

Do you hear me, Coyote?

I remember my first encounter with Roy Wagner's work. It was at the University of Manchester shortly after I joined the faculty in 2003. *An anthropology of the subject* had been published a couple of years earlier and some of us decided it would be nice to hold a group discussion on the book (Wagner 2001). We met weekly over a term. I have a wonderful memory of those days, a vibrant gathering of minds, working our way through a difficult but inspiring text, spreading out its metaphors and aphorisms, failing at every explanation, yet feeling all the more energised for it. Our ritual weekly meetings effected an exhilarating transposition of means and ends: we met to study *An anthropology of the subject* and ended up turning anthropology (the dynamics of our department) into its own subject form. Roy would have been proud of our collective accomplishment at such a subject–object shift.

Roy's lifelong work was very much focused on the study of such shifts: how the study and containment of culture is but an analogy of its very own invention – how we study a book by inventing its studiousness. Indeed few anthropologists have understood with Roy's profundity and originality the extent to which anthropology itself is born from such analogical flows: metaphorisation, obviation, holography, subject–object shifts. His intellectual generosity was endless, the perspective of one analogy always reciprocated by the perspective of the next – until we get, indeed, to 'The reciprocity of perspectives'.

The energy of anthropological description has always been a little bit of a mystery, for one is never quite sure whether it is the energies of metaphor or the metaphors of energy that are implicated in the provision of a form to description. With Roy, however, there was never any doubt: whichever side of this chiasmatic difference one falls into, his was always the side with a surplus of energy.

Do you hear me, Coyote?
We hear you, boss.

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Reference

Wagner, R. 2001. *An anthropology of the subject*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Reversals, reciprocity and fun

I discovered *The invention of culture* (Wagner 1975) early in my studies. I read it several times, and for a while it felt like on one reading it made sense and on the next I