over the world,"

he wrote in 1949, "the masses of the people are struggling to break into history, to free themselves of the chains that bind them to the old order."[8] In this historical upsurge, it was impossible for the historian and the anthropologist to remain only an outside observer.

While De Martino's political militancy and regional roots led him to see himself as a participant in this historic change, his consciousness of his role and identity as an intellectual also made him aware of ambiguities. As the oppressed masses "break into history," he said, they bring with them their yearning for justice (often expressed by what he called "progressive folklore," as opposed to a concept of folklore as inherently conservative and archaic); but they also bring the archaic, regressive aspects of their present culture as shaped by the experience of oppression. The rise of the masses will imply, at least for some time, a degree of "barbarization" of culture as a whole.

The intellectual's duty, therefore, is to guarantee some kind of "prophylaxis" by placing this process in historical perspective and providing the "historic pity" necessary for "archaic" cultures to be understood and protected from exploitation by the forces of reaction. The intellectuals' ability to maintain their own otherness, to preserve a distance from the masses even while they share in the struggle for their emancipation becomes necessary not only for their own salvation, but for that of the masses as well.

On the other hand, De Martino realized that this necessary distance is also the result of a historic injustice, and is an injustice in itself. When facing the southern peasants, he wrote, "I am ashamed of my privilege of not being like them, as if I had stolen something that belongs to them as well. Or, rather, I am ashamed that I accepted this filthy concession from society, that I allowed society to use all its arts to make me 'free' at this price."[9]

A complex pattern of identification and difference appears also in the work of another major southern writer, social scientist and political activist, Rocco Scotellaro. Born of an artisan and farming family in Lucania, Scotellaro strove all his life to be true to his class roots while, as a poet, a researcher, an activist and even briefly as the mayor of his native village of Tricarico, he saw a painful distance grow between himself and his own people. On the other hand, he perceived that this distance was not only the negative effect of the intellectual's estrangement, but also a condition for a more effective and conscious participation.[10]

This ambivalence shaped his political and intellectual life. When he went to jail (after leading landless peasants to seize the

estates of the local landlords), Scotellaro endeavored to prove to the other inmates that he was one of them, seeking an almost prepolitical, almost paleo-Christian sense of brotherhood and of "likeness." But the inmates attempted to comfort him by telling him that he would get out soon, because "jail is not for the likes of you." Later, when he left Tricarico to study in Naples and thus be better prepared for a role of political leadership, Scotellaro remembered that the landlords and bosses, too, had often "pointed the way to the station" to him, as if to tell him that he must separate his fate from that of the illiterate masses and take his place among the educated, the elite, and the rulers.[11] The conflict between the insider's empathy and the outsider's critical eye gives shape and meaning to his unfinished autobiography as well as to his pioneering collection of life stories of southern peasants.

A double oxymoron—"native intellectual," "militant intellectual"—crosses the lives of Rocco Scotellaro and Ernesto De Martino. De Martino tells the story of the old farmhand who took him aside in an alley of the town where he was Socialist local chairman, recited to him a long poem about life of a poor farm worker, and then told him "You go on—you who know, you who can, you who shall see."[12] This is an ambiguous mandate. It may mean that the democratic intellectual will open the way, but also that the intellectual will "go on" and leave the peasant behind. For both of them, the problematic term *intellectual*—evokes a difference that keeps turning up disturbingly throughout a lifelong search for understanding, participation, and identification.

"WE HAD NO INTELLECTUALS"

As the Valnerina experiment went on, I learned first-hand what De Martino and Scotellaro teach: both the "militant intellectual" and the "native intellectual" are more complicated roles than they appear to be at first glance. Being politically close to the informants did not make me an insider; on the other hand, when the significance of the fact that I had also grown up in Terni dawned on me, this complicated rather than simplified my relationships with the interviewees.

When I met Bruno Zenoni, a leader of Terni's partisan brigade with an incredibly precise historical memory, I introduced myself as a "comrade," explaining that the motivations of my research were broadly political rather than academic. He was pleased, spoke freely, and introduced me to other people. However, I began to no-

tice that, while his introduction was sufficient to guarantee me politically, he still always introduced me as "professor," rather than "comrade." I had stressed political homogeneity; but he was foregrounding my cultural and professional difference and otherness.

The working class of Terni always had a difficult relationship with intellectuals—a rare and mostly hostile species for generations in town, anyway. Merely looking like one had been enough to put partisans and underground anti-Fascists on their guard; more recently, young intellectuals had been easing old workers out of leadership roles in the unions and the party. On the other hand, Zenoni's generation had a high respect for culture, and the lack of education and intellectual professional skills was felt to be a serious hindrance to the growth of the working-class movement. "When we took over the city administration after the war," said Zenoni, "we had no intellectuals, and we had to do everything ourselves, with the little schooling we had." Once he felt that my politics were not antagonistic (though I wasn't a party member), the fact that I was a "professor" intrigued him with the possibility that his history, which he had been telling and reconstructing for forty years, might be collected and told by someone who had the skills to do it professionally. The lesson here was the other side of the medal from those of Greve and Labro: here, I had been displaying my sameness, but (once some kind of equality was achieved) it was my difference that was appreciated.

Meanwhile, I was learning that there was another ground of sameness: the fact that I had grown up in Terni changed the whole relationship, for myself as well as for the interviewees. It had never occurred to me to think of myself as a "native intellectual"—I wasn't born in Terni, I had always felt as a sojourner there, and I had been away for ten years before I came back to interview. Yet, while I gradually realized that I belonged to Terni more than I had ever known, my "informants" developed subtle counter-interviewing strategies to find out who I really was—like dropping names, making allusions and studying my reactions. The pattern of sameness and otherness was reproduced by the fact that I had gone to the same schools, had grown up in a working-class neighborhood, yet I came from a middle-class family. Discovering that we had met as boys on a soccer field sometimes made for a more relaxed exchange. Sometimes, however, my being a native only underscored the class difference. "So we meet again," said a steelworker, after identifying me as a grade school classmate. "Are you still the teacher's pet?"

ORGANIC OR UPSIDE DOWN

> Every social group [wrote Antonio Gramsci] coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its function not only in the economic but also in the social and political field.

The most influential theory of the relationship between intellectuals and the working class is the one based on Antonio Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual," formulated in his prison writings. An organic intellectual of the working class is an intellectual who is or becomes part of the working class movement. Just what makes an intellectual "organic," however, is uncertain, and the question has been historically short-circuited by the intermediation of the political party. "The political party," Gramsci wrote, "for some social groups is nothing other than their specific way of elaborating their own category of organic intellectuals directly in the political field and not just in the field of productive technique." Therefore, "an intellectual who joins the political party of a particular group is merged with the organic intellectuals of the group itself, and is linked tightly with the group."[13]

In the guarded wording he used in order to elude prison censorship, Gramsci seems to draw the outlines of two types of organic intellectuals: one which originates from within the "social group," a sort of "native" intellectual with a political consciousness of class; and another which joins the class by becoming a member of its political party. Though they have much in common, they are not the same thing, and have been treated differently by the different currents of the post-war Italian Left.

The majority of the official and organized Left has favored the second type of organic intellectual, in apparent harmony with the Leninist idea that the revolutionary consciousness cannot arise from the workers' own experience, but must be brought to them from outside. Actually, the real roots of this approach seem to lie rather in the continuing prevalence of a concept of the unity of culture, derived from Croce rather than Lenin. Culture remained, therefore, largely identified with the high culture of the ruling classes, with its modes of production, values, and professional roles—mitigated perhaps by a wider access to education, a more democratic distribution of information, more progressive contents, and sometimes a less ab-

struse language. Once they certify their political credentials by joining the party of the working class, organic intellectuals need change very little of their role, status, or *modus operandi;* and they hardly need question the *type* of knowledge with which they deal. As Gianni Bosio put it critically, the task of this kind of organic intellectual consists only in "supplying the workers with materials and information for their uplift and improvement, turning them into targets for a message which is only a reinterpretation of culture *tout court,* that is of ruling culture."[14]

Bosio's criticism represents a position which was shared by the libertarian Left minorities in the 1950s and 1960s and by what would later become the New Left. These currents were more concerned with the first type of organic intellectual, originating directly inside the class. A programmatic document of an influential New Left cultural group, which named itself after Gianni Bosio, says:

> By organic intellectual we mean the intellectual which the working class generates from within itself. Organic, and intellectual, are the strike leader, the shop steward, or the factory-council member, because these roles imply knowledge, consciousness, decision making, leadership, organization. And further back, organic intellectuals are the folk poets and storytellers, the narrators of historical memory, the traditional musicians, when they become aware of the meaning and relevance of their work.[15]

Gianni Bosio took up De Martino's intensely political approach to anthropology and history, with certain very important innovations.[16] First of all, he shifted the focus of observation from the rural South to the industrial North, from the peasant masses to the industrial working class (though he consistently maintained that there were links and continuities between the two, and that the experience of field work in rural areas provided an essential methodological background for "urban" field work). By focusing on the modern, advanced regions of the country, Bosio gave new meaning to De Martino's concept of "progressive folklore" and contributed to the breakdown of the distinction between ethnology and history, replacing the narrow "folkloric man" (relevant only as the bearer of cultural relics of the past) with the "historical man" endowed with all his culture, from traditional folklore to progressive folklore and modern class consciousness.[17]

Bosio's second innovation was his concept of the circularity between cultural and political work, and the consequent view of the researcher as an organizer. "The organization of culture is as important, and perhaps more important, as the production of culture."[18] He was not only the leading figure in a new "school of thought," but also the founder of a cultural-political movement, which positively claimed that the working class was not only part of history (as De Martino had shown), but had a history (and culture) of its own. The influence of this movement would be felt, though mostly indirectly, both in the radical student movements of the 1960s and in the "Hot Autumn" of the working class in 1969.

Bosio's work was based on a view of the working class as "not just an objective datum for a class-conscious culture, but as an active protagonist."[19] The function of an intellectual who sees himself also as a "militant of the working class" is, then, not to bring to the people a modified version of hegemonic culture, but to "arm the class with its own power." He called for an intellectual who should not be "organic" so much as "reversed" or "upside down"; who could "give up the privilege of being a depository of culture and accept the possibility of recognizing and receiving cultural messages from the proletarian world."[20] The upside-down intellectual will not only teach, but also learn; in the field situation, "upside-down" researchers do not *study* informants, but *learn* from them, and allow themselves to be "studied" in turn.

While Bosio's approach deals with the intellectual's relationship with the working class, it fails to face the closely linked question of the relationship of the intellectual with himself or herself. De Martino's achingly personal conflicts between the activist and the scholar, between human sympathy and scientific and critical observation are mediated, and even removed, by political militancy. Bosio's project could function best for a vanguard group, or at times of very intense political activism when a political solution to all problems seemed possible. The "upside-down" intellectual began to appear as emotionally obsolete in the late 1970s, when revolutionary hopes declined and the working class no longer fulfilled all the functions of a cultural and political model, as the organic intellectual had appeared to the radicals of the 1960s.

When the average, "mass" intellectual suffered dramatic changes in employment opportunities, income, and status; when youth culture and women's liberation beset us with the problems of the politics of private life; and when questions of sexual roles and private identity became more and more pressing, then working-

class politics and culture could be seen as an answer to *some* problems, but could no longer be imagined as a satisfactory answer to all. Both the "organic" and the "upside-down" intellectual were trained to remove themselves as individuals—the former, so as to keep most of his privileges in the background and implicitly retain them; the latter, so as to set most of his personal contradictions aside. But as that awkward word—"I"—became relevant again, both of these role models and methodological approaches left too much room for false consciousness to be satisfactory any longer.

A NEW RELATIONSHIP

This brings us back to the original problem: the role of equality and difference in field research. The two concepts are related. Only equality prepares us to accept difference in terms other than hierarchy and subordination; on the other hand, without difference there is no equality—only sameness, which is a much less worthwhile ideal. Only equality makes the interview credible, but only difference makes it relevant. Field work is meaningful as the encounter of two subjects who recognize each other as subjects, and therefore separate, and seek to build their equality upon their difference in order to work together.

In these terms, research may help us cope with some of our most pressing contemporary needs: the redefinition of "self" and the crisis of political action. The recognition of the other, which is the foundation of anthropology, is at best limited unless it implies also a questioning and redefinition of the anthropologist's (or historian's) own identity. At a time in our common history when the crisis of radical and revolutionary movements has left most of us alone to face our individual and common problems, the quest for self-definition often takes the form of narcissism, cynicism, downright selfishness, and disregard for general issues. I believe that one possible function of research today is to, once again, place the question of identity on a social and interpersonal plane, and to help us recognize ourselves in what makes us similar yet different from others.

On the other hand, when the encounter takes place in the light of equality, not only the observer, but also the "observed," may be stimulated to think new thoughts about themselves. This throws a new light on an old problem: the observer's interference on the observed reality. The positivistic fetish of noninterference

has developed outlandish techniques to bypass or remove this problem. I believe we ought to turn the question on its head, and consider the changes that our presence may cause as some of the most important results of our field work.[21] There is no need to stoop to propaganda in order to use the *fact* itself of the interview as an opportunity to stimulate others, as well as ourselves, to a higher degree of self-scrutiny and self-awareness; to help them grow more aware of the relevance and meaning of their culture and knowledge; and to raise the question of the senselessness and injustice of the inequality between them and us. Political work is work for change, and all these changes are highly political. At a time when politics in traditional terms of propaganda, organizations, and institutions has become unsatisfactory and at times even unsavory, the fact that our presence may facilitate meaningful change in the self-awareness of the people we meet is perhaps one still usable form of political action.