

## **The Return of the Native**

(With apologies to Thomas Hardy)

There's an ironic Spanish witticism and mildly malicious inquiry that goes something like this: "*Qué tal Fulano. No le he visto hace tiempo. Pues ¡Fatál! Va por su homenaje*" which translates roughly: How is so and so, I haven't seen him in a long time. "Fatal, Terrible. He's going to his farewell dinner! That's a little like I feel - and perhaps most of us feel - on these occasions... some degree of ambivalence about this particular rite of passage. We appreciate the effort made to celebrate the moment. But we wish we didn't have to be reminded of "Time's Swift Chariot" and of "moving on." And like any ambivalence, that's a feeling that is probably overdetermined and not fully accessible. For one thing, though most of you may not know this, and anyone suffering from nominal realism will not believe it, I am the most native of all members of this Department. I was born in Chicago, one month before Marshall (we were both holiday babies. He was born on Christmas Day in 1930, for obvious reasons, and I was born on Thanksgiving Day, for unknown reasons). He went on to bring us a new dispensation in anthropology. My subsequent interest in the Play of Tropes and the ironies of everyday life may have been a response to the Puritan sobrieties (and the ironies -- talk to the Indians) of the original Thanksgiving. I lived as a baby first in South Shore, 79th and the Lake, and then (in 1932-33) in Hyde Park itself in a still-standing apartment on 5545 South Kimbark, Apt 1 south. Just a few blocks away. I lived there more than a year-and-a-half until the Depression moved my father into the Hyde Park "Y" and farmed my mother and me out to my maternal relatives in Spoon River country, Henry County, in Western Illinois. Later I returned from Spoon River to Oak Park, and I am happy to have with me here tonight my friendly grade school rival, Junie Sinson, an eminent Chicago lawyer, grade school and high school companion, along with his wife Dorothy, also of Oak Park High School's great classes of 1948-1949. Anyway, my lamented friend Milton Singer once kindly asked me in his avuncular way (he came here in 1939 at the invitation of Robert Redfield) how I liked Hyde Park. I asked him right back: "Milton, how do you like Hyde Park? I arrived here seven years before you did!"

So it was obvious I was destined to return home from the East Coast where I taught for over 25 years. But it wasn't an easy decision. It is too bad the Guilty Parties of my move back home here - Marshall and Jean and John - aren't here to put me out to pasture and take some of the blame. They are doing the Chicago Thing in two distinguished lecture series in Paris and Frankfurt. Marshall first suggested a move at Princeton the week that he gave the Captain Cook lecture that provoked Obeyesekere (and thereby hangs one of the most interesting debates of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century anthropology), then kept up the pressure later in Fez, Morocco at the 10th Wenner Gren Conference. Jean and John, those busy, busy people, actually came out to Midway airport to meet me when I flew in for the obligatory visit. Jean in her intense way kept me steadily engaged in conversation all throughout our return along Garfield Boulevard, so I never noticed the changes that had taken place in Hyde Park's surrounding neighborhood in those twenty-five years since my departure for the East. Two others who shanghaied me, Ray Fogelson and Nancy Munn, both of whom I have known since the sixties (Ray actually came out to Princeton for a term in 1984 as I recall to scout me out) are here to take their lumps, or project a few on me, for their sins. Ray Smith should also take his lumps, for he was the Chair who actually negotiated my coming.

"Has that move been a good one?" one can ask? - from the pristine, patrician bucolia of Princeton to the Hurly Burly of Chicago, the City of the Big Shoulders, the University of the Great Books and the Greater Ideas about them. It's always a parlous thing to move when one is fifty five years old as I was. It's harder to avoid becoming an odd fella among good fellas. It's for you all to judge. At least you are not giving Paul and me silver watches. But anyone who has taught here any length of time is bound to be grateful for the great advantage that Chicago has over any other Department of Anthropology I have ever taught at or know of. And that's true in two ways. First, if we can take Geertz's view that culture is out there and not in here, there is always so much in the culture of ideas out there in discussion and debate at Chicago, nurtured by our Monday lunches and our Monday Afternoon seminars and our many, many proposal and dissertation hearings, the fruitful debates, just to give two instances from my perspective, between poetics and pragmatics and between synchronics and diachronics

in ethnography. And secondly, of course, there is the very high quality and contributions of our students over the many years, students like Dale Pesmen and David Sutton, who eventually return to us as the fruits of our labor such invaluable books as I hold here in my hands, books from which we in turn learn so much as we do from "**Memories Cast in Stone**," and "**Russia and Soul**." Though they say, or used to say in my heyday, that you "can't go home again," coming home to such a flourishing intellectual atmosphere and to be among such students as we have here steadily over the years has made, for me, the coming-home to Hyde Park one of the best decisions I ever made. Thank you!