

CLIFFORD GEERTZ AS A CULTURAL SYSTEM: A Review Article

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"All this drastic clarity - luminous, dazzling, stunning...blinding" (Geertz 1988:68).

Clifford Geertz is writing himself into a cultural system. With his recent volume *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* he seems to demand entry into the sacred canon of the discipline. From the double-barrelled initials on the front cover to the scatter-gun last pages of the index (from "aestheticism" to "zuni" (153-157)), this volume, with military precision, ranks the name of one author above all contemporaries on the parade-ground which is the history of ethnography. As the trumpeted end to an aggressively successful campaign, *Works and Lives* stands as the fitting monument, and the crowning glory, of a distinguished and honoured career. All hail to the General.

Forgive me for overstretching these metaphors, it may seem that this is trivial, a parody - but there has been so much of it of late - the generality of Geertz's book signals a strange cooling off after recent sophisticated debates over the textuality of anthropology. The tactics and strategies enlisted by critics to engage with texts are perhaps now more elaborate, sometimes better camouflaged - but they are becoming ever more contentious, so why not admit that a sniper attack on Geertz is an overt broadside? I charge that this book stands at an obsolete point on the battle-field that is this issue; 'surplus' might be a good description... In close scrutiny of ethnographic writing it becomes dangerously easy to exaggerate the importance of the words an author uses to describe some thing or other. Sniping at Clifford Geertz's own metaphors may bring some criticisms, yet at the same time such a line of attack follows that author's boys-own commandment to examine carefully the language of ethnography and to become more specific in our readings.

The language Geertz uses must tell us something about the kind of anthropology he imagines, and a cursory examination of simply what is collected into his first chapter seems a useful start. He writes on page one: "The illusion that ethnography is a matter of sorting strange and irregular facts into familiar and orderly categories...has long since been exploded"(1). It seems ironic, then, that so many strange and irregular entities populate his first chapter. Exploded across the ordered narrative of the work is a menagerie of metaphors which collect all manner of images into the text. Self-absorbed hypochondriacs and library loungers(1), a lady sawn in half(2), unreliable narrators(3), Kings(3), Malinowski in ruins(4), Bateson, Mead, Lévi-Strauss(4), demented Balinese(4), Nuer dogmas(4), German Barons(5), Zande who may no longer be themselves(5), Pacific argonauts(5), God(6), an elephant whose different parts are held in the hands of different minds!(6), Foucault, Mallarme(7), "a North African who talks always of his mother's brother, the horse, but never his father, the donkey"(8), physicists, novelists, pilgrims and puppets(10), cartographers with identity problems(10), old chiefs(13), cannibals - native and anthropological ones (12-14), dead Greeks, but not Plato and Aristotle(15), Freud, Marx, Barthes and witchdoctors(18),

eclipses, schools of fish and bastards(20), Mandarins, Poles, Dons and Cassowaries(21), cattle(22), phantasms, not just phantoms(22), sorcerers and samurai(23), and "invisible needles in invisible haystacks"(24). This is only just over two strange items per page in twenty-four pages and is not yet an exhaustive list - the point being to raise the question of the scope, and perhaps the focus, of the anthropological imagination. Looked at out of its narrative context this list may seem odd, but surely the issue of how this haphazard universalism operates as a claim for authority is relevant. The broad sweep of Geertz's intellect tends towards an encompassing of the world.

A more specific instance of the same question might be drawn around two other curiosities in the first chapter. Geertz drops in two italicised foreign words: "*vraisemblance*" and "*Wahrscheinlichkeit*"(3), while discussing the ways in which anthropological texts convince. We might also consider how these French and German significations of scholarly cosmopolitanism work to favour the authority of the author in the eyes of the readers.

Discussions of ethnographic writing have become increasingly self-reflexive, so when Geertz says that the "crucial peculiarities of ethnographic writing are...so fully in view as to escape notice"(5) should not he consider his own experience of his own text as an example within this domain. Unfortunately we do not get any consideration of how the marks of "incorrigible assertion", in which, in "fact", much of anthropological writing consists(5), might be found in *Works and Lives* itself. Of course the "incorrigible" is so difficult to correct once it becomes "fact", but are assertions of fact the most revealing items? Perhaps the first assertion that should corrode, given Geertz's reading of Foucault's and Barthes' essays on the death of the author, is the subtitle of this volume. How significant is the front cover of a text that raises the question of authorship under the name of a popular author? The correspondence of the large white script banner "Clifford Geertz" with the smaller, also white, subtitle "The Anthropologist as Author" is not necessarily coincidental. The full name of Geertz is larger, and far brighter, than the book's grey title, but most stunning of all are the two purple initials, one dark, one light, which dominate the bottom half of this five colour cover. Has Geertz control over the graphics which appear on his covers? The assertive four inch C.G. must be a very subtle barb intended to highlight, in full unashamed view, the paradox of the anthropological author as author discussing the death of authorship. This is another way of asserting, with dead-pan irony, that the author "is still very much alive"(6), even in the (book) face of death.

These initials initiate C.G. into good company; the book sets out to discuss a series of other great double-initialled initiates - E.P., and L-S., (Evans- Pritchard and Lévi-Strauss). But in case the argument that Geertz is in part asserting his identity as anthropological author is not carried at this (subliminal? initial?) stage, the list of greatest anthropological authors of all time that Geertz provides could be seen under the rubric of appropriation. The prestige of those with whom you engage is something to be appropriated and so perhaps the rhetorical implication of Geertz's list is that his name should be appended to the canon. It is not that Geertz is an unimportant writer, the point is only to see the ways that style, argument, the small technologies or techniques such as lists and covers, etc., can, even unintentionally, support self-projections such as this. Projections of a very specific authorial identity alongside the deities of the anthropological culture system - no death of authorships here. Geertz can identify such processes of appropriation and rhetorical invention when they occur with

others, and his point about the adjectivisation of last names is a good example. This moment allows him to borrow a Parsonian joke about Benedictine anthropology, although it is a joke at the expense of the only woman in the list, the others are Boas, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Murdock, Evans-Pritchard, Griaule, and Lévi-Strauss. Perhaps the reason that Geertz doesn't show any self-consciousness about whether this reification is happening to him, even in his own work, is that it is still a little too hard to twist the tongue around "Geertzian".

What should be asked in all of this is how certain names and certain authors get onto the 'list'. How is the canon fashioned? Geertz addressed this when he writes: "we listen to some voices and ignore others"(6). It is an obvious point, and it is not clear why he goes on, without providing details, to say that it would be a scandal if some interpretations were listened to more carefully because of "prejudice or political desire"(6). Why would Geertz want to silence the political dimension of ethnographic reading? (And he dismisses this dimension by association too, he places whim and habit alongside political exclusions of "some voices"(6)). The creation of the canon is not simply a matter of good, evocative, stylistically pleasant writing triumphing over the bad, sloppy examples. There is more 'politics of taste' than has been acknowledged here; is it really so scandalous to recognise the politics of prose? Geertz himself has pointed out that anthropology is not innocent, so in his own terms we should be alert to the subtle impacts of political desires on our readings. Never more so than when reading Geertz.

One way to awaken an awareness of the significance of such reading is to ask why such and such comes to be quoted in commentaries in the first place? Why are some texts and not others considered important, singled out, reinscribed through criticism? It is not just a matter of counting how many lines of a text are quotations, however, it is interesting to find a page and a half slab quote of Raymond Firth only eleven pages into Geertz's book. Geertz stresses the importance of beginnings and prefaces while beginning with someone else's beginning. Resorting to one of the most vivid tropical island arrival scenes in the literature, he has skipped the two 'introductions', one of them by Malinowski, to Firth's *We, the Tikopia*, and says that "the book itself"(11) begins with the first chapter. Perhaps it is a prejudicial and political scandal to suggest that things 'about' a book can be gleaned from covers, introductions and prefaces? Isn't it strange that Geertz is alert to the rhetorical imagery in his quoted introduction from Firth, but never turns his gaze on the privileged place of certain names in his own text?

"If anthropologists were to stop reporting how things are done in Africa and Polynesia", Geertz writes, "if they were instead to spend their time trying to find double plots in Alfred Kroeber or unreliable narrators in Max Gluckman...matters would indeed be in a *parlous* state"(2-3, my emphasis). How cunning is Geertz? He characterises anthropology under the dubious framework, which admittedly is not completely dead, of Europeans writing about Africans and Polynesians - a one-way discourse. It should be no surprise that later he is able to talk about the crisis of anthropology; this kind of anthropology should be in crisis, has been for a long time. The talk of looking for double plots and unreliable narrators is also something of a caricature, one that makes it easy to dismiss anything that seems uncomfortably literary. This double move opens up a middle path - so Geertz will take the safe ground, the non-*parlous* mainstream way.

Parlous has a first meaning of peril or danger, and an anthropology which gave up its right to write about Africans and Polynesians might be in danger of having to extend this to giving up anthropology. Since there is space for a middle path this is not what

Geertz advocates, but there is a second, although obsolete, meaning of parlous, and that is shrewd or clever. Would an anthropology which avoided, but did not discontinue, the imperialist project of describing others, and which discussed, but did not recommend, turning in on its own double plots, not be a very shrewd anthropology? Geertz doesn't fill in the space, and it might not be stretching this contrived space too far to link parlous with parley - talk, dialogue, discussion, truce - or to parlour - a special room for discussion, which could be the academy, the museum, the book or journal review, or the hall in which the great anthropologists of Geertz's list might assemble. That Geertz does not consciously elaborate upon this space, although it is 'obviously' going to be 'free' of prejudice and political desire, filled with dialogues between 'equals', etc., indicates something of its pallid ivory tone.

The charmed circle which is here described also (inevitably) includes some omissions and vacancies. This again can be explored by looking to quotation: who is quoted, and who is not quoted, how books and journals circulate in certain privileged zones. Perhaps it is now time for anthropologists to theorise more institutional aspects of writing ethnographic texts. Not only are the discovery of relevant materials, the whims of library acquisitions, the systems of recommendation and review important effects, but also the series of delays that postpone all works. Of significance in the shaping of anthropological 'knowledge' here are the delays between writing, first, second, and later drafts, lecturing, publisher's acceptance, referee's review, rewriting, proofing, printing and publication, reviews in journals - all applicable to Geertz's book, but also to every book and article he has read. To take *Works and Lives*, however, as an example: when was it written? How many years have passed since it was conceived? How many drafts? When was the last draft and how many changes or additions were made? What weight should be placed on the first sentence of the preface: "The first four chapters of this volume were given, in somewhat different form...in the Spring of 1983"(v)? On how different a form?

It is not enough to point to everything that has been written in, say, the last two years that Geertz could not possibly have included, even in his footnotes (although much of the recent 'crisis' literature has probably been inspired by reading his other works or listening to the original lectures, and the subsequent world tour, with, of course, some of the recent contributions going well beyond anything he has ever thought). Nor should too much store be set beside a list of the conspicuously absent crucial works published well before the last draft went to the printer (although the names of Said, Spivak, Derrida, Deleuze, Bakhtin, Bhabha, Baudrillard are significant, to mention just a few). The point is that this book of Geertz's, even accounting for the technological delays between conception and fruition, seems somehow out of date. Is it the effect of the authors he has chosen to comment upon all being dead - or at least he writes as if they were dead, their work complete, whole and sealed, even Lévi-Strauss seems to have decayed a little? Or is it that advanced anthropology seminars are strictly tied to the traditional canon and its narrow curricular, inadequate for a contemporary scene?

It is certainly no big deal for Geertz to tell us that "Explicit representations of authorial presence tend to be relegated, like other embarrassments, to prefaces, notes and appendixes"(16). The first chapter of *Works and Lives* lives up to this commonplace, none of the conventions are disrupted, the stage is set in the same old ways, the author takes his place among the delegated and venerated.

"less ambiguous strategies"(27)

When Geertz comes to examine Lévi-Strauss the chapter title is 'The World in a Text', the subtitle being 'How to read *Tristes Tropiques*'. Both these phrases indicate a tendency to totalise and simplify for specific purposes. It just may be possible that the world does not fit into a text and that there are more ways to read a book than Geertz can imagine. With this in mind, the following is one way, among many, to read Geertz's, rather superficial, chapter on the 'world' of Lévi-Strauss.

Geertz himself prefers, he claims, "less ambiguous strategies"(27) than those of structuralism, although ambiguity in writing is often in the eye of the beholder. Claims to humble non-ambiguity, that is, claims to clarity, also work as superiority claims within explicitly realist discourses. Humility may be also a pose. It is not ambiguous, it must be admitted, that Geertz insists upon pointing out his difference from Lévi-Strauss, so much so that the venom of his quick refusals might seem to hide something more than scholarly or intellectual criticism. No-one can deny that academic debates often involve an emotional undercurrent, but to move from irony and comparison with lost actors, to admitted skepticism and "outright hostility"(27), as well as proclaiming lack of attraction - although he is (ambiguously) "appreciative and unconverted"(27) - in just four paragraphs is much more than is needed to make the point that Lévi-Strauss's "odd facts and even odder explanations"(26) offer a "peculiarly illuminating"(27) case against separating what is said in a text from how it is said.

Geertz's hostility to Lévi-Strauss should lead us to query his choice of *Tristes Tropiques* as representative text for analysis. Is it a convenient or strategic target? Geertz calls *Tristes Tropiques* (T.T.) the "finest of his texts", and "the one that most illuminates the whole of his work"(27). This 1955 text will 'illuminate' all the other work, even though the distinction between text and work has been problematised. The idea of illuminating the whole of, for example, structural anthropology, or the two thousand and more pages of the 'Introduction to a Science of Mythology' written up to twenty years later, is not only asking too much of a slim volume described as 'non-theoretical', but also devalues the contents of all Lévi-Strauss's other works. Geertz later writes that *Mythologiques* is just an "enormous footnote"(30) to the essay 'The Structural Study of Myth', which must strike attentive readers of those four volumes as absurd. Similarly, *Tristes Tropiques* is not the digest version of structuralism, just as recognising that Lévi-Strauss is "difficult to read"(27) does not mean that we should not attempt to do so. There is a grave danger of simplifying things for the sake of the coherence of a single chapter.

C.G. will make L-S's T.T. clear for us. He writes that "the most immediate value of such a 'lit-crit' approach to Lévi-Strauss is that he is very difficult to read"(27). The problem of difficulty in anthropology deserves further consideration, it raises the question of clarity for readers, who should the text be addressed to, at what level, in whose terms? Is 'difficulty' the motive for commentary? What is lost in the secondary explication? How honest - fidelity to some presumed original - will a commentary be? Isn't all anthropology a commentary of some kind, parasitic, always interpretive and so never original? How difficult is that? Is anthropology, especially in the form of *Tristes Tropiques*, about knowledge in some ultimate sense, or is it an exercise in self-clarification? Would a reduction/commentary distil the right essence of that? How? For whom? What are the motives of books like this one by Geertz? Books on books? More and more words.

If Lèvi-Strauss is "difficult not just in the recognised sense that his by now famous rain-forest prose - dripping with steamy metaphors, overgrown with luxuriant images, and flowered with extravagant puns"(27-8), he is more difficult because "his books look like ordinary anthropological works, even at times like rather old-fashioned ones"(28). If Geertz wants to suggest Lèvi- Strauss is out of date in some way, is old-fashioned, it is to forget his most recently formulated (borrowed) insight; that you can not separate what a text says from how it says it. For Geertz to distinguish conventional anthropology books from the steamy tropes that inhabit them is one thing, but to introduce this questionable distinction with what must be the most heavily cultivated prose (that rain-forest sentence as subtle as a four inch leech), and then to write a phrase such as: "stylistic extravagances aside"(28), is an amazing self-deception.

After discussing Lèvi-Stauss' style for page after page, Geertz will offer a footnote which deserves to be elevated from the margin of the book in its perfection as an example of the opposite of, and the impossibility of, the dismissal "stylistic extravagances aside":

Though it is of course, part of my argument (the heart of it, in fact) that the relation between the *ars intelligendi*, the art of understanding, and the *ars explicandi*, the art of presentation, is so intimate in anthropology as to render them at base inseparable(46n).

Geertz does not discuss what Lèvi-Strauss text 'understands' at the same time as he discusses its style, and this appears to contradict his - Latin, scholarly and authoritative - understanding of the issue. His understanding does not extend to a self-criticism of the way this separation has already been set up in his reading of *Tristes Tropiques*, and it would not be difficult to consider this footnote, and therefore the comments earlier in the text linking style and meaning, as additions at the stage of one of the late drafts of *Works and Lives*. Not all footnotes are after-thoughts, however; sometimes there are genuine contradictions.

What is it about self-consciousness that raises the ire of so many writers? Geertz writes that "Were (Lèvi-Strauss) any more self-conscious he would transport to a higher plane"(28). To transport to a higher plane, in one sense of transport, is to die; a fate that has not yet overcome Lèvi-Strauss, although other senses of transportation, say of meanings, might be useful for understanding his work. Geertz, however, is critical of Lèvi-Strauss's self-referential manner in *Tristes Tropiques* in a way that sits strangely alongside the self-referentiality of some of Geertz's own works. Consider the 'I arrived, malarial and diffident' beginning of Geertz's essay on Balinese cockfighting with the 'I hate travelling' introduction of *Tristes Tropiques* - what is so different? Almost a vendetta against anthropology's number one writer has Geertz attacking Lèvi-Strauss with such hostility in at least three book review showdowns: 'The Cerebral Savage' review of *The Savage Mind*, 'The Uses of Diversity' review of *The View From Afar* and now this 'World in a Text' review of *Tristes Tropiques*.

Geertz claims to read *Tristes Tropiques* anew, to provide an "understand"(29) reading, and the idea of renewed readings of the canonical texts of any discipline, while not exactly a new idea, must still be applauded. The danger would be the case were any particular new reading offered itself as a cumulative or definitive one. Geertz finds *Tristes Tropiques* to be five kinds of text at once(33), which is where he sees his reading departing from the two most common approaches to Lèvi-Strauss's work extant. The two approaches he dismisses so easily are quite creatively caricatured out of the way.

The first is plodding linear historical development, which is smashed on account of Lévi-Strauss's having so often gone back to old themes in his work, for not having conventional structures in his "individual books (which) do not march directionally through their subjects like proper (!) monographs, beginning at the beginning and ending at the end, but circle, hovering, around them like avian meditations, remote and brooding"(31). (This last passage might give the impression that Geertz is afraid of Lévi-Strauss in the form of some dark and evil monstrous nightmare).

The second approach has structuralism as a body of thought or a method somehow fixed outside of context and time, focusing upon various matters with what Geertz condemns as "Enlightenment encyclopedism (from Arawak to Zapotec)"(31). Geertz's own index spreads just a little further than this (from aestheticism to Zuni) even as he dismisses such work as a "melange of aestheticism"(31), but even where Geertz is taking stock of attempts to understand the whole of Lévi-Strauss's production, it is clear that both kinds of analysis are suitable registers in which to place what he himself will do with *Tristes Tropiques*, even as he claims that it does not 'fit' in one or the other camp(32). In the first place, to see the volume as the kernel from which the whole has developed presumes a notion of that whole as a development, and therefore a history - he makes much of his footnote discovery that passages from 1942 papers are "incorporated"(37n) into the 1955 text, what is it about self-quotation that could destroy historicity? - and second, to see the volume as the kernel - the myth of myths, perhaps - simultaneously presumes an unchanging structuralist position operating behind all the individual, hovering and brooding expressions. For Geertz to be able to follow both paths at once is either brilliant or savagely confused.

Keys, centres, pivots, tacking, and "deeper penetration as one strips away the layers"(33) (memories of the turtle anecdote from *The Interpretation of Cultures*) cannot justify Geertz's reading of Lévi-Strauss as anything less than partial, and while he must accept this, it is partial in the sense of underdeveloped, inadequate, impotent. Let him not be prevented from presenting a reading because of this, but acknowledge that, despite the 'how to read' assertion of the subtitle, this is no final, true, right, or 'best yet', better or worse reading. The question of why one reading gets privileged over another leads to other, political, questions which might be raised about the processes and fortunes of reviews?

Tristes Tropiques is a travelogue, ethnography, philosophy, indictment of the West, and symbolist literary masterpiece. It is, we are informed, somehow several texts "all jammed together to produce...well, we shall come back to what is produced later"(33). In this manner Geertz again separates style and content and goes on to further separate out five strands of the text. Geertz could not be suggesting that there are really five books in one, it is just his 'tribute' to Lévi-Strauss that it is necessary to simplify the narrative into five easier pieces. Yet to write as Geertz does about Lévi-Strauss's style, call it Symbolist or whatever, and to portray his position, if only in part, as a critique of European expansionism merely on "aesthetic grounds"(44) is inadequate. The volume is not just a Symbolist-philosophic-ethnographic-travelogue, just as its anti-expansionism is not just aesthetic. This revisionist commentary allows Anthropology to get off too easily; the disciplinary links of scholarship and institutional power are becoming clear in *Tristes Tropiques*, Geertz tries to smudge this political aspect of the book under the rubric of (his romanticised idea of the French) aesthetics.

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Perhaps the Symbolist reading was given too much weight by Geertz's junior colleague, Boon, in an extraordinary book *From Symbolism to Structuralism*, but I don't think that Boon set out to exhaust the possible readings of *Tristes Tropiques*. In any case, Geertz offers no opportunity, beyond reference to Boon, for readers to decide the issue. This is especially so where Geertz writes that Lévi-Strauss was "concerned to place himself and his text (what distinction?) in the literary tradition established by Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and...especially Proust"(42). How can this be "especially Proust" when Geertz admits that "as far as I can discover, he never mentions him in *Tristes Tropiques*"(42)? Just how can Geertz tell "from what he writes" and from "the way he writes"(42)? How does Geertz know? He should tell us. And how do we know, from the way Geertz writes, that he, himself, has read Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, and especially Proust, in any form except between the covers of Boon's book? What are the signs in writing that identify such readings? A concern to place oneself in a literary tradition, apart from the possibility that it may be the "adoption" of a tradition, always involves intentions, motivations, etc., on the part of an author which cannot easily be inferred from "the way he writes".

A part of Geertz's frustration, if it is that, with Lévi-Strauss's work, may have to do with the central theme of Geertz's book. Just how much 'being-there' did Lévi-Strauss do? Does Geertz only select *Tristes Tropiques* as 'key' over all the other works because it is the one which has some details of that anthropological status marker 'fieldwork'? Fieldwork and ethnography is not all that anthropology is, but if the issue is central to Geertz's motivation to write on *Tristes Tropiques* it is unfortunate that he does not treat the problem in more depth. An important discussion of the problem of understanding otherness, and its ethical implication for the discipline of anthropology, is characterised as a "barren, defeated end" of a quest, where the "ultimate savages" are "unreachable"(47). Lévi-Strauss, of course, did 'reach' a village of the Tupi-Kawahib, and this is not the 'end' of the book. It is the moment of destruction of otherness that Lévi-Strauss considers here, something to which Geertz sometimes seems insensitive. The ellipsis in his account suggests as much. (It is also surprising - but is it? - that Derrida's 1967 discussion of *Tristes Tropiques* is never mentioned, given its importance on this issue).

Geertz might argue, however, that he has read *Tristes Tropiques* carefully (in French and in two English translations(34n)). But what does careful reading mean? What is a good or a bad reading? How closely should, or can, Geertz read? He has spent considerable effort finding terms in which to express his opinion of Lévi-Strauss's writing style. The sheer versatility of this style could be indicated, to a point close to the surreal, if a list of Geertz's descriptive terms were compiled. Typologies of writing styles might always be premature because they could foreclose upon new possibilities, but Geertz's terms for Lévi-Strauss might be read to begin to form the basis for, an admittedly encyclopedic, compendium. Alternatively, this could pose as concrete poetry. Geertz calls Lévi-Strauss's writing:

rhetorical, odd, new, a cycle of terms(26), ambiguous, Barthesian, "with world making intent"(27), "rain-forest prose - dripping with steamy metaphors, overgrown with luxuriant images, and flowered with extravagant puns"(27-8), self-referential(28), strategic(29), achronic(30), remote and brooding, aesthetic, encyclopedic(31), centrifugal, multiplex(32), kaleidoscopic, formalist - like an "ideal-typical Russian/Czech formalist poem"(33), manifold(33), crude(34), vulgar(35), controversial, overfocused, shrill and "a bit thick"(36), flam-

boyant(38), reformist, devastatingly bitter(39) emphatic(41) and with syntactic, metonymic jostling(44), also, aloof, closed, cold, airless and cerebral(48) literary absolutism(48).

It is ironically appropriate to reassemble Geertz's language as a tribute to the diversity of Lévi-Strauss's text.

"it is necessary to quote a fair patch of the stuff"(49)

Who needs to do fieldwork anyway? Is the message of 'being there' - the critique of being there as being 'mere' rhetorical persuasion - a proposal for abandoning fieldwork? A call back to the armchair, for better reading-work, or a call for more, or better, fieldwork?

Frustrations about position in a world-wide discipline for Geertz begin to show in his attempts to "mimic", to quote, the "off-common...Common Room" voice of "Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard: 'E-P'"(49). He cannot get close to an 'accurate'(?!) description of E-P's style, and so finds it necessary to "quote a fair patch of the stuff". E-P is "one of the most homogeneous writers the world has seen"(49) - which is no small claim, but suggests that Geertz cannot distinguish one 'patch of the stuff' from any other in its overbearing homogeneity. When Geertz fills seven of his pages with block quotations from a nine page article by Evans-Pritchard we must wonder why homogeneity takes so long to describe, why it needs so many examples, and why the article - obscure, forgotten, but certainly of some importance - was not simply reprinted in full. This is not to suggest that Geertz should be editing textbooks - especially since that activity is very much a homogenising one - but the choice of this text and the way it is presented to a readership, again says something about the delays of dissemination in anthropology: information filtered through so many channels, by so many different, and possibly misrepresented, voices, held up here and there, losing its way, disguised, diverted, elided.

Just what is the "Black-and-White-in-Colour charm of it all"(55) that Geertz finds in Evans-Pritchard's wartime text? Is this a racist joke referring to the white leader and his dark militia? Or is it a nostalgic glance back to our favourite mythic representations of the war, and the process by which those old movies, like *Casablanca*, are now camouflaged in contemporary technicolour? Geertz's quotation presents the slightly modified and modernised version of Evans-Pritchard circa 1940.

Commentators often manage to make things more difficult than they might otherwise seem. Geertz writes: "It is...very difficult to isolate the means by which this in fact quite elaborate text-building strategy is pursued"(58). It is probably even more difficult to become self conscious of these strategies, and show them, as you go. the opportunity offered in Evans-Pritchard's wartime wanderings, and Geertz's militant wonderings, should not be missed. How is this text built?

In just one paragraph describing Evans-Pritchard's style, Geertz moves from the Italian *presto staccato* to the French *Images Afriques* while searching for the tone of an Englishman writing about fighting in the Sudan against Italians with a band of Anuak recruits. How do these Italian/French trinkets sparkle in Geertz's version as compared to the dry savanna scrub prose of Evans-Pritchard? What mark of inadequacy is it that Geertz finds when he writes that, even though Evans-Pritchard spoke both French and Italian, there are no 'foreign' phrases in his ethnographies except for the occasional native

vernacular(60)? This is more than an exhibition of academic multilingual (European) arrogance upon Geertz's part, it is also inconsistent and possibly racist. Geertz is berating Evans-Pritchard for speaking with a scholastic Oxbridge accent (in writing?) while he himself scatters French, German and Italian signifiers of scholasticism throughout his text without modesty; he condemns Evans-Pritchard for not doing the same while writing about Africa, and he fails to recognise - but how could he deny it? - that the 'native vernacular' is a 'foreign' language, and however token, is probably the only non-English language that is not purely a mark of European cosmopolitan privilege when it appears in an English text on Africa. This is not even to do more than mention the confusion in this discussion when Geertz looks for 'speech acts' in a written text. And how can you have a "verbal footnote"(67)?

How should self-consciousness of textual strategies be made evident in a text anyway? What would such texts look like? Could comprehensive confession ever be achieved? Do we want this? Whatever the case, it is not clear from Geertz's writing that any disruption of the status quo has been achieved. Nevertheless small indications can be made of some ways to go. Geertz writes:

The presumptions that connect the author and his audience, presumptions that are social, cultural, and literary at once, are so strong and pervasive, so deeply institutionalised, that very small signs can carry very big messages(58).

How far can this go? Is there not a danger that criticism becomes a matter of quite arbitrary interpretation? Geertz comments that Evans-Pritchard's writing has few commas, and hardly any semicolons: "readers are expected to know when to breath"(60). Surely someone could be equally critical of a writing style excessively blocked up with colons and the like? The memorable repetitious three clause formula of a Geertz sentence, a Geertz paragraph, and a Geertz argument - and the final staccato punch-line sentences he now often appends to passages - might come up for consideration. In Evans-Pritchard, for Geertz, "Quizzical interrogatives, hedging conditionals, musing apostrophes simply don't appear"(60). A kind of writing fixated upon apostrophes and colons would be in desperate need of a laxative, and while being here and being there in anthropology might be all about the rhythm and flow of a text, rather than an experience, it is still within the context of narrative realism, however fabricated, that much anthropology is written. Perhaps other sources might be examined for suggestions, but realism remains also the major source from which anthropologists learn to write.

Geertz describes the 'flat', 'declarative' tones, the 'unheightened' language, the 'middle voice' of 'Educated England' in Evans-Pritchard's style and declares: "no ventriloquism here"(60). Which is exactly not the point that Geertz seemed to want to make. Evans-Pritchard is speaking/writing from a particularly institutionalised and socialised place, in a particular manner, and from a viewpoint that is not individual and not unique. Therefore ventriloquy. Without taking into account the quoted nature of Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic accounts (where "Nuer say..." and "Nuer think that..."), nor the status of his own quotations, it is very difficult to evaluate the degree of irony intended in Geertz's first sentence for this chapter: "There are some voices that are easy to imitate, whether for mockery of social climbing"(49). Who is Geertz mocking?

Just why is this chapter on Evans-Pritchard called 'Slide-Show'? With its references to 'magic lantern ethnography' wouldn't this be more suited to the chapter on *Tristes*

Tropiques where Lévi -Strauss discusses 'exotic' photographs? Perhaps the discussion of Evans-Pritchard's photography was intended to be far longer than the few simple paragraphs Geertz offers. An analysis of the photographs from *The Nuer* might provide a good way to open up the 'backstage' or negative side of that text. For example the photograph of a girl in a field on the second page of a chapter entitled 'Interest in Cattle' is worth comment; here the cow has wandered almost all the way out of the frame, but the naked Nuer woman remains in central focus. Might this tell us something about anthropological motives and unacknowledged authorial interests? It would be important here to consider also the climate in which the volume was first published, and so on. Similarly, the map that appears in *The Nuer* comes from army surveillance, but we are told very little of the 'pacification bombing' of the Nuer which occurred at the time of Evans-Pritchard's field trips. Geertz doesn't show much interest in these slides, despite his theme of the anthropologist as military officer. Further explorations in ethnographic photography might be called 'Instamatic Anthropology'.

This is to raise the issue of the "established frames of social perception" upon which we "instinctively rely"(64) which Geertz mentions but does not develop. Surely we must focus more closely upon the instincts of anthropology. Has Geertz revealed the instincts that come into play when Evans-Pritchard was at war in the Sudan? Geertz admits an anxiety not to be seen as unmasking, demystifying or deconstructing his authors(58) (possession: *his* authors, in the manner of 'my tribe'), but if not, what is he doing, and why? Other instincts and motives need to be considered here.

African transparencies abound in this sliding showing of Evans-Pritchard's tropes - is it only to do with Evans-Pritchard's style, however, that the image of a collapsing granary calls up the entire text of *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* for Geertz? How total could this recall be? And should we not analyse the debates which have helped to lift that image out of Evans-Pritchard's text? Geertz does not begin to develop anything like the sophisticated sorts of analysis that will be needed to make sense of a changing argumentative discipline. He only manages to appropriate that image - with all its instinctual and historical associations - for his own text. This is another form of quotation, another mimicry of ventriloquy. It is not sufficient to say that "every writer on sacrifice or totemism or 'primitive thought' seems obliged to conjure with"(65) Evans-Pritchard's, or the Nuer's, problem of twins and birds. It is not just a stylistic trick that has made this scene important, but Geertz goes no further. The image enters Geertz's text and attracts it pedigreed interest, Geertz too, has been there - in the library, in the text.

"the crisis in ethnographic writing"(72)

The crisis in ethnographic writing is now at least twenty years old, if not far older, and Geertz's book is, in the most simple of ways, its continuation, perhaps even its routinisation. The most recent manifestation of this crisis has been one of the most productive ever, and a whole new generation of doubters and 'suicidal rejoicers for the end of anthropology' have established big reputations and secure positions within the trade. Anthropologists worried about the status of writing have managed to become 'writers' to an extraordinary degree. It is a very grave crisis indeed when chic labels can be coined to cover serious problems, so that guilt, political implications, and moral problems can be treated under the sterile multi-syllabic dismissal "epistemological hypochondria"(71). The ethnographic project is sick and frothing at the mouth.

One moment among many that can be singled out as a flash-point (if such a term can be used in the slow-motion of the publishing industry) is the release of Malinowski's field diary in 1967; *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*. Discussions of Malinowski's place in the discipline now, predictably, begin with the posthumous volume.

Geertz begins his chapter on Malinowski with a three page "collage"(75) from the diary. It is a well chosen, well constructed selection, offering a clear narrative indication of the kinds of thing found inside the book. Geertz then provides the following footnote:

I have collapsed paragraphs, run separated sentences together, spelled out abbreviations, glossed native terms, and made a few other cosmetic adjustments to make things read a bit more easily. Though these paragraphs are all excerpted from the opening section of the book, covering the first four months of an eventual four year chronicle, a similar sample taken from anywhere in the course of the narrative would give the same picture. Like most private journals, especially by the self-possessed, nothing moves in the text but time(75n).

There are a number of things to be noted about this footnote at the beginning edge of a pockmarked but doctored Malinowskian text:

- Isn't the image of collapsing paragraphs, glossing native terms and 'cosmetic adjustment' the almost always hidden common practice of all ethnographic writing? Geertz's own method of modifying Malinowski follows a now sometimes discredited anthropological habit of making 'others' make sense. Should we be concerned that the publication of the diary had offered us an approximation of anthropology 'in the raw', and Geertz's quotation has retained none of this 'in process' kind of feel? If everything is a quotation this hardly matters, does it?

- Yet another consequence of Geertz's doctoring (autopsy? vivisection?) of Malinowski's text might be characterised as the 'whole' problem with anthropological texts. All complex communications have 'holes', in that they are never complete representations of what goes on in any particular scene. One of the significant points about the publication of Malinowski's diary, with all its abbreviations etc., was that it showed this most clearly. The idea that this narrative, which Geertz has forged out of fragments from the first four months, could represent any moment of the entire four years of the chronicle is somewhat misleading. The diary does not cover four years; first, in that Malinowski's fieldwork consisted of several trips with months away in Melbourne spread over the four years, and second, in that not all the notebooks in which Malinowski jotted his thoughts were included in the published version. Third, the choice of contents of the diary was in part that of the editors (Stocking has raised questions about what was edited out and why) who controlled the original manuscripts, and so forth, the abbreviations, native terms, various brief notes etc., were Malinowski's own shorthand to himself. In question here would be fidelity to the point of view of the original author, and in a text concerned with styles of writing, would not this kind of liberty with the text need to be more adequately justified? Fifth, it would also be necessary to look at the diary for changes in style over time; does the accumulation of years have any influence upon Malinowski's perspective? Evidence to the contrary would have to be very solid to dispel doubts about this.

- The phrase which seems to have a derisive tone, where Geertz comments that in "most private journals, especially by the *self-obsessed*, nothing much moves in the text but time"(75n my emphasis), contains an unintentional irony. Geertz's own self-obsession

only emerges in elided ways, as a sort of footnote or marginal commentary; something we need to look at with a sidelong glance as it fleetingly escapes under the dominant super ego that expels all self-reflecting self-concern. While Malinowski placed the gaze of anthropology upon its own practice in his first chapter of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in a way that made possible the development of self-reflecting interest in anthropology which makes the diary interesting, Geertz gives very little away about himself. In a climate so centrally concerned with selves - even as that concern is continually refracted through concern with the self of/against the 'other' - it may be a surprise that we have seen no 'private' diary from Geertz.

What desire is it that pushes Geertz into wanting to foreclose upon the open ends of Malinowski's text? Why does he want to decide the "undecidable"(80) about this poet or anatomist or scientist or writer? What insecurity insists that things be labelled and pigeonholed? Geertz must surely have had his 'cockfight' article in mind, where his invisibility disappeared in a very 'literary' way, when he writes of Malinowski: "To become a convincing 'I-witness', one must, so it seems, first become a convincing 'I':"(79). Geertz the writer, scientist, anatomist, poet - of others - does not grant any opportunity for us to decide about his self. He remains strangely invisible behind his quotes.

This chapter on Malinowski introduces a new quirk into the text; it is not just about Malinowski. Perhaps the project of reviewing the 'founding father' of anthropology (all the 'fathers' remain male) is exhausted, it becomes necessary to fill out the obligatory chapter on the Pole with other stuff. It might be much more worthwhile to examine the institutional forces that have conspired to make some form of obeisance inevitable - not to mention *Argonauts* or the *Diary* in a discussion of ethnographic writing, or of fieldwork, would amount to wilful disregard of the established canon. Others can be more easily ignored, but even if commentators may have nothing to say, they must still name this reference point. The obligation that controls this movement is not, however, simply respect for a true founder of the discipline, it has more to do with Geertz's need to write a 'proper' anthropological book, to name the correct names, a form of textual etiquette. He is right to point out that anthropologists do not write just to write diaries, but do so to write, and publish, books; and the coinage "participant description"(83) is apposite. But ethnography is driven by darker motives than this pleasant 'participant description', it is a form of 'being-there' which must be considered as 'being-there-on-the-shelf', the obligation to get the book, any book, out. To write, to be seen, to be read.

Hence, who gets quoted in Geertz's text is very important. Malinowski's work hardly needs the publicity, but questions about the chains of significance, reference, citation and publication publicity can be asked about the names Geertz places alongside Malinowski's in this chapter. In the contemporary scene many monographs can be overlooked, ignored, or forgotten; one of the functions of this chapter of *Works and Lives* seems to be to reinforce the reputation of the bright young proteges - we might assume - of the 'I-witness' with 'malarial diffidence'. How the "oncoming generation"(91) is introduced is interesting in itself. If it is remembered that Malinowski arranged for Sir James Frazer to write a preface for *Argonauts* how should we evaluate Geertz's selection of relevant 'new' authors in this chapter. There can be no doubt that a 'new canon' # (is this a contradiction?) is being forged even as Geertz writes: "the scene is less ordered, relative standing less established. We really don't know yet who the 'author's are"(91).

In writing a rose may not be a rose, and a word, for example - arbitrary - should never be assumed to be so arbitrary as it seems. Geertz continues:

I would like, therefore, quite briefly, quite *arbitrarily*, and in a brisk news-from-the-front sort of way, to consider three recent examples, different among themselves in tone, subject matter, and specific approach (to say nothing, as I shall try to do, of quality) yet clearly of the mode:(91 my emphasis).

Quality, of course, can be bracketed off in wartime dispatches like this, (but who are they fighting for or against?), the point is that the three 'authors' that Geertz here 'authenticates' by citation are not, first of all unknown, are very much on the same side, fighting, or writing?, in the same places, sometimes in the same books, and certainly with much (incestuous?) reference to each other, and to Geertz. A more explicit tracing of the teaching and research links between Geertz, the anthropological institutions of the U.S.A., and these three 'new' authors would be useful. Even in a 'brief' and 'arbitrary' report, the presence or 'being-there' of some and the absence of others has repercussions for the discipline - who is to say this, and not that, will be important for a discipline today?

The point is to look not only at the style in which a Malinowski, or some other, writes a text, but at how we read those styles at different times and in different contexts. The rereadings, the new meanings, the continuing history of Malinowski's work, the ways the 'original' text is twisted and stretched in other ethnographies, reviews, textbooks and essays like this, can teach us something of the way the discipline is organised. How is it that some texts get singled out from all the similar volumes which arrive "almost by the week"(97) on the desk of someone like Geertz? Surely the extraction of one particular name from all those others is not merely a matter of style. It may be a point of undecidability as to whether it is superior skill, stylistic excellence, patrons or patronage of students, future teachers and writers of textbooks, accessibility, decisions of publishing companies, funding bodies, contingencies of international politics, prejudices, etc., in-group seminars and emergent schools of criticism, and so on and on, that determines why some texts attract attention and will not go away. We ought then to question the discomfort this 'undecidability' provides in a mentality that demands full and clear explanations and dislikes the suggestion that less glamorous motivations condition the production of anthropological knowledge.

"ethnography for admirals"(127)

Geertz writes, enigmatically, "So with words."(109) in his chapter on Benedict. An amazing sentence, an amazing paragraph. Words are never more cryptic than this, even when the subtlety is so thinly disguised, even when the poise of the phrase sits like a rock at the edge of a precipice, like dark sunglasses at an inside party, like daredevil racing within the speed limit, like package tourism to 'wild' kingdoms. Geertz never pushes this idea - "So with words" - over the edge, he never risks anything but the neatest contrived ambiguity.

So with words, without explanation, sits before the most densely 'quoted' section of a book already heavy with quotes. And by no means is this a long book; it is not quite 150 pages of text with at least twenty percent of the volume being single-spaced block quotations, not counting any of the many shorter quotes that appear in the double-spaced 'Geertz' sections. Of course it would be possible, given the too simple responses that sometimes can be found in some writers' readings of phrases like 'the author is

dead', for Geertz to claim that his quotation of others is not an unoriginal writing. It is not an accusation of plagiarism that I am making here - so often a plagiarist gets away with it because instances are hard to detect, because the delays of publishing cover up possible solutions to the 'I thought of it first and you stole it' syndrome, and because anthropology has toyed too much with the ideas of diffusion and spontaneous invention so that 'originality' counts for not so much nowadays. What is an original text in anthropology anyway, with all its mediations between informant, translator, notebook, first draft, published version, reader etc? The point is, that Geertz just seems caught up in a basic problem of commentary, or criticism: so much of it is parasitic.

Must commentary duplicate its object? Must criticism? What is the role of summary in criticism? Is it perhaps a way of making another author's work simple and ripe for destruction? To select out the most susceptible sections of a book for review is the time-honoured practice of reviewing, what is the status of this authorial privilege? Perhaps Geertz's three page quotation from Benedict at the start of a chapter called 'Us/Not-Us' is some sort of gesture towards fidelity to the original text? The double play in the title should not be missed - us and not us can have the meaning of an abstract us and them, but it is also U.S., the United States and its anthropological regime, that Geertz has targeted, but not developed in any detail, here. A clever typological gesture which unfortunately remains just a gesture - if there is a difference in that. Authors can't write back, can not respond, in writing in the same way as in speech, even the current debates in anthropological journals and conferences where responses follow very quickly, seem somewhat contrived. Again the delays of publication are relevant here. But do we need extended replays of Benedict's work when, as Geertz himself points out, there are already nearly two million copies of her book *Patterns of Culture*, in more than two dozen languages(111), and "only" a massive 350,000 copies of *The Chrysanthemum and the sword*(116)?

The issue is that these are not just works that Benedict writes, and we cannot respond with a simple 'that's how it is'. Benedict wrote in ways, and about things, that are closely tied to U.S. military interests, and while these things gain mention in Geertz's version of Benedict, there is little 'deep' analysis of the implications of this for anthropology and the writing of ethnography in particular. The manoeuvres of anthropology occur in the real world, writing occurs in the real world, and it is a dangerous escapism, or a whitewash, a sidestepping of responsibility, to hold a view of writing which continues to refuse its implications in wider political processes.

What really is the value of a commentary that does not much more than acknowledge that there are some "unfortunate" chapters(116) in an otherwise distinguished series of books, that, through a reading of Benedict's work as somehow akin to that of Swift, "an interpretive act"(127), avoids the label "ethnography for admirals"(127) and which attempts to displace Mead as custodian-appropriator of Benedict by offering this swift rehabilitation? As if Geertz could climb up into the anthropology hall of fame by providing this service to Benedict; as if she needed it. The military connection for anthropology should not be camouflaged in this way.

Being-there on the shelf, and the reference to Libya: The Last Chapter of Clifford Geertz?

The last chapter of a book rarely ever offers what the idea of a 'last' chapter might promise; this is no exception. "There are few more completely academicised profes-

sions"(130) than anthropology, says Geertz, and his listing of some of the trappings which surround ethnographic writing as an act drive this point home. However, the cultural system of "lecterns, libraries, blackboards and seminars"(129), and publication, review, citation and teaching(130), does not exhaust the context of anthropological writing. The idea that anthropology only goes on in the academy, even if Geertz's point were extended as it should be to insist that anthropologists take the academy into the field with them just as they carry their tents and luggage, still seems to have a dangerously simplifying, and maybe arrogant, air to it. The sleight of hand is that as the "gap between engaging others where they are and representing them where they aren't"(130) becomes suddenly visible, it may just be too easy to proclaim a crisis of representation which enables the continued representation of 'others' from there in texts we keep here - only now the others are increasingly figments or fragments of literature. The texts barely change except in that now the anthropologist stays at home in the library where it is safe to say 'look there is nothing up my sleeve', and the others...well, representation remains pretty much the same here and there, only now with more television.

"What once seemed only technically difficult, getting 'their' lives into 'our' works, has turned morally, politically, even epistemologically, delicate"(130) - but if so, the moralists, politicists(?), and the delicate epistemologists, seem to revel in their problems. The crisis is profuse. There are so many experiments going on in ethnography, and while Geertz need not keep up with all this and while his own writing shows little evidence that anything has really changed - for example he can note that some have named anthropology as the "continuation of imperialism by other means"(131) and then go on to look back towards the "end of colonialism"(131) from which anthropology has supposedly radically changed - it does seem at least time to ask what kind of books, if any, anthropologists like Geertz should be writing? What is a North American anthropologist who specialises in Indonesian and Moroccan studies doing writing about Uganda, Libya and Kampuchea, and just what are the "ironies involved"(132) in these places? Geertz does not tell us, although it is clear that the Uganda reference would be to Idi Amin's reign of terror and of course the U.S. bombed Kampuchea back into the stone age, but what is ironic about this unexplained reference to Libya?

Geertz cannot see a clear future for anthropological writers(135) (! job prospects?!). There will be those who too quickly proclaim that his insight could certainly have come to us earlier so we might have saved something. Instead now we photocopy tripe and it clogs up the machines. We might be better off with the literary classics some will say. Without wanting to perpetuate an already overly hasty tilting at a Quixotic windmill, this might also be the place for some comments on anthropology as a politically loaded kind of cultural consumption - a kind of potlatch where the rich leisured reading class of the wealthy West (another homogenisation) conspicuously consumes its 'Others' in some sort of commodity fetishism. Here also we could examine popular culture for metaphors of the privileged position of the theorist who is simultaneously perhaps a voyeur, a sort of textual exhibitionist (and increasingly so with an experimental ethnography), an escapist (from this world and from others), a participator, but also a collaborator, a thief, a trickster, shaman and a fool. More reading would be necessary, at any rate closer reading. Still something good could come of this, it is not for nothing that Lear tolerates his sidekick, and all of us are searching for more stories about ourselves.

Perhaps for some this slim volume will provoke some sort of penny to drop, and the rhetoric always present (being there) in the ethnographic text will come suddenly, glaringly, into view. If so, this book serves a purpose, though it would be questionable to credit Geertz as the messianic leader of a new cult of experimental anthropology. Certainly there might be the routinisation of charisma at play here - especially in the appointments of heirs and approved experiments - and there is a new dawn and a new age promised. But, the penny that drops is not always coined in the most valuable ways, the experimental moment is not simply a moment, and this volume by Geertz should not be taken as either a summation or a full review. If anything the volume is one among many, albeit accorded, and proclaiming, without much self-consciousness of its privilege, a certain prestige. Geertz seems to be militantly ignorant of his own political positioning in the North American regime, and in the circle of voices speaking out about ethnography - the charmed circle - perhaps of reflection on the place of this writing is appropriate now.

What does it mean to review Geertz here? Pot-shots at the hot-shots? Book reviews offer a certain twist in the medium of publication because they constitute the lower order reflection of one kind of text upon another. Here it is a review of a book that is also a kind of review, but usually reviews hide in the latter pages of journals like voyeurs in the shadows, while the 'real' texts - the volumes which are reviewed, hold centre stage and carry all the weight. *Works and Lives* then, is out of place, a series of reviews promenading as a book on the basis of a certain reputation, the opportunity to publish, the guarantee of sales.

At the same time, as the up-side of Geertz's new(?) project, it is possible to rehabilitate the act of reviewing by questioning the distinctions upon which it is (de)based. This would nowhere be more appropriate than in anthropology where the action is always that of the interpretation of interpretations at whatever level - fieldwork, book or review. And to attempt to do this by focusing upon a discipline like anthropology which exhibits a 'considered' voyeurism in its academic work is doubly appropriate. The conventional understanding of the work of the anthropologist, and this is very much Geertz, is that s/he observes and displays, examines and reveals, reads (culture as text) and writes (text as culture). Sometimes the anthropologist reviews the work of colleagues, although the 'real' research is still the first order viewing - fieldwork (malarial in Bali?) - which contributes (exhibits) new knowledge to the discipline, while the reviews themselves are done during term, during conferences, between seminars, and so on. What is obscured in the privilege accorded first to the monographs Geertz examines, and then to his own book, is a recognition that all (re)viewing is co-constituted with what is viewed, action with reaction, writing with reading, and voyeurism with exposure (the anthropologist as voyeur in the field, exhibitionist at home), and that none of these couplets occur in a political vacuum. All this recurs in the context of certain choices, and at last leads to the question, which should be carefully put under review: why is the new culture of ethnographic reflexivity so persistently unreflective about its own productions?

Notes

Clifford Geertz

Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author. California: Stanford University Press. ISBN 0-8047-1428-2, \$19.95