

# Semiotic Dimensions of Creativity\*

Eitan Wilf

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem, 91905, Israel; email: eitan.wilf@mail.huji.ac.il

Annu. Rev. Anthropol. 2014. 43:397–412

The *Annual Review of Anthropology* is online at [anthro.annualreviews.org](http://anthro.annualreviews.org)

This article's doi:  
10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030020

Copyright © 2014 by Annual Reviews.  
All rights reserved

\*This article is part of a special theme on Knowledge. For a list of other articles in this theme, see <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/full/10.1146/annurev-an-43>

## Keywords

creativity, semiotic mediation, improvisation, socialization, value, neoliberalism

## Abstract

Recurrent, most recently Romantic, ideologies conceptualize creativity as the solitary, ex nihilo creation of products of self-evident and universal value—most emblematically in the field of art—by highly exceptional individuals. Such ideologies obscure the social dimensions of creativity that come into view via anthropological analysis: (a) the nature and ubiquity of creative processes as communicative and improvisational events, with real-time emergent properties, involving human and nonhuman agents in the context of pre-existing yet malleable genres and constraints; (b) the role of socialization in the making of creative individuals, implicating processes of social reproduction; and (c) the processes by which certain objects and individuals are recognized and constructed as exemplars of creativity and thus acquire their value. This review discusses these dimensions by synthesizing cultural and linguistic/semiotic anthropological research. It concludes by addressing the recent transformation of creativity into the neoliberal philosopher's stone and the potential contribution of anthropology to the demystification of this transformation.

## INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to appreciate the added value of the anthropology of creativity without acknowledging both the long intellectual history of “creativity” and similar concepts in the West and the ideologies this history has institutionalized. Recurrent, most recently Romantic, ideologies conceptualize creativity as the solitary, ex nihilo creation of products of self-evident and universal value—most emblematically in the field of art—by highly exceptional and gifted individuals. This ideology originated millennia ago with the idea of divine intervention by entities such as the muses and one’s tutelary spirit or *genius* (Abrams 1971, pp. 189–90; Murray 1989), and its present form was crystallized with the rise of Romanticism and its organic metaphors of the independent gestation and spontaneous growth of the exceptional individual’s inborn inner nature. According to Romantic ideologies of poetic inspiration, “an inspired poem or painting is sudden, effortless, and complete, [no longer] because it is a gift from without, but because it grows of itself, within a region of the mind which is inaccessible either to awareness or control” (Abrams 1971, p. 192). Today, these notions are part of the fabric of the popular imagination in the West, a taken-for-granted script about creative agency that is disseminated and circulated in different artifacts and narratives (Taylor 1989, p. 376).

Such ideologies of creativity obscure the social dimensions that come into view via anthropological analysis, which provides essential tools for clarifying at least three dimensions of the ethnographic context of “creativity”: (a) the nature and ubiquity of creative processes as communicative, interactional, and improvisational events, with real-time emergent properties, involving human and nonhuman agents in the context of pre-existing yet malleable genres, conventions, and constraints; (b) the role of socialization, apprenticeship, and pedagogy/learning in the making of creative individuals, implicating processes of social reproduction; and (c) the processes by which certain objects and individuals are recognized, constructed, and authenticated as bearers and exemplars of creativity and thus acquire their value. This review discusses these dimensions by drawing from and synthesizing cultural and linguistic/semiotic anthropological research. It concludes by addressing the recent transformation of creativity into the neoliberal philosopher’s stone, along with the relevance of the anthropology of creativity for its analysis and demystification.

## CREATIVITY AS PROCESS: EMERGENCE AND IMPROVISATION

[Genius] cannot itself describe or indicate scientifically how it brings its product into being . . . (For that is also presumably how the word “genius” is derived from *genius*, in the sense of the particular spirit given to a person at birth, which protects and guides him, and from whose inspiration those original ideas stem.) (Kant 2008 [1790], p. 187)

One tradition in cultural anthropology has problematized the Romantic notion of creativity as a mysterious, ex nihilo, and original creation by looking at creativity through the prism of improvisation. Lévi-Strauss’s (1966, p. 19) analysis of bricolage and mythical thought, which draws from structural linguistics, has been influential in this tradition, especially via its emphasis on the ways in which bricolage and mythical thought are constrained by an already existing set of objects or constitutive units in which each object or unit already has its own sense and purpose that limits its potential combination with and substitution for others. This emphasis on the “dialogue” with an existing set of objects or units in which the bricoleur must engage (Lévi-Strauss 1966, p. 17) helped reframe creativity as the reworking (or selection and recombination) of a given set of building blocks in “a field of possible or legitimate . . . transformations,” i.e., “innovation within culturally prescribed parameters of style” (Gell 1998, pp. 215, 175n3; Liep 2001, p. 2; see

also Nettle & Russell 1998; Selfridge-Field 2001; Lord 2003). A different form of this idea found expression in Bourdieu's (1977) notion of *habitus*, i.e., "the basis for the *intentionless invention* of regulated improvisation" (p. 79, emphasis in original). Although Bourdieu critiqued Lévi-Strauss's notion of rules, arguing instead that the constraints underlying behavior are much more general, he, too, understood creativity, or more specifically "invention," as always already limited by the social conditions that structured one's *habitus* during his or her socialization and that the *habitus* in turn reproduces (Bourdieu 1977, p. 95). As in similar theories, these theories have reframed creativity as virtuosity: the (unconscious or embodied) mastery of a set of rules of transformation or generative schemes that enable some individuals to seamlessly behave in a stylistically appropriate and coherent way in different situations (Boas 1955, p. 17; Bateson 1967, p. 148; Bourdieu 1977, p. 79; Gell 1998, p. 158; see Wilf 2013d, pp. 719–21, for discussion).

Although Lévi-Strauss (1966, p. 19) argued that the engineer resembles the *bricoleur* in that he, too, must "begin by making a catalogue of a previously determined set consisting of theoretical and practical knowledge, of technical means, which restrict the possible solutions," he also argued that they are different in that "the engineer is always trying to make his way out of and go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization while the '*bricoleur*' by inclination or necessity always remains within them." Thus, whereas Lévi-Strauss problematized the Romantic idea of the free and autonomous creative agent mainly with respect to so-called "traditional" societies, in which this idea has rarely been part of native ethnotheories of agency, he opened the door to its reproduction with respect to Western modernity, in which it has been the core of various mystifying ideologies.

The polarity between these two presumably different forms of creative agency—the one operating within an already given set of constraints, and the other by changing that set of constraints—has been the focus of debates in later anthropological theories of cultural creativity, such as those underlying John Liep's (2001) introduction to his edited volume on the subject. Liep (2001, p. 2) makes a distinction between "improvisation," a form of agency that characterizes individuals' everyday life as "small-scale everyday creativity" limited by a given set of culturally specific conventions, and "innovation" or "'true' creativity" (Liep 2001, p. 6), a form of agency emerging in "new cultural gaps and discrepancies" following "the appearance of social groups struggling for recognition and empowerment . . . . Cultural elements from hitherto unconnected contexts will be combined here" (Liep 2001, p. 8; see also Lavie et al. 1993, p. 6; Coote & Shelton 1994, pp. 5–7; Glaskin 2010; Mageo 2010). In a direct critique of Liep, Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007, p. 2) have argued that "the difference between improvisation and innovation . . . is not that the one works within established convention while the other breaks with it, but that the former characterizes creativity by way of its processes, the latter by way of its products." They add that Liep's approach is informed by the Romantic myth of "liberation from the constraints of a world that is already made" (Ingold & Hallam 2007, p. 3). Drawing from diverse sources such as Bergson's philosophy of vitalism, Ingold & Hallam highlight the irreducibly generative, temporal, and relational nature of improvisation, which is the basis of all forms of agency as "adjustment and response to the conditions of a world-in-form" (Ingold & Hallam 2007, p. 3; see also Wagner 1981, pp. 36–37).

Although Ingold & Hallam (2007) offer a necessary critique of Liep's identification of "true" creativity with the reconfiguration of a given set of constraints, other anthropologists have suggested that we need to acknowledge the ubiquity of improvisation without excluding from consideration forms of creativity—not necessarily those forms informed by Romanticism—that are explicitly motivated by the desire to change a given set of constraints or field of possibilities. For example, as several of Bourdieu's critics have argued, embodied practical mastery is often the subject of awareness in various practices of bodily self-cultivation and reform; such practices are

predicated upon an explicit attempt to change the space of possibilities—what people can and are disposed to do—by reconfiguring the bedrock of such a space, i.e., the body (Starrett 1995; Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006; Wilf 2010). However, even the entrepreneurs of such projects of “bodily reform” must take into account and hence improvise within a set of persistent “bodily facts,” such as the “physical constraints on human perception” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992, p. 72). In other words, there is always an irreducible style to styling new styles (Wilf 2013d, pp. 727–29). Thus, an analysis of attempts to change the constraints must, indeed, be an analysis of creativity by way of its processuality, but the latter does not exclude the former.

On the other side of the subdisciplinary fence, anthropologists working within linguistic and semiotic anthropology have attempted to clarify emergence and improvisation, along with the role of and relationship between these two orientations to creativity, as semiotic processes. The notions of indexical presupposition and indexical creativity—owing, in part, to Peircean semiotics—have provided one productive avenue of research (Silverstein 1993, 1997; Sawyer 2003). The analysis of real-time communicative events has revealed that participants operate at any given moment within emergent frames that are both constraining to and constrained by their strategic ongoing contributions. Participants’ multimodal contributions may be indexically presupposing (i.e., they may be appropriate to a by-degree, already established frame) and/or indexically creative (i.e., they may create expectations about a new frame and thereby initiate its gradual emergence). The indeterminate nature of indexical sign phenomena—namely, the fact that a sign can point to different aspects of social reality—means that establishing a context structured by cultural dimensions made relevant to the interaction is an ongoing process of metapragmatic regimentation of such phenomena—the site of real-time negotiation, struggle, and cooperation (Duranti & Brenneis 1986, Bauman & Briggs 1990, Urban 1996). Most importantly, this phenomenon implies that new frames become solidified only once signs begin to presuppose one of the frames creatively indexed by a previous sign, such that all signs gradually come to index one another in a part-whole relationship and point as a text to a particular context.

This scholarship has provided an analytic toolkit for reconceptualizing and problematizing the polarity between the two presumably different forms of agency (Sawyer 1996). On the one hand, even when trying to remain within frames in which all sign vehicles are highly regimented, as in ritual, participants often have to negotiate contingencies that result in ambiguities or that suggest potentially new meanings, which they might quickly take advantage of or try to reintegrate into the existing genre (Bauman 1984, pp. 129–30; Sahlin 1985; Schieffelin 1985, pp. 721–22; Rosaldo 1986, p. 134; Briggs 1988, pp. 4–5; Csordas 1997; Keane 1997; Malaby 2002; Lord 2003, pp. 37–38; Wilf 2013b). On the other hand, new frames or styles—even if they are an explicit goal—do not spring forth immediately and fully formed—popular Romantic depictions of the emergence of new styles in art notwithstanding. Rather, the emergence of these styles depends on the piecemeal elaboration (i.e., improvisation) of a metapragmatic configuration dense enough to regiment signs in whatever modality such that they would all come to be gradually recognized as constituting a “new style,” not only by external observers but also by the individuals cultivating it (Goffman 1986; Berliner 1994, pp. 374–83; Monson 1996; Sawyer 2003; Murphy 2005; Wilf 2013a).

The focus on indexicality has also revealed (*a*) that supposedly new utterances, behaviors, and products are always already found in a type- or token-interdiscursivity and intertextuality with prior genres, utterances, behaviors, and building blocks (Bakhtin 1982, Silverstein 2005) and (*b*) that individuals might strategically buttress their claims of being “creative” or “traditional” by maximizing or minimizing the intertextual gaps between already existing types and tokens and their present behavior (Briggs & Bauman 1992, p. 149; but see Wilf 2012, p. 38). Even the most “creative” act must be mediated “through the articulation of the collective” (Wagner 1981, p. 122; Mills 1940). This scholarship has thus undermined classical Romantic claims that “learning

is borrowed knowledge; Genius is knowledge innate, and quite our own” (Young 1759, p. 36); such claims have been overdetermined by the rise of modern possessive individualism (Hirsch & Strathern 2005, Leach 2007).

Peirce’s (1955) understanding of a sign as anything that stands for an object in some respect for someone or something has led him to consider consciousness, bodily functions, animal communication, and physical processes as forms of semiosis that are generative or creative (Colapietro 1988, Parmentier 1994). His perspective is conducive to cross-subdisciplinary exchange with existing theories of creative agency and the roles therein of distributed cognition and nonhuman agents (Latour & Woolgar 1986, Goodwin 1994, Csikszentmihalyi 1996, Knorr Cetina 1997, Nakamura 2007, Suchman 2007), tacit and embodied knowledge (Polanyi 2009, Myers & Dumit 2011), and the transactions between nature and culture (McLean 2009), which can be approached as forms of semiosis or real-time communicative events between different kinds of participants that involve different kinds of semiotic forms (Monson 1996, Gell 1998, Kockelman 2012, Wilf 2013a). Scholars have also used this conceptual machinery to theorize emergence across various temporal and spatial scales (Lemke 2000, Wortham 2005), thereby opening the door to understanding, for example, the emergence of a painting over a number of sessions (Ingold 2007; Mall 2007), of a painter’s entire oeuvre (Baudrillard 1981a, Gell 1998), and of schools or styles of painting (Bourdieu 1993) as forms of semiosis that involve sign vehicles at different levels of social reality rather than as teleological organic growth and other Romantic mystifications.

## CREATIVITY AS SOCIALIZATION: BECOMING “NATURAL”

Genius is the talent (natural gift) . . . an inborn productive faculty of the artist, [that] itself belongs to nature . . . [It] does not have it in his power . . . to communicate to others precepts that would put them in a position to produce similar products . . . Genius is entirely opposed to the spirit of imitation. (Kant 2008 [1790], pp. 186–87)

If there has ever been a sphere in which naturalization functions as a key constitutive logic, it is the sphere of Western modern art, in which it has often been taken for granted that artists are nature, genius is an inborn predisposition, and creative practice cannot be taught because it is an independent organic growth akin to being in a state of “god’s grace” (Murray 1989, p. 11; Efland 1990, p. 52; Goldstein 1996, pp. 25, 46, 261; McDermott 2004; Wilf 2013c, pp. 132–35).

Anthropologists themselves have often reproduced these Romantic associations, for example, by assuming that creative agency cannot be cultivated via highly regimented practices of socialization such as learning via pattern books, routinized behavior, and rote memorization. These assumptions found expression in Weber’s (1978, p. 1144) argument that charismatic education is necessarily antithetical to professional training, Boas’s (1955, p. 157) suggestion that the emergence of pattern books signals the decadence of folk art, Victor Turner’s (1967, 1979) positioning of creativity in liminal zones far removed from the mundane structures of society, and the tendency of anthropologists either to limit creativity to the realm of unexpected and unpredictable “eruptions” (Lavie et al. 1993, p. 6) or to argue that improvisation cannot be taught via formal schooling (Bryant 2005, p. 228). Given that anthropology has a Romantic heritage of theorizing culture in the model of artistic style (Wilf 2013d, pp. 723–27), these emphases are not entirely unexpected.

However, the ethnographic record suggests that creative agency results from socially informed and consequential, albeit always contingent, processes of socialization that can take many forms and that find expression in a broad spectrum of institutional sites. First, as discussed above, imitating, following a model, and engaging in forms of highly regimented, rule-governed behavior socialize

participants into creativity if only because they must constantly adapt both their real-time activity to the general patterns and the general patterns to the contingency of the unique situation (Wagner 1981, pp. 36–37; Briggs 1988, pp. 4, 5; Taussig 1993; Ingold & Hallam 2007, p. 5; Nakamura 2007; Downey 2008; Farnell & Wood 2011). Second, as suggested by Bateson’s (1967, p. 293) theory of deutero-learning or “learning to learn,” individuals can learn rules to use in generating new rules, such as instances in which jazz students learn rule-governed techniques for reconfiguring their playing bodies as a means of periodically generating new musical ideas (Wilf 2010). Third, schools, the use of pattern books, and an emphasis on routinized behavior never entail complete abstraction or the absence of real-time, pragmatically rich communicative events—a qualification similar to the one made with respect to theories that assumed a “great divide” between orality and literacy (Finnegan 1988). Consider the plethora of academic art programs in the United States. Even in such institutions, pedagogy is suffused with real-time communicative events through which educators attempt to reproduce the “socially and culturally structured world” of their practice (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 51). As in apprenticeship, neophytes learn more than factual knowledge by being exposed to and participating in such events (Kondo 1990, Herzfeld 2003). They learn to inhabit the genred role of the creative artist, which consists of a specific speech register, bodily comportment, dress code, and set of gender norms, along with various other dimensions of cultural know-how (Nettl 1995, Singerman 1999, Kingsbury 2001, Duranti & Burrell 2004, Black 2008, Elkins 2009, Solis & Nettl 2009, McGurl 2011, Chumley 2013, Wilf 2014).

Fourth, many anthropologists working in ethnographic contexts typically associated with rote memorization and ritualized forms of regimentation have problematized the Romantic distinction between creative, authentic, or spontaneous interiority and external, mediated conventions by arguing that individuals in these contexts hone such interiority by following, imitating, and inhabiting the external, conventional, and highly regimented forms and behaviors associated with it. Anthropologists have tried to capture the dialectical nature of this process by coining phrases such as “rehearsed spontaneity” (Mahmood 2005, pp. 128–31; see also Hirschkind 2006, pp. 13–19) and “rituals of creativity” (Wilf 2012).

Fifth, anthropologists have argued that learning to effectively break from highly regimented communicative genres requires novices to first learn the ins and outs of such genres. Novices must become sufficiently competent participants in such genres that they can identify and capitalize on fleeting opportunities to “breach expectations” (Howard 2009, p. 339) by utilizing complex contextual and pragmatic ambiguity that results from the indeterminacy of indexical sign phenomena (Sherzer 2002, Duranti & Black 2011). For example, in the process of learning the magician’s craft, neophytes must develop a “working knowledge of human perception and cognition” (Jones 2011, p. 52) that would allow them to both anticipate how their audience will understand each and every one of their moves and encourage their audience to assume a specific interpretative frame as taken for granted, making it possible for them (the magicians) to defamiliarize this frame at the moment of denouement and thus enchant (see also Bateson 1967, p. 182). Novice magicians internalize and inhabit the indexical presupposing practices of their audience by voicing, through direct reported speech, the audience’s potential reactions to each of their moves as they practice their craft offstage (Jones 2011, p. 57). These studies of socialization practices have demonstrated the coconstitution of improvisation within given conventions and forms of improvisation oriented to the reconfiguration of such conventions. In doing so, they have also problematized the Romantic idea that creativity cannot be cultivated via highly regimented practices of socialization but that it must be the result of unmediated or so-called natural processes.

Other studies have problematized the same Romantic idea by highlighting the social stratificatory origins and consequences of the socialization to these different orientations to improvisation (Lareau 2003). Heath’s (1986) pioneering study of how young children in three communities in



the Southeastern United States learn or fail to learn specific narrative skills through literacy events such as bedtime storytelling exemplifies this line of research. One of her findings is that white working-class children in this ethnographic context are discouraged from fictionalizing “events known to them and shift[ing] them about into other frames” (Heath 1986, p. 111). Hence, when “asked to write a creative story or tell it into a tape recorder, they retell stories from books; they do not create their own” (Heath 1986, p. 112; see also Rogoff 1990, pp. 197–200). Because mainstream institutions sanction specific narrative and interactional skills, children who fail to acquire these skills at an early age have a lower chance of succeeding at school and other mainstream institutions, with significant repercussions for their social mobility. Approaches that highlight the ubiquity of improvisation (Ingold & Hallam 2007), then, might risk obscuring the social stratificatory repercussions of socialization into different forms of improvisational agency and competence.

Similarly, although theories of improvisation that draw from art-based forms of improvisation such as jazz often gloss contextual preferences for a particular kind of improvisation as a matter of “aesthetics” (Sawyer 1996; Howard 2009, p. 339; Duranti & Black 2011, p. 459), the rhetoric of aesthetics has often been used to mask the social stratificatory roots and fruits of socialization into different forms of improvisation. Here, again, Bourdieu has been a crucial influence in providing an empirical and theoretical elaboration of Marx’s claim that “money is the truly creative power” (Marx 1978, p. 104). Bourdieu (1980) has argued that differences in aesthetic predispositions and people’s aptitudes to different forms of improvisation are the concealed result of the unequal distribution of economic capital, making it easier for some and harder for others to symbolically display distance from economic necessity in the form of, for example, adopting a Kantian aesthetic that subordinates function (literal meaning) to form (abstract imagination). These different orientations are eventually translated back into the unequal field of economic capital and reproduce this field because mainstream institutions are predicated upon and favor the Kantian aesthetic and the Bourgeois habitus it represents. Having been incorporated into one’s body, such orientations do indeed become natural, yet nature in this case is the product of culture, rather than independent of it. These processes of translation remain unacknowledged precisely because aesthetics has been ideologically framed as the sphere of the quintessentially natural.

At stake is not so much whether white lower-class children are indeed led to maintain their socioeconomic position by not being inculcated with the disposition to fictionalize and engage in a specific form of creative behavior. In his classic ethnography of British white working-class children, Paul Willis (1981, p. 2) argued that it is precisely by “creatively” transforming aspects of mainstream middle-class culture, i.e., by refusing to remain within the tight metapragmatic configuration of middle-class norms and practices that envelopes them at school, that working-class children reproduce their socioeconomic status (compare with Herzfeld 2003). Rather, “resources from sociohistorical, ontological, local, event-based and other timescales” facilitate the creation of unexpected metapragmatic models, from which emerge social identities that regiment the behavior and skills of those who come to inhabit them (Wortham 2005, p. 279). These and similar interventions, above and beyond their wide spectrum of perspectives, have problematized the Romantic notion of creativity as a natural predisposition by highlighting instead the socially informed yet always contingent processes of becoming, or of being prevented from becoming, “naturally” creative.

## CREATIVITY AS VALUE: THE PERFORMATIVITY OF SINGULARITY

[Genius’s] products must . . . be models, i.e., exemplary, hence, while not themselves the result of imitation, they must yet serve others in that way, i.e., as a standard or a rule for judging. (Kant 2008 [1790], pp. 186–87)

The Romantic idea that creativity produces highly original and unique entities of unquestionable value—in other words, singularities—obscures the processual and contingently emergent nature of such value. The anthropological line of research that has focused on value-production in the field of the commodity brand can shed some light on the semiotics of value-production in the field of creative practice. Particularly interesting are counterfeiting and other “creative brand engagements” (Nakassis 2012, p. 626; Vann 2006; Thomas 2012), which expose the machinery of value-production responsible for “the brand token’s ability to be part of its type” (e.g., the ability of each Nike shoe to be identified as an instantiation of all the meanings associated with the Nike brand), an ability that cannot be explained solely by the specific qualities of the token that make it “real” as opposed to “fake” (Nakassis 2012, p. 636n9). Counterfeiting and similar practices expose this machinery by capitalizing on a brand’s very logics and forms, which are performative and citational. The ability of a commodity token to be part of its brand type depends on an authorizing framework distributed across multiple social sites, which include, for example, “its certification at the site of production (marked by the label), [and] its distribution and sale through authorized agents (marked by price tag and receipt)” (Nakassis 2012, p. 628; Manning 2010; Silverstein 2013, p. 350). Underlying this type-token relation is “a brand *ontology*—the cultural and legal notion that things such as brands exist and that they have such-and-such properties as specified, and policed, by institutions” (Nakassis 2012, p. 628). Although these structures of authorization are performative and citational, they are typically interpreted under an ideology of authenticity.

In denaturalizing the distinction between “real” and “fake,” counterfeiting and other creative brand engagements, as well as their analyses, are highly relevant to the study of value-production in Western modernity’s sphere of creative practice, in which (a) objects and people that are deemed exemplary of creativity, and hence valuable, often cannot be distinguished from objects and people excluded from this category merely on the basis of their qualities, and (b) fakes and forgeries have similarly troubled and embarrassed the dominant economy of value by exposing its performative and citational logic, which is frequently hidden behind the rhetoric of aesthetic necessity (Hammer 2012). Indeed, note that “the brand token’s ability to be part of its type” and the structures of authorization that secure this ability correspond, for example, to the ability of any Monet painting to be identified as a “Monet” and to the various machineries of authorization that make identification of a specific painting as a token of a type possible, such as signature (Baudrillard 1981a), catalogues raisonnés and similar taxonomic machineries (Silverstein 2013), art auctions (Plattner 1998), spaces such as museums and galleries (Becker 1982), and other events and sites that regiment the spheres of singularities (Karpik 2010). Note also that this type-token relation in the field of art is indeed only intelligible with respect to a “style ontology”—the cultural and legal notion that things such as styles exist and have specific properties.

One of the baptismal events of Western modernity’s style ontology consists of the claims made in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century by Bourgeois writers who attempted to secure the profits that can be accrued by defining an artwork as indexically iconic (or, more precisely, diagrammatic) of the artist’s unique creative faculty. They considered this faculty and its products inalienable possessions deserving of protection against plagiarism and piracy (and any form of intertextuality) that necessitates specific institutional arrangements such as the copyright (Rose 1993). For example, in 1793, Fichte argued that “Each individual has his own thought process, his own way of forming concepts and connecting them” and that “each writer must give his thoughts a certain form, and he can give them no other form than his own because he has no other. But neither can he be willing to hand over this *form* in making his thoughts public, for no one can *appropriate* his thoughts without thereby *altering their form*. This latter thus remains forever his exclusive property” (quoted in Woodmansee 1996, pp. 51–52). This style ontology has socialized (and, with the institution of the copyright, forced) modern individuals to reumatize the indexical



relation between tokens (artworks) and types (artists), i.e., to understand this relation as one of diagrammaticity (Wilf 2013a, pp. 196–200).

A closer look at the modern “style ontology,” however, reveals a crucial difference that distinguishes the field of modern art from that of the commodity brand. In the field of modern art, each token (e.g., each Monet painting) is typically expected to be different from other tokens of the same type (e.g., other Monet paintings) because of the emphasis Romanticism places on the creative as opposed to the imitative imagination (Taylor 1989, pp. 376–79), although tokens should all be in the same style (a “Monet”) and hence similar in some respect (Wilf 2013a). Thus, processes of singularization in the field of art take place both at the level of types (each painter is unique, corresponding to brand differentiation) and at the level of tokens of the same type (each painting by a specific painter is unique). Note that certain commodities outside the sphere of modern art also aspire to this token differentiation. For example, the most rarefied of wines manifest “total individuation . . . [that] gets down to the level of the individual bottle” (Silverstein 2013, p. 356), a level at which each bottle is transformed into “potable art” (Silverstein 2013, p. 350). However, the logics and forms of singularization and value-production at the level of tokens are also based on performativity and citationality. Value is produced at specific baptismal and performative events that are the subject of subsequent citations, resulting in indexical chains that people are socialized to recognize as indexing authenticity and aesthetic necessity.

If “in contemporary Western thought, we take it more or less for granted that things . . . represent the natural universe of commodities,” whereas “[people] represent the natural universe of individuation and singularization” (Kopytoff 1986, p. 64), then it is not surprising that the singularization of objects of creativity has often been accomplished by constructing such objects as having an indexically iconic relation to (preferably important and well-known) individuals (cf. Weiner 1992, Mauss 2000). In this sense, the careful presentation of an artwork’s past provenance in an art auction (Baudrillard 1981b) is not that different from “Kula speech”—the narration of the histories of circulation and past important owners of famous Kula shells (Munn 1992, p. 51). Indeed, such objects—e.g., specific Stradivari violins—are often given names and sobriquets that derive from the past owners of these objects and that function as “rigid designators” of singularity (Kripke 1980; Lee 1997, p. 82). Authenticating speech about such objects often involves characterological prose, which literally and ritually transforms these objects into individuals (and in turn individuals who can properly use this prose—e.g., critics and connoisseurs—into individuals of a very rarefied kind) (Becker 1982, pp. 150–53; Agha 2007; Carr 2010; Karpik 2010; Silverstein 2013, pp. 348–49). The singularity of an object of creativity is thus the product of emergent communicative events during which the history of the object is carefully entextualized, i.e., given coherence that detaches it from the object’s past messy circulation (Urban 1996). Such events of entextualization result in an inversion whereby an object is understood to have a distinguished biography and identity because of its singular value, whereas in reality, the object often comes to have this value because it has been imbued with such a biography and identity.

Note that artists, too, can become singular as a result of their carefully entextualized biographies. For example, jazz musicians can accrue singular value for having apprenticed with specific past jazz masters, distinguishing them from the host of musicians who lack such a pedigree but who instead received most of their education in academic programs. The latter are considered to be exchangeable with one another, whereas the former—because of the personal biographies that they and others carefully narrate in key institutional events and sites—are held to be singularly creative (Wilf 2014, pp. 83–114). Still, existing ideologies of creativity that function as metadiscourses whose referential content (e.g., that someone is creative and someone else is not) is relative to and indexes contexts of use, and that therefore have a regimenting function with respect to the communicative practices and modes of behavior of the individuals who are implicated in them,

always already restrict the degree to which an artist (and her artworks) can be singularized as creative (cf. Gal 2002). Particularly prevalent are the shifting designations of specific societies, groups within specific societies, and individuals within specific groups, as more creative than others with respect to specific domains or creative practices and according to race-, ethnicity-, and gender-based distinctions—designations that individuals internalize in the course of their socialization and that impact their behavior (Gioia 1988, Atkins 2001, Herzfeld 2003, Grazian 2005, Hirschkind 2006, Rustin & Tucker 2008, Agrama 2010, Ferguson 2010).

If most commodities are typically understood to be commensurable with and identical to many other commodities, an additional strategy of singularization of creativity's products, which is often mobilized in tandem with the previous ones, is restricted production and circulation. Restricted production (that corresponds to the production of a "limited edition" in the commodity sphere) takes place, for example, when photographers produce one print and then destroy the negative (Christopherson 1974) or delete the digital file in an attempt to singularize their artwork against the backdrop of its being produced using a technology that offers potentially infinite reproductions that represent the very antithesis of singularization or what Benjamin called "cult value" (Benjamin 1969). Restricted circulation, in turn, is the deliberate freezing or slowing down of the movement of an object for a period of time during which it can solidify its status as a singularity. One can think of restricted production and circulation as literally iconic of individuation in the sense that individuation consists of differentiation in an otherwise undifferentiated space-time grid populated by commodities that in theory (though never in practice) can be easily substituted for one another and move freely and quickly in every direction. Immobility thus becomes a qualisign of value (cf. Munn 1992, p. 17; Harkness 2013, pp. 14–15). At stake is not necessarily the barring of artworks from the sphere of commodities altogether, but rather their "intermittent forays into the commodity sphere"—for example, at art auctions that enable the artwork to fetch an exorbitant price that in fact solidifies it as priceless—"quickly followed by reentries into the closed sphere of singular 'art'" (Kopytoff 1986, p. 83; Baudrillard 1981b; Appadurai 1986, p. 14; Plattner 1998; Myers 2002; cf. Zelizer 1994). These and other conventional strategies of value-production are responsible for what retrospectively appears to be the *sui generis* singularity of an artwork.

## MYSTIFICATIONS OF CREATIVITY: THE NEOLIBERAL SEQUEL

Postindustrial modernity has often been identified with "the rise of the creative class" (Florida 2003), i.e., the emergence of a coterie of professionals defined by their creative production and manipulation of knowledge. Indeed, with the global shift to the so-called information economy, creativity has become a panacea that promises success in various domains and at various levels of social reality, and hence creativity has also become the focus of managerial theories, self-help books, and experts whose goal is to help individuals, firms, cities, and nation-states harness it as a resource for boosting productivity and creating value (Wilf 2015). Even MBA schools are now "offering training in the ineffable," i.e., the "'art' of management," which presumes "the need to cultivate talent and creativity and capitalize on the intuitive insights of managers" (Orta 2013, p. 695). If the Romantics had Homer and Shakespeare as their exemplars of genius (Abrams 1971, pp. 195–96), today "the Genius of [Steve] Jobs" fills that slot (Isaacson 2011).

This recent surge of creativity has been double-sided. On the one hand, organizational theorists and consultants of various kinds have argued that creativity can be formalized, institutionalized, and rationalized (Barrett 1998). In that respect, their efforts, which, to be sure, differ in their rigorousness, have had the potential to demystify creativity as a mysterious process from which only a few can benefit, even if these theorists and consultants have often emphasized the Romantic image of creativity as a backdrop against which their promise to unlock "the secrets of highly creative

people” by, for example, providing “an accessible, eight-step program to increasing anyone’s creative potential” could become more valuable (Sawyer 2013).

On the other hand, this ascendance of creativity cannot be set apart from the rise of a “neoliberal agency” that requires subjects to imagine and fashion their own future by engaging with risk and making decisions under conditions of increased uncertainty (Gershon 2011, pp. 539–43; Wilf 2015). The ability to imagine new possibilities and to embrace the unknown often maps onto Romantic tropes of creative agency, defined as the ability to imagine and realize futurities that transcend present constraints. New distinctions quickly emerge between individuals who excel in exercising this agency and those who do not, and these distinctions are often naturalized via characterological terms. For example, Wall Street investment bankers who occupy a position at the top of the social ladder and who thrive in an atmosphere of extreme precariousness because they can capitalize on their skills (which often result from a privileged background) characterize themselves in terms of “smartness, speed... flexibility, and global prowess” as opposed to “‘nine to five’ corporate workers whose steady, clock-watching routinization produces ‘stagnant’, ‘fat’, ‘lazy’, ‘dead wood’ that needs to be ‘pruned’” (Ho 2009, p. 252; see also Muehlebach & Shoshan 2012, p. 336). Against this backdrop, there is little surprise in the rise of self-help literature and experts purporting to help individuals who lack a “flexible” habitus learn to be in touch with and tap into their “instincts,” “feelings,” and “entrepreneurial DNA,” all of which are understood as built-in mechanisms that can guide neoliberal subjects in making decisions under conditions of increased uncertainty (Wilf 2011). These are all new forms of the same Romantic mystifications of creativity that (a) presume the existence of an autonomous inner nature as a compass, (b) make each individual responsible for being in touch with and following this compass, and (c) frame failure to be creative and to transcend present constraints as the result of one’s natural predisposition. Against this backdrop, anthropology, which provides essential tools for clarifying the social dimensions of the ethnographic context of “creativity,” has never been more relevant.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author is not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Susan Gal and Michael Silverstein for reading and commenting on this article when it was in its embryonic form, and an anonymous reviewer for feedback given when the article was almost fully formed. Barbara Yngvesson, Ilana Gershon, and Teri Silvio made helpful suggestions when I presented portions of this review at the 2013 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association.

## LITERATURE CITED

- Abrams MH. 1971. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press
- Agha A. 2007. *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Agrama HA. 2010. Ethics, tradition, authority: toward an anthropology of the fatwa. *Am. Ethnol.* 37(1):2–18
- Appadurai A. 1986. Introduction: commodities and the politics of value. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A Appadurai, pp. 3–63. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Atkins ET. 2001. *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press
- Bakhtin MM. 1982. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: Univ. Tex. Press

- Barrett FJ. 1998. Creativity and improvisation in jazz and organizations: implications for organizational learning. *Organ. Sci.* 9(5):605–22
- Bateson G. 1967. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. New York: Ballantine
- Baudrillard J. 1981a. Gesture and signature: semiurgy in contemporary art. In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, pp. 102–11. St. Louis, MO: Telos
- Baudrillard J. 1981b. The art auction: sign exchange and sumptuary value. In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, pp. 112–22. St. Louis, MO: Telos
- Bauman R. 1984. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland
- Bauman R, Briggs CL. 1990. Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 19:59–88
- Becker HS. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Benjamin W. 1969. The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. In *Illuminations*, ed. H Arendt, pp. 217–52. New York: Schocken
- Berliner P. 1994. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Black SP. 2008. Creativity and learning jazz: the practice of “listening.” *Mind Cult. Act.* 15(4):279–95
- Boas F. 1955. *Primitive Art*. London: Dover
- Bourdieu P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Bourdieu P. 1980. The aristocracy of culture. *Media, Cult. Soc.* 2:225–54
- Bourdieu P. 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press
- Briggs CL. 1988. *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexican Verbal Art*. Philadelphia: Univ. Pa. Press
- Briggs CL, Bauman R. 1992. Genre, intertextuality, and social power. *J. Linguist. Anthropol.* 2(2):131–72
- Bryant R. 2005. The soul danced into the body: nation and improvisation in Istanbul. *Am. Ethnol.* 32(2):222–38
- Carr ES. 2010. Enactments of expertise. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 39:17–32
- Christopherson RW. 1974. From folk art to fine art: a transformation in the meaning of photographic work. *J. Contemp. Ethnogr.* 3(2):123–57
- Chumley LH. 2013. Evaluation regimes and the qualia of quality. *Anthropol. Theory* 13(1/2):169–83
- Colapietro VM. 1988. *Peirce’s Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity*. Albany, NY: State Univ. N.Y. Press
- Comaroff JL, Comaroff J. 1992. Bodily reform as historical practice. In *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, pp. 69–91. Boulder, CO: Westview
- Coote J, Shelton A. 1994. *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon
- Csikszentmihalyi M. 1996. *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: Harper Collins
- Csordas TJ. 1997. *Language, Charisma, and Creativity: The Ritual Life of a Religious Movement*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Downey G. 2008. Scaffolding imitation in capoeira: physical education and enculturation in an Afro-Brazilian art. *Am. Anthropol.* 110(2):204–13
- Duranti A, Black SP. 2011. Language socialization and verbal improvisation. In *The Handbook of Language Socialization*, ed. A Duranti, E Ochs, BB Schieffelin, pp. 443–63. London: Blackwell
- Duranti A, Burrell K. 2004. Jazz improvisation: a search for inner harmonies and a unique self. *Ricerche Psicologia* 27(3):71–101
- Duranti A, Brenneis D, eds. 1986. Special Issue: The Audience as Co-Author. *Text Talk* 6(3)
- Efland AD. 1990. *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts*. New York: Teachers College Press
- Elkins J. 2009. *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art*. Washington, DC: New Academia
- Farnell B, Wood RN. 2011. Performing precision and the limits of observation. In *Redrawing Anthropology: Materials, Movements, Lines*, ed. T Ingold, pp. 91–114. Farnham, UK: Ashgate
- Ferguson JM. 2010. Another country is the past: Western cowboys, Lanna nostalgia, and bluegrass aesthetics as performed by professional musicians in Northern Thailand. *Am. Ethnol.* 37(2):227–40
- Finnegan R. 1988. *Literacy and Orality*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell
- Florida R. 2003. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic

- Gal S. 2002. A semiotics of the public/private distinction. *Differences* 13(1):77–95
- Gell A. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press
- Gershon I. 2011. Neoliberal agency. *Curr. Anthropol.* 52(4):537–55
- Gioia T. 1988. Jazz and the primitivist myth. In *The Imperfect Art: Reflections on Jazz and Modern Culture*, pp. 19–49. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press
- Glaskin K. 2010. On dreams, innovation and the emerging genre of the individual artist. *Anthropol. Forum* 20(3):251–67
- Goffman E. 1986. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Boston: Northeast. Univ. Press
- Goldstein C. 1996. *Teaching Art: Academies and Schools from Vasari to Albers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Goodwin C. 1994. Professional vision. *Am. Anthropol.* 96(3):606–33
- Grazian D. 2005. *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Hallam E, Ingold T, eds. 2007. *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Oxford, UK: Berg
- Hammer J. 2012. The greatest fake-art scam in history? *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 10. <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2012/10/wolfgang-beltracchi-helene-art-scam>
- Harkness N. 2013. Softer soju in South Korea. *Anthropol. Theory* 13(1/2):12–30
- Heath SB. 1986. What no bedtime story means: narrative skills at home and school. In *Language Socialization across Cultures*, ed. BB Schieffelin, E Ochs, pp. 97–124. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Herzfeld M. 2003. *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Hirsch E, Strathern M, eds. 2005. *Transactions and Creations: Property Debates and the Stimulus of Melanesia*. Oxford, UK: Berghahn
- Hirschkind C. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press
- Ho K. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press
- Howard KM. 2009. Breaking in and spinning out: repetition and decalibration in Thai children's play genres. *Lang. Soc.* 38(3):339–63
- Ingold T. 2007. *Lines: A Brief History*. London: Routledge
- Ingold T, Hallam E. 2007. Creativity and cultural improvisation: an introduction. See Hallam & Ingold 2007, pp. 1–24
- Isaacson W. 2011. The genius of Jobs. *New York Times*, Oct. 30, p. SR1
- Jones GM. 2011. *Trade of the Tricks: Inside the Magician's Craft*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Kant I. 2008 [1790]. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Karpik L. 2010. *Valuing the Unique: The Economics of Singularities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press
- Keane W. 1997. *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Kingsbury H. 2001. *Music, Talent, & Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press
- Knorr Cetina K. 1997. Sociality with objects: social relations in postsocial knowledge societies. *Theory, Cult. Soc.* 14(4):1–30
- Kockelman P. 2012. *Agent, Person, Subject, Self: A Theory of Ontology, Interaction, and Infrastructure*. Oxford, UK: Oxford Univ. Press
- Kondo DK. 1990. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Kopytoff I. 1986. The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A Appadurai, pp. 64–91. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Kripke SA. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press
- Lareau A. 2003. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Latour B, Woolgar S. 1986. *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press
- Lave J, Wenger E. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press

- Lavie S, Narayan K, Rosaldo R. 1993. Introduction: creativity in anthropology. In *Creativity/Antropology*, ed. S Lavie, K Narayan, R Rosaldo, pp. 1–8. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press
- Leach J. 2007. Creativity, subjectivity, and the dynamic of possessive individualism. See Hallam & Ingold 2007, pp. 99–116
- Lee B. 1997. *Talking Heads: Language, Metalanguage, and the Semiotics of Subjectivity*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press
- Lemke JL. 2000. Across the scales of time: artifacts, activities, and meanings in ecosocial systems. *Mind Cult. Act.* 7(4):273–90
- Lévi-Strauss C. 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Liep J. 2001. Introduction. In *Locating Cultural Creativity*, ed. J Liep, pp. 1–13. London: Pluto Press
- Lord AB. 2003. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press
- Mageo J. 2010. Race, gender, and ‘foreign exchange’ in Samoan performing arts. *Anthropol. Forum* 20(3):269–89
- Mahmood S. 2005. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press
- Malaby TM. 2002. Odds and ends: risk, mortality, and the politics of contingency. *Cult. Med. Psychiatry* 26(3):283–312
- Mall AS. 2007. Structure, innovation and agency in pattern construction: the *Kolam* of Southern India. See Hallam & Ingold 2007, pp. 55–78
- Manning P. 2010. The semiotics of brand. *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 39:33–49
- Marx K. 1978. Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. RC Tucker, pp. 66–125. New York: Norton
- Mauss M. 2000. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: Norton
- McDermott R. 2004. Materials for a confrontation with genius as a personal identity. *Ethos* 32(2):278–88
- McGurl M. 2011. *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press
- McLean S. 2009. Stories and cosmogonies: imagining creativity beyond “nature” and “culture.” *Cult. Anthropol.* 24(2):213–45
- Mills CW. 1940. Situated actions and vocabularies of motive. *Am. Soc. Rev.* 5(6):904–13
- Monson I. 1996. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Muehlebach A, Shoshan N. 2012. Introduction. *Anthropol. Q.* 85(2):317–44
- Munn ND. 1992. *The Fame of Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim Society (Papua New Guinea Society)*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press
- Murphy KM. 2005. Collaborative imagining: the interactive use of gestures, talk, and graphic representation in architectural practice. *Semiotica* 156:113–45
- Murray P. 1989. Poetic genius and its classical origins. In *Genius: The History of an Idea*, ed. P Murray, pp. 9–31. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell
- Myers FR. 2002. Introduction: the empire of things. In *The Empire of Things: Regimes of Value and Material Culture*, ed. FR Myers, pp. 3–64. Santa Fe, NM: Sch. Am. Res. Press
- Myers N, Dumit J. 2011. Haptic creativity and the mid-embodiments of experimental life. In *A Companion to the Anthropology of the Body and Embodiment*, ed. FE Mascia-Lees, pp. 239–61. New York: Wiley-Blackwell
- Nakamura F. 2007. Creating or performing words? Observations on contemporary Japanese calligraphy. See Hallam & Ingold 2007, pp. 79–98
- Nakassis CV. 2012. Brand, citationality, performativity. *Am. Anthropol.* 114(4):624–38
- Nettl B. 1995. *Heartland Excursions: Ethnomusicological Reflections on Schools of Music*. Urbana: Univ. Ill. Press
- Nettl B, Russell M, eds. 1998. *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Orta A. 2013. Managing the margins: MBA training, international business, and “the value chain of culture.” *Am. Ethnol.* 40(4):689–703
- Parmentier RJ. 1994. *Signs in Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press
- Peirce CS. 1955. Logic as semiotic: the theory of signs. In *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. J Buchler, pp. 98–119. London: Dover



- Plattner S. 1998. A most ingenious paradox: the market for contemporary fine art. *Am. Anthropol.* 100(2):482–93
- Polanyi M. 2009. *The Tacit Dimension*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Rogoff B. 1990. *Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press
- Rosaldo R. 1986. Ilongot hunting as story and experience. In *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. VW Turner, EM Bruner, pp. 97–138. Urbana: Univ. Ill. Press
- Rose M. 1993. *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press
- Rustin NT, Tucker S. 2008. *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press
- Sahlins MD. 1985. *Islands of History*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Sawyer KR. 1996. The semiotics of improvisation: the pragmatics of musical and verbal performance. *Semiotica* 108(3–4):269–306
- Sawyer KR. 2003. *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum
- Sawyer KR. 2013. *Zig Zag: The Surprising Path to Greater Creativity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Schieffelin EL. 1985. Performance and the cultural construction of reality. *Am. Ethnol.* 12(4):707–24
- Selfridge-Field E. 2001. Composition, combinatorics, and simulation: a historical and philosophical enquiry. In *Virtual Music: Computer Synthesis of Musical Style*, ed. D Cope, pp. 187–219. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Sherzer J. 2002. *Speech Play and Verbal Art*. Austin: Univ. Texas Press
- Silverstein M. 1993. Metapragmatic discourse and metapragmatic function. In *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. J Lucy, pp. 33–58. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Silverstein M. 1997. The Improvisational performance of culture in realtime discursive practice. In *Creativity in Performance*, ed. KR Sawyer, pp. 265–312. Greenwich, CT: Ablex
- Silverstein M. 2005. Axes of evals: token versus type interdiscursivity. *J. Linguist. Anthropol.* 15(1):6–22
- Silverstein M. 2013. Discourse and the no-thing-ness of culture. *Signs Soc.* 1(2):327–66
- Singerman H. 1999. *Art Subjects: Making Artists in the American University*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Solis G, Netti B, eds. 2009. *Musical Improvisation: Art, Education, and Society*. Urbana: Univ. Ill. Press
- Starrett G. 1995. The hexis of interpretation: Islam and the body in the Egyptian popular school. *Am. Ethnol.* 22(4):953–69
- Suchman LA. 2007. *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Taussig M. 1993. *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*. New York: Routledge
- Taylor C. 1989. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press
- Thomas K. 2012. Intellectual property law and the ethics of imitation in Guatemala. *Anthropol. Q.* 85(3):758–815
- Turner V. 1967. Betwixt and between: the liminal period in rites of passage. In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, pp. 93–111. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press
- Turner V. 1979. Variations on a theme of liminality. In *Secular Ritual*, ed. SF Moore, B Myerhoff, pp. 36–52. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum
- Urban G. 1996. Entextualization, replication, and power. In *Natural Histories of Discourse*, ed. M Silverstein, G Urban, pp. 21–44. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Vann EF. 2006. The limits of authenticity in Vietnamese consumer markets. *Am. Anthropol.* 108(2):286–96
- Wagner R. 1981. *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Weber M. 1978. Charisma and its transformations. In *Economy and Society*, pp. 1111–57. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Weiner AB. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*. Berkeley: Univ. Calif. Press
- Wilf E. 2010. Swinging within the Iron Cage: modernity, creativity, and embodied practice in American postsecondary jazz education. *Am. Ethnol.* 37(3):563–82
- Wilf E. 2011. Sincerity versus self-expression: modern creative agency and the materiality of semiotic forms. *Cult. Anthropol.* 26(3):462–84
- Wilf E. 2012. Rituals of creativity: tradition, modernity, and the “acoustic unconscious” in a U.S. collegiate jazz music program. *Am. Anthropol.* 114(1):32–44

- Wilf E. 2013a. From media technologies that reproduce Seconds to media technologies that reproduce Thirds: a Peircean perspective on stylistic fidelity and style-reproducing computerized algorithms. *Signs Soc.* 2(1):185–211
- Wilf E. 2013b. Sociable robots, jazz music, and divination: contingency as a cultural resource for negotiating problems of intentionality. *Am. Ethnol.* 40(4):605–18
- Wilf E. 2013c. Streamlining the muse: creative agency and the reconfiguration of charismatic education as professional training in Israeli poetry writing workshops. *Ethos* 41(2):127–49
- Wilf E. 2013d. Toward an anthropology of computer-mediated, algorithmic forms of sociality. *Curr. Anthropol.* 54(6):716–39
- Wilf E. 2014. *School for Cool: The Academic Jazz Program and the Paradox of Institutionalized Creativity*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Wilf E. 2015. The ‘cool’ organization man: incorporating uncertainty from jazz music into the business world. In *Modes of Uncertainty: Anthropological Cases*, ed. P Rabinow, L Samimian-Darash. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press
- Willis P. 1981. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press
- Woodmansee M. 1996. Genius and the copyright. In *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics*, pp. 35–56. New York: Columbia Univ. Press
- Wortham SEF. 2005. *Learning Identity: The Joint Emergence of Social Identification and Academic Learning*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Young E. 1759. *Conjectures on Original Composition*. London: Miller
- Zelizer VA. 1994. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press