

The Cultural Processes of “Appropriation”

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During the last ten years, the term *appropriation* has become ubiquitous in the discourse of many disciplines, but—despite its manifest usefulness in academic argument—it remains conceptually unstable. The focus of this essay collection on the cultural processes of appropriation offers an opportunity, first, to trace out the recent history of the concept of appropriation as it developed in various fields of study, and then to examine the complexity of “cultural process” as revealed by medieval and early modern examples. Our aim is to demonstrate, as Rhonda Knight observes in the conclusion to her essay, “the importance of placing premodern and modern considerations of cultural appropriation in dialogue with one another.”

In Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff’s *Critical Terms for Art History*, the term *appropriation* merits an essay, written by one of the editors, in which Nelson explains, “my essay on *appropriation* is a deliberate repositioning and thus critique of the previous essay on *influence*”¹ that had appeared in the volume *Critical Terms for Literary Study*.² In the art history volume, Nelson’s “appropriation” essay is placed immediately after the essay on “originality” written by the other editor, Schiff. Thus the two entries form a dialectical diptych, so that the terms engage in a dialogue in which “appropriation” forces a reconsideration of “originality.”

Within traditional literary history, the idea of one text appropriating elements from another was referred to as “influence,” that is, “relations built on dyads of transmission from one unity (author, work, tradition) to another.”³ Although in this sense “influence” may be traced back as far as written texts, its importance as a concept within literary studies was a phenomenon of the eighteenth and, even more, of the nineteenth centuries.⁴

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“Influence-study generally entailed the practice of tracing a text’s generic and thematic lineage, especially but not always as evidenced in established canonical works (including myths) from Western literary history,” Louis Renza points out in the above-mentioned essay on “influence.”⁵ Literary influence in such studies “performed a conservative cultural function,” reinforcing the canon of “classics.” Even as reinterpreted through Harold Bloom’s concept of “the anxiety of influence,” literary influence-study, Renza argues, tended to reify the ideologies of “author” and “authority,” ignoring extraliterary influences on and “culture-specific ideological circumstances” of the work of literature.⁶ Because of all these associations, “influence” has been denigrated while “intertextuality” as a more dynamic concept attracted critical attention, especially in the formulations of Kristeva and Barthes, for whom “[a] text . . . is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, and contestation.”⁷

The notion of reuse—of materials, as in *spolia*, or of forms and ideas—has been an integral part of the art historical activity, too. Oleg Grabar’s 1973 study of Islamic art argued that Islamic monuments were the products of a wide range of processes by which the new religion established itself both physically and symbolically.⁸ Similarly, scholars of early Christian art have shown how Roman imperial iconography was appropriated by Christian artists through a process of iconographic adaptation. Christ is represented as an emperor, for example, but the secular imperial iconography of costume is made to fit a new religious context where Christ becomes the Pantocrator, the ruler of the universe; in the process, the iconography undergoes changes without completely abolishing the original meanings.⁹ It could be argued that, like Molière’s *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* who spoke in prose without knowing it, art historians have studied appropriation without using the term.

Traditionally, medievalists have focused on discovering the definitive point of origin for the monuments, artifacts, and texts they study. As Claire Sponsler notes in her essay for this volume, “For most of its history, the study of medieval Europe has been a recuperative project preoccupied with beginnings, sources, and the recovery of lost originals.” Scholarly transmission studies, then, emphasized the influence of that privileged (if largely hypothetical) originary object on extant texts or objects. Contrary to the notions of “origin” or “influence,” “appropriation” emphasizes the act of taking; it is understood to be “active, subjective, and motivated.”¹⁰ “Borrowing” may suggest more agency, but Nelson argues that it is an awkward

concept, “as if what is taken is ever repaid.”¹¹ The fundamentally active nature of appropriation is manifest in its etymology, from the Latin verb *appropriare*, “to make one’s own,” a combination of “*ad*, meaning ‘to,’ with the notion of ‘rendering to,’ and *proprius*, ‘own or personal.’”¹² Beyond the simple acknowledgment of borrowing or influence, what the concept of appropriation stresses is, above all, the motivation for the appropriation: to gain power over.¹³

Because of its associations with power, the term *appropriation* had a negative charge when it was first popularized within cultural studies. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of social discourse as a system of regulation, theorists analyzed the production of cultural meanings that occurred through the appropriation of an “other.” Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is the classic locus for such a description; it emphasizes the way the West used representations of “the Orient” to fulfill its own desires and consolidate its own power. Said offered a binary model of cultural relations for which, as Nelson points out, “in every cultural appropriation there are those who act and those who are acted upon, and for those whose memories and cultural identities are manipulated by aesthetic, academic, economic, or political appropriations, the consequences can be disquieting or painful.”¹⁴ According to this concept of “appropriation,” the model is always a relationship between cultural unequals—a dominant culture that appropriates and a weaker culture that has no control over its representations or products—and it triggered a crisis within such fields as anthropology and art. These were disciplines for which other cultures and their artifacts were central objects of study, but that relationship had usually been seen as neutral or even laudatory. Whereas early anthropology had conceived of its mission as “salvage,” studying vanishing tribes and subcultures around the world, now questions were asked about the ideological implications of ethnographic practices, including the writing of ethnographies. As James Clifford observed in *Writing Culture*—a collection that captured the excitement and anxiety of that pivotal moment within his field—“Anthropology no longer speaks with automatic authority for others defined as unable to speak for themselves (‘primitive,’ ‘pre-literate,’ ‘without history’).”¹⁵

Within the art world also, questions about the legitimacy of taking artifacts from a less wealthy or powerful culture began to be raised in tandem with the question of how those “others” were to be represented.¹⁶ Craig Owens articulated the major point in 1982: “[T]he person who represents the world is transformed, through the act of representation, from a subjective being enmeshed in space and time—by which he is, in a sense

possessed—into a transcendent, objective Mind that appropriates reality for itself and, by appropriating it, dominates it. . . . Representation is thus defined as appropriation and is thereby constituted as an apparatus of power.”¹⁷ The political and economic issues raised by the practice of the dominant society’s “taking—from a culture that is not [its] own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge” were then taken up within cultural property law.¹⁸

This binary model of cultural appropriation, which was dominant during the 1980s, provoked theoretical resistance by the late 1980s from those who argued that it silenced the “other.” In “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,” Benita Parry noted the deconstructive tendency to produce “a theory assigning absolute power to the hegemonic discourse in constituting and disarticulating the native.” She criticized even the leading postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Spivak, for constructing an account of colonialism in which “the European agent in consolidating the imperialist Sovereign Self, induces the native to collude in its own subject(ed) formation as other and voiceless. Thus while protesting at the obliteration of the native’s subject position in the text of imperialism, Spivak in her project gives no speaking part to the colonized.”¹⁹

Postcolonial theory of the last decade has only intensified this critique of Western hegemony, and has turned its attention to the ways in which “natives,” “subalterns,” and “others” may in fact be agents rather than powerless victims, capable of resisting or subverting the imposed agenda even as they appear to be adopting the tools of the dominant culture. Homi Bhabha offers an image of “colonial mimicry” as ambivalent “(almost the same, *but not quite*),” a replication that by its incompleteness reveals the limitations in the disciplinary discourse, “so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.”²⁰ Mary Louise Pratt coined the term *contact zone* to describe “the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” Within contact zones what ethnographers call *transculturation* may occur. The term calls attention to the ways that “subordinated or marginalized groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.”²¹ Homi Bhabha employs the term *liminal* for the contact zone, calling attention to the “interstitial passage between fixed identifications” that “opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy.”²² Critics analyzing Caribbean culture and

language speak of *métissage* or creolization for the mixing of cultural forms that disrupts the oppressive unitary identity.²³ Even performance studies and queer studies have drawn from other disciplines to produce José Esteban Muñoz's concept of "disidentification" for the minority subject, as a "mode of *recycling* or re-forming an object that has already been invested with powerful energy" by the dominant culture.²⁴

In a critique of Gramsci's idea of hegemony, James C. Scott has described "hidden transcripts" and techniques such as disguise or concealment by which the ostensibly powerless resist domination. Usually the subordinates appear to assent to the public script by which the dominant group performs its power; and there may be sites and occasions (often associated with popular culture) that allow the voicing or enacting of dissent without producing retribution. Scott argues that:

what permits subordinate groups to undercut the authorized cultural norms is the fact that cultural expression by virtue of its polyvalent symbolism and metaphor lends itself to disguise. By the subtle use of codes one can insinuate into a ritual, a pattern of dress, a song, a story, meanings that are accessible to one intended audience and opaque to another audience the actors wish to exclude.²⁵

Slaveholders in nineteenth-century America might have suspected that the popularity of Joshua and Moses in slave Christianity had something to do with their roles as liberators of oppressed peoples, but the resistant messages encoded as Old Testament figures "passed" in the disguise of "authorized" religion. Likewise, Filipino populations were able to reinterpret the Passion rituals of Holy Week that had been imposed by their Hispanic masters, infusing the orthodox plays with a folk sensibility.²⁶

Despite our difficulties in gaining access to historical experiences of subordinated peoples, there are studies such as those of the sixteenth-century Nahua in New Spain that reveal how (employing the newly alphabetized Nahuatl) they were able to appropriate the European other they encountered to their own mythic and historical narratives. As Jorge Klor de Alva notes, "[T]he Christian discourse preached by the friars and the political one taught by the Spanish military and Crown officials are appropriated and reencoded to fit within the registers that affirm local sovereignty and promote the favorable accommodations of local socio-economic interests with those of the colony."²⁷

What all of these recent postcolonial analyses suggest is that “appropriation” is potentially a two-way process, one in which exchange and creative response may take place. Whether drawing explicitly on such theories or not, the essays in this special issue avoid the reductive model whereby every act of appropriation must be one of imposed power. They break away from definitions of appropriation as influence or simple one-way transmission to explore the complex processes by which spaces, objects, and other “cultural expressions” are brought to represent something different from their original purposes, and they emphasize the diversity of forms and effects that appropriation can have.

The essays in the volume put the emphasis as much on process as on content, on “production” rather than on “produit,” on “énonciation” instead of on “énoncé,” as Antoine Compagnon puts it in his study of “citation.”²⁸ Although quotation might seem to be a most uncreative strategy, Compagnon’s analysis reverses this common assumption to show how, in fact, “le travail de la citation ne diffère pas du jeu du langage en général” [the work of quotation does not differ from the play of language in general].²⁹ He chooses a quotation from Maurice Blanchot for the epigraph to his book: “Ce qu’il importe, ce n’est pas de dire, c’est de redire et, dans cette redite, de dire chaque fois encore une première fois” [What counts is not to say, but to say again, and in this repetition to turn each time into a first time].³⁰ Thus, for Compagnon, citation becomes emblematic of the production of the text and the operations of language in general, but couldn’t his insight be extended to include all cultural expression? Even as it uses previous materials, appropriation in its play of improvisation similarly generates new meanings for a new context.

However varied those new meanings might be, what all these essays show is that appropriation is aimed at creating and/or consolidating identity, and in the examples discussed here the identity is always a collective one. Traditional literary studies, art history, and other disciplines tended to focus on cases in which individuals deliberately constructed their own identities, a model that is somewhat anachronistic for the medieval period, resting as it does on modern notions of individuality, authorship, and artistic genius. While not denying that such cases of individual self-construction exist for earlier centuries, this volume takes up the more typical cases in which appropriation contributes to the formation of collective identities such as those of nation, town, family, gender, and cult.

A recurrent paradigm in the articulation of identity is the adoption of someone else’s history for one’s own, a paradigm familiar to us from the

cultural theories discussed above. Rhonda Knight explores the way that the English writer Robert Mannyng of Brunne produces a national identity in the fourteenth century by translating Latin and Anglo-Norman chronicles, acts of translation that appropriate the histories of others (the Irish, the Britons) for England. Mannyng's account of the magical translation of Stonehenge from Ireland to Salisbury Plain shows how artifact appropriation is an instance of "cannibal culture," that is, the consumption and transformation of "foreign symbols and artifacts into images that come to epitomize the values and even the identity of the appropriating culture."³¹ Knight's analysis does raise questions, however, about the contemporary concept of appropriation, which seems to assume stable, coherent, unitary "cultures" that can come into contact and conflict. She also asks if it is appropriation if the transgressed culture is largely fictional.

Victor Scherb's survey of the vicissitudes of the Gog and Magog figures shows how a historical sequence of identities depended on them as referents for the alien or other, against which a group could define itself. Throughout Scherb's essay, the construction of ethnic identity is paramount: "Although their role changes over time, the myths of Gog and Magog contribute to the formation of a uniquely Western and, eventually, English consciousness." What changes is the exact nature of the group whose identity is at stake: Hebrews, early Christians, the English nation, local English communities, London civic authorities, the mercantile classes. Also shifting is what precisely Gog and Magog represent: hostile tribes, cannibals and other bestial beings, giants, instruments of Satan, barbarian hordes, the Jews, a Saracen knight, a mountain. Finally, Scherb observes how the relation between the group and Gog and Magog evolves from a fully marginal other to a domesticated giant who, in urban spectacles, is welcomed at the heart of the urban space.³² The transformations of Gog and Magog emphasize the point that appropriation is not a one-time act but that it tends to be a continuing process, one in which the appropriated objects may be radically transformed while triggering new and different appropriations—a fluidity not theorized within a strict cultural studies model of appropriation.

Claire Spensler's essay "In Transit" calls attention to the dynamic quality of appropriation, that cultural meanings must be understood as being in circulation. Her analysis of relics draws on theories of Grant McCracken and Patrick Geary to suggest that medieval relics acquired meaning primarily through this creative process of exchange that continually revalidated and reinterpreted their power. "Only so long as the relic was

repeatedly consumed and appropriated, made over into a powerful ritual object, did it retain its value. By appropriating the saint's relic, a community thus produced that cult object."

What Victor Scherb's and Randon Jerris's essays show is how such fluid chains of appropriation often extend across long periods of time. Scherb traces the myth of Gog and Magog from the Bible to the seventeenth century, while Jerris explores the cultic appropriation of the Alpine landscape through millennia. The familiar models of cultural appropriation outlined in the first half of this introduction do not fully acknowledge a diachronic dimension to appropriation, but this volume's focus on the *processes* of appropriation enables us to follow the unfolding of these phenomena in their complexity, observing what changes and what remains the same. Jerris's analysis of three stages in the appropriation of Alpine sites reveals that, although the cultic contexts change, from prehistoric, to Roman, to Christian, the process by which a landscape is sanctified remains the same. The resulting layering of cultures is certainly complex—as calendrical and agricultural indigenous cults coexisted with Roman polytheism, or as Christian churches were built on Roman settlements or pagan astronomical sites—but the cultural work performed by the topography is surprisingly unchanged. Scherb's essay also shows how the multiform quality of the Gog and Magog myth had the power to serve a variety of cultural agendas and remained compelling as symbolic material for centuries. The appropriated objects, whether myth or mountain, are treated as potent tools for constructing identity and their continuing appropriation manifests their symbolic efficacy. By taking a diachronic approach, we can perceive the processes by which a symbol accrues power or—in Bourdieu's term, *cultural capital*—and is ripe for appropriation for a new purpose.³³

In another example of appropriation of powerful symbols, Joëlle Rollo-Koster maps out the creation and development in fourteenth-century Avignon of convents of repentent prostitutes, the *Repenties*. This case-study shows how a rejected and marginal group appropriated established cultural constructs—the monastic rule, the model of Mary Magdalene, and urban topography—to become a fully accepted group in their new identity as nuns. The order was originally established through male ecclesiastical patronage who used the monastic rule and the figure of Mary Magdalene in what can be seen as an attempt to control female sexuality. However, what Rollo-Koster also shows is the agency of the *Repenties* themselves in exploiting these cultural possibilities to empower their order and, indeed, their active manipulation of urban space to assert their social status.

The cultural appropriation demonstrated in this example flows not just from male authorities to the repentent prostitutes, but also in the opposite direction, with the *Repenties* engaging actively in the process. The final episode in Rollo-Koster's account, in which we see the *Repenties* acquiring property at the center of Avignon, marks their successful negotiation within their culture, the result of which is that a marginalized female group was able to claim a place literally at the center of society. The obvious and independent strategies of appropriation exhibited by the nuns might be considered acts of resistance within a postcolonial theoretical interpretation, but here the interests of the powerful and the powerless are not necessarily at odds; instead, they converge toward the ultimate goal of validating the order of the *Repenties*.

Processes of appropriation have a powerful diachronic dimension, as we have seen, but they also have a spatial dimension that must be acknowledged. The insertion of the *Repenties* at the heart of Avignon is proof that their strategies of identity-building have been successful. Often the first act of appropriation is one of picking a site in which the new identity can be displayed. In a colonial situation the imperialistic invaders simply take over the territory of the other culture. In a postcolonial situation the contact zone between cultures becomes a space where languages, discourses, and other cultural expressions mingle conflictually. Our essays suggest a more nuanced view of spatial appropriation in which the exercise of power is not always aggressive. Randon Jerris's account of the history of Alpine settlement undercuts any notion of violent encounters, showing instead that diverse societies and belief systems were able to coexist in the same space.³⁴

The precision with which space can be appropriated is remarkable. Colonized space is usually represented as undifferentiated space, but what Véronique Plesch's essay shows is how we might read the Arborio site as involving multiple appropriations of location, each thoroughly meaningful. San Sebastiano's inscriptions are placed on paintings of saints, within a confraternity chapel, which itself is located at the periphery of town—all three highly significant spatial choices. Furthermore, the inscriptions are incised *into* the frescoes, and this too reveals the intensity of the desire to merge with that locus. As a result, the saints and the confraternity chapel retain their devotional power even as a secular and civic message is inscribed in them. The original meanings of that religious location are not obliterated by the addition of the inscriptions recording the town's chronicle. In fact, there appears to be a vital dialogue between inscriptions and environment, which

creates a new discourse meant to consolidate and defend Arborio's threatened identity.

The productive synergy between the appropriated site and the new function that we see in Plesch's study offers a contrast to the coexistent, but not interactive, discourses found in appropriated Books of Hours discussed by Kathleen Ashley. Family records newly inscribed in these devotional books fill the margins and blank end-sheets, but there is very little dialogue between the two discourses of religious devotion and bourgeois family history. The two simply cohabitate in the same book space, just as pagan and Christian cultic practices coexisted in Randon Jerris's Churraetia in the Alps. In neither example does the juxtaposition of discourses from separate spheres lead to conflict. Nevertheless, while the liturgical materials of the Books of Hours remain fixed, the ever-increasing volume of family data in the margins eventually, over generations, endows these books with a primary function as consolidator of genealogical history and hence of the family's claim to the new upper-class social identity.

The analysis above suggests that, in order to produce a new identity, what must be articulated is a set of parameters which defines the entity by giving it a specific location in time and space. Our focus on processes of appropriation has suggested the importance of the diachronic dimension, since acts of appropriation unfold through time, allowing for multiple mutations and transformations. Focusing on the synchronic dimension reveals the spectrum of appropriation, from situations in which almost *nothing* is retained of an original meaning and/or function to those in which an original continues virtually unchanged.

As an example of the first, Claire Sponsler describes the Coke bottle thrown out of the Western airplane in the movie *The Gods Must Be Crazy*. The significance and function of the Coke bottle in Western culture is unavailable to the Bushmen, denizens of an isolated culture who assign the bottle an entirely new set of meanings and uses. At the other end of the spectrum we could imagine a liturgical object that changes hands but continues to be used for its original intended function within a largely similar religious context. The ends of the spectrum might be considered ideal cases or logical abstractions in our model of appropriation.³⁵

In between the extremes of no retained meaning/use and completely retained meaning/use lies a wide range of possible combinations, a range that the essays in this volume explore and that conforms more nearly to the practices of appropriation in the real world. *Bricolage*, a concept

defined by Lévi-Strauss and used by Hebdige and Gilroy to analyze the use of symbols by subcultures, might be next to the Coke bottle end of the spectrum, in that the cultural materials of the dominant society are resourcefully and freely refashioned for the subcultural context with little reference to the source's original purpose. However, Sponsler points out that bricolage is a technique of appropriation useful to the powerful in society as well—as her example of the Lancastrian construction of a text of the *Canterbury Tales* suggests. The medieval Books of Hours appropriated by the bourgeoisie in the sixteenth century to function as family record books, while perhaps retaining some of the associations of Books of Hours, are closer to the bricolage end of the spectrum. The Avignon example of the *Repenties* seems closer to the other end, where Certeau's concept of the consumer readapting already meaning-laden cultural materials might apply. Both the male founders of the order and the female penitents adopt and adapt religious rules and myths to a new purpose of identity-building, but without changing the meaning of those discourses. The chapel wall paintings of saints inscribed with local events by Arborio's townsfolk over centuries—in a process where the original devotional purpose virtually fuses with the new social purpose—perhaps illustrates the midpoint in our spectrum.

Keeping this spectrum in mind when discussing examples of appropriation should mitigate the tendency to apply one reductive model of the process and of its effects. The metaphor of the one-time event of appropriation simply cannot capture the richness of cultural process involved. Michel Butor has described individual products as being only knots within a larger cultural fabric:

L'oeuvre d'un individu est une sorte de noeud qui se produit à l'intérieur d'un tissu culturel au sein duquel l'individu se trouve non pas plongé mais apparu. L'individu est, dès l'origine, un moment de ce tissu culturel. Aussi bien, une oeuvre est-elle toujours une oeuvre collective.³⁶

[The work of an individual is a kind of a knot that occurs within a cultural fabric in which the individual is not immersed but appears. The individual is, from the origin, a moment of this cultural fabric. Likewise, a work is always a collective work.]

To follow Butor's metaphor, one could say that the processes of appropriation are the threads that run through cultural fabrics. As warp and weft they

extend vertically and horizontally—diachronically and synchronically—and are the indispensable constitutive elements that generate surface, density, and texture; in short, they *are* culture.



Notes

The topic chosen for this special issue, “The Cultural Processes of ‘Appropriation,’” was the thematic focus of the 1998 annual meeting of the New England Medieval Association, held in Portland, Maine and sponsored by the Maine Medieval Association—an informal consortium of colleagues from Bates, Bowdoin, and Colby Colleges, and from the Universities of Maine and Southern Maine. Despite the varied disciplines of participants, the theme of appropriation generated discussions that were thought-provoking and truly interdisciplinary. Although only two of the essays included in this special issue began as presentations at the conference, this volume is meant to continue that intellectual excitement in print. For help at various stages in preparing this special issue, we want to thank Alan Bernstein, Gail Gibson, David Simon, Sarah Stanbury, and Anne Thompson.

- 1 Robert S. Nelson and Richard Schiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), xix.
- 2 Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, eds., *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 186–202.
- 3 Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, “Figures in the Corpus: Theories of Influence and Intertextuality,” in *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History*, Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein, eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 3.
- 4 Clayton and Rothstein, “Figures in the Corpus,” 4–5.
- 5 Louis A. Renza, “Influence,” *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 186.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 193, 197.
- 7 Barthes, “The Death of the Author” (148), quoted by Susan Stanford Friedman, “Weavings: Intertextuality and the (Re) Birth of the Author,” in *Influence and Intertextuality*, 150. Friedman comments dryly on the methods by which Kristeva put forth her own theories under the guise of discussing a male critic, Bakhtin: “Feminist critics might readily recognize the gender inflection of Kristeva’s self-authorizing strategy, one she uses often: to propose her own theories, she presents a ‘reading’ of some (male) precursor or fellow writer, a re-reading in which her attribution of ideas to a male master screens the introduction of her own ideas. This ‘mis-reading,’ to invoke Harold Bloom’s term, does not eliminate the other, but rather borrows his authority from the position of disciple. Intertextuality was paradoxically born under the guise of influence” (147).
- 8 Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).
- 9 For an example of such transmutations, see Ernst Kantorowicz’s essay, “The Quinity of Winchester,” *Art Bulletin* 29 (1947): 73–85, in which the Roman compositional

scheme of emperors crowned by a victory became a Christian scheme, with Peter and Paul replacing the emperors and Christ replacing the victory.

- 10 Nelson and Shiff, *Critical Terms for Art History*, 118.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid., 117.
- 13 Analyzing a statement by art historian Meyer Shapiro on the role of still life, Craig Owens attributes these motives to art history: “In this passage, representation communicates with power via the medium of possession (use, enjoyment). Thus, we can identify the motives of art history, at least insofar as it is practiced as a humanistic discipline: a desire for *property*, which conveys man’s sense of his ‘power over things’; a desire for *propriety*, a standard of decorum based upon respect for property relations; a desire for the *proper name*, which designates the specific person who is invariably identified as the subject of the work of art; finally, a desire for *appropriation*.” Owens’s essay, “Representation, Appropriation, and Power,” was originally published in 1982 and posthumously reprinted in a collection of his writings, *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); the quotation is from pp. 95–96.
- 14 Nelson, “Appropriation,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, 127.
- 15 James Clifford, “Introduction,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 10.
- 16 Sally Price in her *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) offers an accessible but hard-hitting analysis of the ways that “primitive” objects have been received in Western societies. See also discussion by Fred Myers, “Representing Culture: The Production of Discourse(s) for Aboriginal Acrylic Paintings,” in *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, George E. Marcus, ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 319–55.
- 17 Owens, “Representation, Appropriation, and Power,” repr. in *Beyond Recognition*, 103–4.
- 18 Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao, “Introduction to Cultural Appropriation: A Framework for Analysis,” in *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation*, Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao, eds. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 1. See also Jane M. Gaines, *Contested Culture: The Image, The Voice, and the Law* (London: B.F.I. Publishing, 1991).
- 19 Benita Parry, “Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse,” *Oxford Literary Review* 9 (1987): 35. See also the collection by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).
- 20 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 86.
- 21 Mary Louise Pratt, *Under Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6.
- 22 Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 4. Within contemporary feminist theory, Gloria Anzaldúa has richly developed the idea of “Borderlands”—geographically between the United States and Mexico where she grew up as a Chicana, and metaphorically between the multiple languages, cultures, and gender identities that she represents; see

- Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987).
- 23 See the discussion in Françoise Lionnet, “Introduction: The Politics and Aesthetics of *Métissage*,” in her *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 1–33. Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss uses the term *bricolage* for the process of combining whatever heterogeneous materials are at hand in a creative way; cultural and postmodern critics have often seized upon this idea to represent nonofficial cultural processes—see, for example, Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xiii–xiv: “users make (*bricolent*) innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules.”
 - 24 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 39.
 - 25 James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 158.
 - 26 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 159.
 - 27 Jorge Klor de Alva, “Nahua Colonial Discourse and the Appropriation of the (European) Other,” in *Borrowed Power*, 169–92.
 - 28 Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main: ou, Le travail de la citation* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1979), 10.
 - 29 Ibid.
 - 30 Quoted in *ibid.*, 7.
 - 31 Knight cites Deborah Root’s concept from *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1996); the rest of the quoted sentence is Knight’s.
 - 32 The popularity of such alien figures in spectacle of the period is noted by Kathleen M. Ashley and analyzed through the discourse of the exotic that paradoxically combines both strangeness/difference and comprehensibility; “‘Strange and Exotic’: Representing the Other in Medieval and Renaissance Performance,” in *East of West: Cross-Cultural Performance and the Staging of Difference*, Claire Sponsler and Xiaomei Chen, eds. (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 77–91.
 - 33 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).
 - 34 Annemarie Weyl Carr offers a penetrating critique of contemporary theories of cultural encounter using medieval paintings from a church in Cyprus. The thirteenth-century wall paintings seem to draw equally on Orthodox icons and Latin or Frankish iconography, combining the two different cultural forms into one composition where donors separate in identity share a space together. “Rather than appropriation, one might more profitably speak of correlation,” Carr suggests, concluding that in “a site like Lusignan Cyprus the most sensitive boundaries may have lain not between groups as such, but between the spheres of activity that did, and the spheres of activity that did not demand the display of ethnic and religious difference”; “Correlative Spaces: Art, Identity, and Appropriation in Lusignan Cyprus,” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 14/15 (1998/1999): 68.

- 35 Many disciplines have had to rethink the effect that such idealized models had on their academic discourses. For example, contemporary anthropology has acknowledged that cultural groups are almost never completely isolated or bounded, but reveal some interaction with outside cultures—a perception that has undermined the foundational assumption of much ethnography of “primitive cultures”; see Robert J. Thornton, “The Rhetoric of Ethnographic Holism,” in *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, 15–33. Likewise, historical religious studies are just beginning to come to grips with the impact of context and performance on religious symbols, rites, and beliefs—which have often been discussed as if they were fixed or static forms having the same meanings whenever they were employed. See discussion by Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, “The Translations of Foy: Bodies, Texts, and Places,” in *The Medieval Translator/Traduire au Moyen Age* 5 (1996): 21–49.
- 36 Quoted in Compagnon, *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation*, 91.