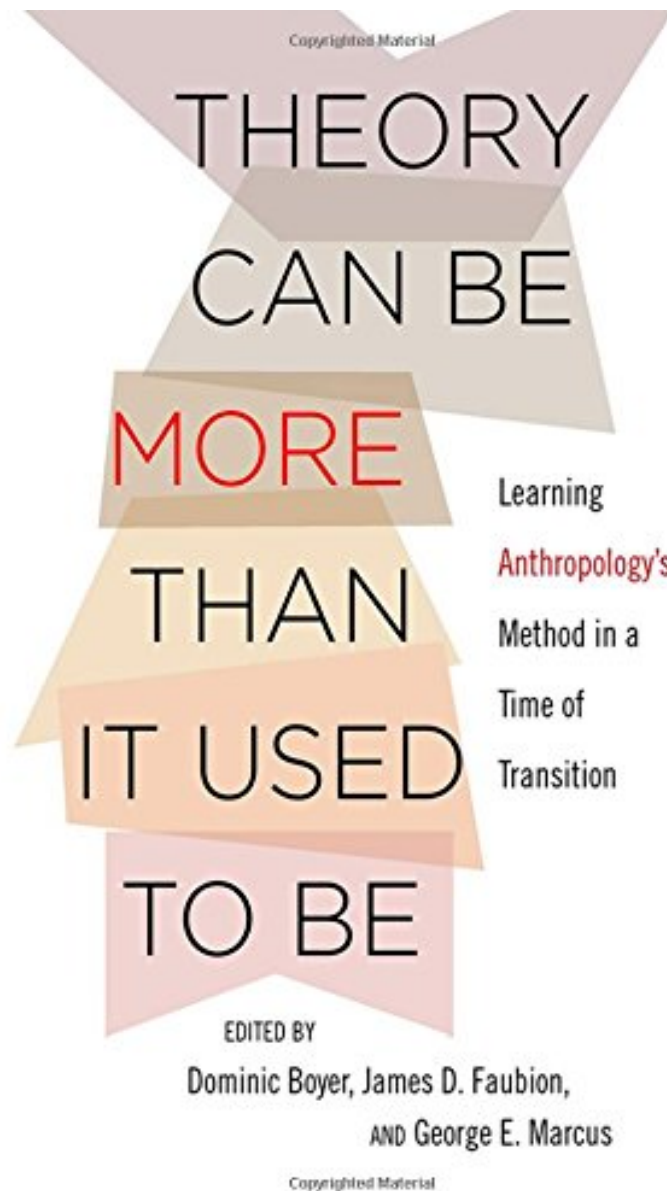


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Theory Can Be More than It Used to Be: Learning Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition

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Theory Can Be More than It Used to Be: Learning Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition:

Within anthropology, as elsewhere in the human sciences, there is a tendency to divide knowledge making into two separate poles: conceptual (theory) vs. empirical (ethnography). In *Theory Can Be More than It Used to Be*, Dominic Boyer, James D. Faubion, and George E. Marcus argue that we need to take a step back from the assumption that we know what theory is to investigate how theory matters: a matter of concepts, of analytic practice, of medium of value, of professional ideology that operates in anthropology and related fields today. They have assembled a distinguished group of scholars to diagnose the state of the theory-ethnography divide in anthropology today and to explore alternative modes of analytical and pedagogical practice. Continuing the methodological insights provided in *Fieldwork Is Not What It Used to Be*, the contributors to this volume find that now is an optimal time to reflect on the status of theory in relation to ethnographic research in anthropology and kindred disciplines. Together they engage with questions such as, What passes for theory in anthropology and the human sciences today and why? What is theory's relation to ethnography? How are students trained to identify and respect anthropological theorization and how do they practice theoretical work in their later career stages? What theoretical experiments, languages, and institutions are available to the human sciences? Throughout, the editors and authors consider theory in practical terms, rather than as an amorphous set of ideas, an esoteric discourse of power, a norm of intellectual life, or an infinitely contestable canon of texts. A short editorial afterword explores alternative ethics and institutions of pedagogy and training in theory. Contributors: Andrea Ballesterio, Rice University; Dominic Boyer, Rice University; Lisa Breglia, George Mason University; Jessica Marie Falcone, Kansas State University; James D. Faubion, Rice University; Kim Fortun, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; Andreas Glaeser, University of Chicago; Cymene Howe, Rice University; Jamer Hunt, Parsons The New School for Design and the Institute of Design in Umea, Sweden; George E. Marcus, University of California, Irvine; Townsend Middleton, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Deepa S. Reddy, University of Houston Clear Lake; Kaushik Sunder Rajan, University of Chicago

"*Theory Can Be More than It Used to Be* illuminates and jeopardizes notions long central to anthropology. Fieldwork and ethnography have both come under much more thorough scrutiny than theory. This book explores the complexities, resonances, and possibilities of theory in relation to contemporary and near-future anthropology. It opens up complex and challenging terrain and provides us with the analytical wherewithal for thinking through and with questions of what theory can be and how it can shape and be shaped by the field. Lucid, fascinating, exceptionally engaging, and highly sophisticated, this book is a major contribution to key debates within and beyond anthropology." Don Brenneis, University of California, Santa Cruz, coeditor of *Annual of Anthropology*

"The essays in *Theory Can Be More than It Used to Be* are well crafted; they draw on vibrant ethnographic material and a creative rendering of social and cultural theory in relation to the abiding imperatives of anthropology. This book sets out a rich variety of approaches that will constitute points of departure for scholarly discussions, research, and pedagogy going forward. It is by no means an exaggeration to say the fate of the discipline of anthropology rests on the questions posed here. There are three no better and more respected anthropologists than Dominic Boyer, James D. Faubion, and George E. Marcus to speak authoritatively to these profound concerns and challenges." Douglas R. Holmes, Binghamton University, author of *Integral Europe: Fast-Capitalism, Multiculturalism, Neofascism*

About the Author: Dominic Boyer is Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Research in the Human Sciences at Rice University. He is the author of *The Life Informatic: Newsmaking in the Digital Era*, from Cornell; *Spirit and System: Media, Intellectuals, and the Dialectic in Modern German Culture*; and *Understanding Media: A Popular Philosophy*. He is coeditor of *Theory Can Be More than It Used to Be: Learning Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition*, also from Cornell. James Faubion is the Radoslav Tsanoff Chair and Professor of Anthropology at Rice University. He is the author of *An Anthropology of Ethics*, *The Shadows and Lights of Waco: Millennialism Today*, and *Modern Greek Lessons: A Primer in Historical Constructivism*. George E. Marcus is Chancellor's Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Irvine. He is coauthor of *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* and coeditor of *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. He was the founding editor of *Cultural Anthropology*.