CONTROLLING TEXTUALITY: A CALL FOR A RETURN TO THE SENSES

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Abstract: This essay traces the involution of anthropological understanding from the 1950s to the present. It is shown that as the conception of "doing ethnography" changed from sensing patterns to reading texts, and from reading texts to writing culture, so too did the content of anthropological knowledge change from being multi-sensory to being self-centred. The essay also proposes a way of escaping the tunnel-vision of contemporary (post-modern) ethnography – namely, by treating cultures as constituted by a particular interplay of the senses which the ethnographer must simulate *before* making any attempt to describe or evoke the culture under study.

Résumé: Cet article trace l'enchevêtrement qu'a subi l'étude de l'anthropologie depuis les années cinquante à nos jours. L'auteur démontre que le concept de "faire de l'ethnographie" a changé radicalement – de la perception sensorielle à la lecture des textes et de cette lecture à l'acte d'écrire une culture. Également, le contenu des connaissances anthropologiques a subi un changement du multi-sensoriel à l'égocentrique. L'article propose comment s'éloigner du champ de vue plutôt étroit de l'ethnographie contemporaine (dite post-moderne) en suggérant que les ethnographes traitent les cultures telles que constituées par l'action réciproque particulière des sens qui doivent être simulés avant que les ethnographes puissent essayer de décrire ou d'évoquer la culture en question.

> For us, the world is the ensemble of references opened up by the texts.
> – Paul Ricoeur (1971:535-536)

> Perception has nothing to do with it.
> – Stephen Tyler (1986:137)

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This essay traces the involution of anthropological understanding from the 1950s to the present. It is shown that as the conception of "doing ethnography" changed from sensing patterns to reading texts, and from reading texts to writing culture, so too did the content of anthropological knowledge change from being multi-sensory to being self-centred. The essay begins and ends with a critique of the position that "Ethnography . . . might be a kind of writing" (Geertz 1988:1). It is shown that this position can only be described as pathological in view of the epistemological anaesthesia it induces. To escape from this anaesthetized state, anthropologists must learn to control their textuality instead of letting it control them. What is more, they could strive for the restoration of the project of "making sense" of other cultures, which was pursued by Rhoda Métraux and her peers in the middle decades of this century, or so it shall be argued.

Part 1: Writing and Experience

In *The Man With A Shattered World*, A.R. Luria describes the case of a Russian soldier by the name of Zasetsky whose world was literally shattered as a result of a head wound suffered during World War II. The injury deprived him of his middle- and long-term memory, the ability to organize sensory perceptions into meaningful wholes, and the capacity to grasp the relationship of words to their objects. Virtually all that he retained from his former life was the ability to write and an odd assortment of words. With the utmost effort, he managed to put these words into sentences. The sentences in turn "became his world, and writing his way of thinking" (Hall 1977:30).

In recent years, certain anthropologists have written themselves into a position or corner remarkably similar to Zasetsky's. For example, no post-modern anthropologist would dream of suggesting that the culture he or she studies be regarded as a meaningful perceptual whole, "collage" maybe (Taussig 1987). Nor would any post-modern anthropologist presume that words have a referential function. The stress is all on their "expressive" or "poetic" function—that is, words may "evoke" reality but they do not "represent" it (Tyler 1986).

It is with regard to the meaning to be found in the experience of fieldwork that the position of the post-modern anthropologist most closely approximates Zasetsky's. Witness the following remark of James Clifford (1988:110): "ethnographic comprehension [is] . . . better seen as a creation of ethnographic *writing* . . . than a consistent quality of ethnographic *experience*." In illustration of his point, Clifford cites the case of Bronislaw Malinowski. There is an irony involved here in that Malinowski was the originator of the method of participant-observation, and therefore attached far more importance to understanding through experience than through writing.

What Clifford highlights is the discrepancy between the professed goal of Malinowski's fieldwork, which was "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise *his* vision of *his* world" (Malinowski 1961:25) and the picture which emerges from his posthumously published diary. The latter reveals a soul perplexed by questions of identity, tortured by self-doubt and generally ambivalent in its attitude toward the native (i.e. not empathic at all). In Clifford's terms, what enabled Malinowski to "rescue a self" from the "disintegration and depression" which thus appears to have pervaded his experience in the Trobriand Islands was "the process of writing" *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in the Canary Islands! The implication is that had it not been for the latter sojourn, where writing became his way of thinking, he would never have succeeded at "the fictional invention of the Trobrianders" or "the construction of a new public figure, the anthropologist as fieldworker" (Clifford 1988:110).

While post-modern anthropologists still do fieldwork, it is no longer referred to as such but rather as "the process of textualization." Furthermore, within this new episteme, writing figures as the means of experience instead of coming after it (as in Malinowski's situation). For example, while it was once permissible to assume that an ethnography is a record of an ethnographer's experience, according to Stephen Tyler (1986:138): "No, it is not a record of experience at all; it is the means of experience. That experience became experience only in the writing of the ethnography. Before that it was only a disconnected array of chance happenings. No experience preceded the ethnography. The experience was the ethnography."

The notion that there is no experience before or without writing, like Derrida's aphorism, "there is no linguistic sign before writing" (Derrida 1976:14), is a potential source of many creative insights. At the same time, one cannot help suspecting that Tyler, like Derrida, has got things backwards—a suspicion which is confirmed by the briefest glance at the frontispiece of *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986). The photograph, which bears the caption "Stephen Tyler in the field," shows Tyler with his back turned to his informants, writing.

It would be an exaggeration to say that whereas ethnographers used to face their informants and try to experience the world their way, now they turn their backs on them and write. But this claim is less exaggerated than one might hope, for what do anthropologists write most about nowadays? One would be hard pressed to find a single recent book on "the method of participant observation," but the number of books on "strategies of text construction" has skyrocketed (see, for example, Marcus and Fischer 1986; van Maanen 1988; Clifford 1988; Geertz 1988). What precipitated this dramatic shift in focus?

In what follows, I shall argue that the publication of *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz 1973) was a major contributing factor, although the full effects of the epistemological rupture this book introduced would not become apparent until a decade later. Clifford Geertz was the first to take cognizance of the fact that the answer to the question, "What does the ethnographer do?" is that "—he writes" (Geertz 1973:19). This answer is so obvious that it does make it somewhat astonishing that throughout the previous history of anthropological inquiry ethnographers believed that "Man," not writing, was the *telos* of their discipline. Of course, they were justified in treating "man" as their end by the fact that both the term "anthropology" and the term "ethnography" refer to "man" or "nation" first, and to read them the other way—that is, Geertz's way, placing the accent on "the word" (*logos*) or "writing" (*graphe*)—would be to reverse their meaning. In any event, Geertz sensitized anthropologists to their calling as authors not only by what he said but also by how he said it—namely, with (superlative) style.

There is another reason the role of the ethnographer was not seen to be so bound up with writing prior to what could be called the "textual revolution" of the 1970s, which is that before this period ethnographers tended to regard other cultures as perceptual systems rather than as texts. Of course, the idea of treating other cultures "as texts" was also one of Geertz's: "The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts . . . which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong" (Geertz 1973:452). Now, there is a nice fit between defining cultures "as texts" and defining the ethnographic function as one of reading-writing. But what does such an approach occlude? Is it, for example, pertinent to the analysis of non-literate cultures? How is "non-verbal communication" to be comprehended within such a framework? What kind of sensory bias does the model of the text import?

Let us pursue the last question for a moment. Geertz wrote *Islam Observed*. Given that oral communication is so fundamental to Islamic civilization, and that "the Qur'an is not the Qur'an unless it is heard" (Nelson 1985:13), would it not have been more appropriate for him to approach Islam through the auditory (than the ocular) modality and to have called his book "Islam Overheard"?

This line of questioning is inspired by Marshall McLuhan (1962) and Walter Ong's (1967) work on how changes in the technology of communications affect the "ratio" or balance between the senses and cognitive processes generally. The same goes for changes in the metaphors for ethnography, as we shall see.

While some writers in the mainstream of textual (or if you prefer, interpretive) anthropology allude to Ong's work (e.g. Clifford 1986:11; Tyler

1986:131), it is those outside the mainstream who have pursued the McLuhan-Ong line of questioning the farthest both in their writing and in their fieldwork (e.g. Seeger 1975; Ohnuki-Tierney 1981; Stoller 1982; Feld 1983; Stoller and Olkes 1986). What is remarkable about the latter body of work is not so much the "experimental" form in which it is written (Marcus and Fischer 1986) as the experiment in perception on which the writing is based. By experimenting with their senses the way these authors do, not only do they link up with a venerable tradition in anthropology (as will be shown in the next part), they also display a degree of "reflexivity" which is greater than that of those who stress reflexivity but at the same time hold that "perception has nothing to do with [ethnography]" (Tyler 1986:137). This raises a puzzling point: while textual anthropologists are extremely conscious of their writing *style*, or "how to get themselves into print," their reflexivity does not seem to encompass the effects of print and other such extensions of the senses on consciousness itself. Various examples of this will be discussed in Part 3, "Creating Texts." But first let us explore how anthropology was practised before the textual revolution.

Part 2: Sensing Patterns

In the 1950s, the long-standing interest of anthropologists in the senses and perception (see e.g. Boas 1889) was given a new twist. Attention shifted from the problem of how people discriminate within a particular sensory modality to the question of what sorts of relationships obtain *between* the modalities. One thinks of the work of E. T. Hall (1969) and Edmund Carpenter (1973) and of Irving Hallowell's (1955) work on spatial orientation among the Ojibway, emphasizing that space is a construct which must be perceived through several modalities at once. One also thinks of Dorothy Lee's reflections on what her Wintu informant meant when he told her that *watca* means "to weep," "is he, like me, thinking of the whole kinesthetic activity with all its emotional implications, or is he merely concerned with the sound of keening, as I think he is?"—given the marked reluctance in Wintu society to "penetrate beyond external form" (Lee 1959:126). One thinks, above all, of Rhoda Métraux's (1953) essay, "Resonance in Imagery."

In this essay, Métraux both codified the analytic practices of her colleagues and sought to articulate a methodology for the study of culture "at a distance" (i.e., by means of literature, films, Rorschach protocols and above all, encounter sessions with emigré informants). She took the "image" as her point of entry, defined as "any unit in the perceptual system through which individuals are related to one another in a culture" (Métraux 1953:350). Thus, a gesture, a drum rhythm, a design on a jug, a scent, a

meal, a figure of speech—each communicate an image in a different modality, and the task of the research worker is to work out how one image "echoes and reinforces and counterpoints another" so as to arrive, ultimately, at "an accurate statement of the configuration of a given culture" (Métraux 1953:343). As Métraux says of this approach:

> To construct the unfamiliar pattern [or configuration] one is dependent on one's own sensibilities to sight and sound and movement, to figures of speech and tone of voice, to gesture and plastic representations, to proportional and colour relationships, to external configurations and to one's own proprioceptions for one's awareness of imagery and ability to transpose from one to another modality following the styles of the culture. Part of one's work consists in learning to modulate one's sensory perceptions and to alter the organization of these perceptions so that one can perhaps make finer discriminations between colours or, on the contrary, can group together colours which one is accustomed to distinguishing . . . And part of one's work consists in learning to perceive and so to build up new image clusters . . . congruent with one another but different in content and form from those one has hitherto known. (Métraux 1953:357-358)

Thus, whereas the research worker must rely on his or her own perceptual system (or sensibilities) to begin with, in time, she or he will have succeeded in constructing an internal model of the perceptual system used by his or her informants, and be able to compare the two intra-subjectively. According to Métraux (1953:357, 360), it is the development of such a "disciplined conscious awareness of the *two* systems within which one is working"—in short, *the capacity to be of two sensoria at once*—which ensures that the research worker's account is "not a generalized account of his own experience (which would be perhaps an *appreciation* of another culture [such as a creative writer might produce]) but rather an account of the way in which others experience the world, organized in a particular way, i.e., through the medium of his own disciplined consciousness."

Métraux goes on to describe how some of her fellows, each in their own way, disciplined their consciousnesses. One characterized the process as

> one in which he creates an "internal society" with "multiple voices" that carry on "multiple conversations" in his own mind. . . . [Another] seems in some way to ingest the culture so that, in effect, her own body becomes a living model of the culture on which she is working as well as the culture of which she is herself a member, and she continually tests out relationships in terms of her own bodily integration. And another describes the process as one of "receiving and sending kinesthetic sets, strengthened by auditory patterns—largely pitch, intonation and stress rather than words . . . I muscularly feel in rhythmic patterns the activity of others—singly or in groups—reading them as I read written material, in chunks, consciously registering

> only shifts of cadence or expectancy violations, internalizing the rest which is relatively easy to recall." (Métraux 1953:361)

One could never accuse these anthropologists of reifying the cultures on which they worked—they embodied them. As should also be apparent, it is not correct to accuse Métraux and her set of creating "worlds" that are "subjective, rather than dialogical or intersubjective" (Clifford 1988:37). The first anthropologist Métraux quotes appears eminently "dialogical" in the way he organized his perceptions, if not his writing style, while the other two seem eminently "intersubjective" given their internal awareness and use of "*multiple* systems" of perception (Métraux 1953:361). Rather than multiplying the voices that appear in their texts, what these anthropologists did was multiply their sensoria (or selves). Put another way, for them cultural analysis involved mastering all sorts of alien techniques of perception as opposed to interiorizing certain "genre conventions" (Marcus and Cushman 1982).

There are two points about the approach of Métraux and her contemporaries I wish to emphasize, the significance of which will become apparent in the next part when we turn to consider the rise of interpretive anthropology. One concerns their attitude to literature, something they never did interpret, but rather analyzed as "a source of data on man's use of his senses" (Hall 1969:100). This is because it was the "construction" of culture, not its "interpretation" that interested them. Thus, in a section on "literature as a key to perception" in *The Hidden Dimension*, Hall (1969:94) proposed that "instead of regarding [a British, American or Japanese] author's images as literary conventions, we examine them as . . . highly patterned systems which release memories."

The other point has to do with learning to transpose one's perceptions from one modality to another following the styles of a culture. Let me illustrate this by elaborating on Edmund Carpenter's (1973) discussion of how the graphic representations of certain non-literate societies are best seen as expressions of an oral consciousness very different from the visual consciousness of "typographic man" (McLuhan 1962).

Consider the following portrait of bear from a Tsimshian house-front: If we ask, "What is the point of view expressed in this representation?" we are forced to admit that it does not have one, but many, as many as there are sides to bear: the animal has been cut from back to front and flattened so that one sees both sides at once (as well as the back, which is indicated by the jagged outlines). Because *we* know that one cannot see an object from all sides at once, we conclude that the artist "lacked perspective." But this is too simple. What we ought to be asking ourselves is how the artist's hand

might have been guided by the ear rather than the eye, given that the culture to which he belonged was an oral one.

There are two facts about auditory consciousness which seem pertinent in this connection. One is that one can hear but not see around corners. The other is that sound surrounds, it "comes at you" from all directions at once. The Tsimshian representation of bear is consistent with both of these facts. Thus, the code in which this painting is expressed is auditory rather than visual. Put another way, the Tsimshian tend to transpose visual imagery into auditory imagery even in their plastic arts. Understanding that art involves "hearing with the eye" (Carpenter 1973:30).

To sum up, we have seen how some of the leading anthropologists of the 1950s and 1960s organized their experience of other cultures by *embodying* them in determinate ways, and how for them the world was the ensemble of references opened up by the interplay of the senses.

Part 3: Creating Texts

All of this was to change following Geertz's (1973) suggestion, in his celebrated article on the Balinese cockfight, that we regard cultures as "ensembles of texts" to be interpreted. The metaphor of the text provided anthropologists with a way of integrating their experience very different from having to use their bodies. It permitted them to fall back on a structure of perception—namely, that of "reading"—already familiar to them, being literate men and women, instead of having to adjust their perceptions so as to conform to the manner in which their informants perceive the world.

In what does the "interpretive method," or the method of "reading culture" consist? It consists, first of all, in assuming that events or actions have

the same sort of "propositional structure" as written texts (Ricoeur 1971: 538), that they "contain their own interpretations" (Geertz 1973: 453). The question then becomes one of how to gain access to these meanings. Geertz's solution, which is borrowed from the hermeneutics of Wilhelm Dilthey and Paul Ricoeur, is to let his imagination circle through the culture-as-text: "Hopping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole that motivates them" (Geertz 1983:69). In this way, Geertz was able to arrive at a "reading" of the Balinese cockfight, a social event, as a commentary on the divisiveness of status in Balinese society.

There are a number of obvious objections to this way of proceeding. The first is that events do not possess the same stability as texts. To treat them as such, as "fixed expressions" (Ricoeur 1971:532; Clifford 1988:36) is to reify them. This point may be illustrated negatively by considering the closest thing to text production there is in an oral society such as that of the Australian Aborigines. We think of the wooden and stone churingas of the Arunta, as described by Spencer and Gillen. The most frequent design met with on the churingas is that of a series of concentric circles, which usually indicate some totemic creature or other. These devices might seem to function much like printed texts or business logos to us, because they are permanently inscribed. But as Spencer and Gillen (1968:145) found, "the same device will mean one thing to a native of one totem and quite another thing to a man who belongs to another totem, and as a man's knowledge is strictly confined to the designs of his own totem, it is quite unsafe to ask, say, an emu man to describe to you the markings on a wild cat churinga, or vice versa." Thus, the signifiers in question are contingent for their meaning on group membership, and the meanings are *not* repeatable.

This complete absence of standardization underlines the fact that for the Arunta the designs are "events" rather than "signs" (Ong 1982:76). As McLuhan (1962:37) would say, "they have no detached point of view," and as he further remarks, "No . . . nomadic people ever had writing any more than they ever developed architecture or 'enclosed space.' For writing is a visual enclosure of non-visual spaces and senses. It is, therefore, an abstraction of the visual from the ordinary sense interplay." Significant in this regard is the fact that the Arunta handle the churingas as much as they view them, butting them against their stomachs, and there is always singing when the churingas are revealed (Spencer and Gillen 1968:171-2, 188, 284-6)—i.e., *total* sensory involvement.

Our second objection to interpretive anthropology is that the hermeneutic method was evolved for the purpose of interpreting the written documents of Western culture. Given that this method was elaborated with the text as its object, how are we to know if it is capable of interpreting anything out-

side the text? Does it not follow that it will mark off for interpretation only those aspects of a form of life which are amenable to textualization and ignore the rest? This point is best illustrated by the manner in which Geertz (1973:450) represents the cockfight as enabling the Balinese "to see a dimension of his own subjectivity" the same way *Macbeth* or *King Lear* enable us to see ours. The analogy is with going to "see a play," as we say. It is only by way of a footnote that we learn that to use a visual idiom (or the analogy of a play) might not be altogether fitting in that "Balinese follow the progress of the fight as much (perhaps, as fighting cocks are actually rather hard to see except as blurs of motion, more) with their bodies as with their eyes, moving their limbs, heads and trunks in gestural mimicry of the cock's maneuvers, [so] that much of the individual's experience of the fight is kinesthetic rather than visual" (Geertz 1973:451 n. 40). It is telling that this sort of sense datum, which loomed so large in the accounts of other "worlds" written by earlier generations (see e.g. Bateson and Mead 1942), should be consigned to a footnote by Geertz.

The reason for this is simple. For the hermeneutician, "the world is the ensemble of references opened up by the texts" (Ricoeur 1971:535-6): literary allusions (e.g. to *Macbeth*) and the projection of one's own interpretations onto the actions of one's informants therefore come to take the place of trying to ascertain the configuration of their perceptual system and "catching the resonances of their imagery" (Métraux 1953:362). Of course, if one assumes that a meal, a ritual dance or a temple "may be the same sort of thing" as a linguistic text, and that "we can apply our ways of knowing about linguistic texts to these other sorts of symbolic constructions," as Alton Becker (1979:2) does, then it is hardly necessary to modulate one's sense perceptions as a Métraux would. Indeed, all one really needs is a "text-organ," which is how Becker suggests we regard symbolic systems. The fact that there is no anatomical basis for this suggestion does not seem to have worried Becker. But the postulation of such fictive organs does worry us because of what such fictions portend for the sense organs proper—complete atrophy.

The interpretive method may thus be said to compound the cultural biases of the ethnographer, rather than, as has been claimed, "offer a sophisticated alternative to the now apparently naive claims for experiential authority" advanced by Métraux and her contemporaries (Clifford 1988:38). For the interpretive ethnographer is not only a member of a literate (or text-producing) culture, he also uses the model of the text as a grid for the modulation of his perception-interpretation of *other* cultures. In short, what the adoption of a Geertzian approach imports is a double interiorization of reading-writing.

The effect of this double interiorization is apparent in the research agenda of those in the vanguard of contemporary "culture theory." What is foremost on that agenda is the study of other people's "minds, selves and emotions," to quote from the sub-title of *Culture Theory* (Shweder and LeVine 1984; see further Marcus and Fischer 1986:45). This inward turn, or shift in the direction of an anthropology of self and feeling, relates to writing in the following way. As Ong (1982:69) points out: "orality fosters personality structures that in certain ways are more communal and externalized, and less introspective, than those among literates. Oral communication unites people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself."

Thus, literacy not only promotes a "reflexive" turn of mind, but also makes what is "inside" the person a matter for overt speculation and analytic discourse in ways that orality does not. In illustration of this point, consider the following excerpt from an account of the concept of the person among the Ommura of New Guinea. The account is written by a British social anthropologist whose mind has not been invaded by the text to the same extent as those who follow Geertz, and whose writing therefore permits us to "hear" as much as to "see" how the Ommura think:

> It was stressed that one cannot "see" the motives, thoughts, or intentions of another. They are "inside the ear." As elsewhere in Papua New Guinea, intellectual processes, knowledge and memory are asociated with the ear. The same verb "*iero*" is used to mean "to hear" (a sound) and "to know" or "to understand." It is taken for granted that people tend to keep their true . . . thoughts, motives and intentions "hidden," and my habit of asking questions such as "Why did he do that?" or "Does she like these?" was generally regarded as rather pointless. Such questions are not treated as matters for overt speculation or analytic discourse, and the typical retort was "Why ask me? I cannot see inside his ear."
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> Similarly, a person's feelings, emotions and physical sensations are, for the most part "invisible" to others. . . . Most feeling and emotion remains "inside the belly" . . . so that no one else can "see" it. (Mayer 1982:246)

The implication of this account vis-à-vis the research agenda of the interpretive ethnographer is that the latter, having doubly interiorized writing, tends to ask questions from within a literate frame of reference for which there can be no answer from within an oral culture. This is not to belittle those questions. It is simply to emphasize the importance of understanding where they come from; namely, that they are thrown up by the invasion of consciousness by writing.

We have seen how the textual revolution has had the effect of narrowing both the ways in which anthropologists perceive the world and the sorts of issues they perceive as worthy of investigation. Its most pernicious effect,

however, has been the *prise de conscience* it sparked of the fact that what the ethnographer does is "write."

It was inevitable that the textual revolution should have precipitated increased self-consciousness about writing, given that "writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself," as discussed above. Nevertheless, it was not until the beginning of the 1980s that this reflex rose to consciousness. At that point, a number of texts appeared with titles like "Ethnographies as Texts" (Marcus and Cushman 1982) and "On Ethnographic Authority" (Clifford [1983] 1988). While many anthropologists continued reading the classics for what they said (Malinowski as an authority *on* the Trobriand Islanders), the authors of these works started analyzing both the classics and certain recent works for the "rhetorical strategies" or "modes of authority" they deployed. Thus did anthropology pass into a stage of "secondary textuality" as distinct from but continuous with Geertz's "primary textuality" (see Ong 1982:136). That is, *the study of other cultures (as texts) became the study of other texts (as texts, or literary creations*). As Marcus and Cushman (1982:26) observe of this "emergent situation," "ethnographers read widely among new works for models, being interested as much, if not more, in styles of text construction as in their cultural analysis, both of which are difficult to separate in any case."

As may be inferred from this quotation, the new works conflate style and substance. A more accurate way of putting this would be that the new works are a product of a flight from theory to style. The reason for this is best expressed by John van Maanen (1988:x): "Put simply, many familiar ethnographic conceits have had their day and are no longer persuasive. To wit, the glacial clarity once attributed to, say, functional, structural, materialist, cognitive or linguistic theories, has withered." It is hardly surprising that the traditional conceits are not found persuasive by modern readerships: as we saw in Part 2, traditionally, anthropologists were more concerned with honing their senses than with developing catchy writing styles. (Recall Métraux's comments on the difference between a research worker and a creative writer.) It follows that Métraux and her contemporaries should be judged by what they were able to perceive, not how persuasively or creatively they wrote.

In any event, if one wants to write with authority in the "emergent situation," it is no longer possible to rely on the authority of any of the grand theories or "meta-narratives" of the past (Marcus and Fischer 1986:8), one simply *must* adopt one of the new styles—dialogical, polyphonic, confessional. Audience expectations have thus come to dictate factual presentations. The criteria for successful (which is to say persuasive as opposed to "realist") writing have been codified by Marcus and Cushman (1982), among others. While these authors claim that the genre they created is an

open-ended one, as is becoming increasingly apparent, one will not get a hearing unless 1) one is present in the text (an "I") instead of absent or omniscient, 2) one shares one's authority with one's informants instead of monologuing (i.e., their "voices" must be no less visible than one's own), and 3) one engages in or displays the requisite degree of "epistemological worrying" or "self-reflexiveness." Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* is exemplary in all these respects, hence a post-modern classic.

Both the first and third aspects or criteria of the new styles are readily explicable in terms of the invasion of consciousness by writing. Writing automatically "throws the psyche back on itself" and so encourages both self-consciousness and reflexivity. The second aspect, stress on dialogue, is not so readily explicable in terms of the fall-out of the Geertzian textual revolution, and so requires further analysis.

It is, in fact, also to Crapanzano that we owe the most scathing critique, from a "dialogical" (read: secondary textualist) perspective, of the model ethnographic encounter as understood by Geertz: "There is never an I-you relationship, a dialogue, two people next to each other reading the same text and discussing it face-to-face, but only an I-they [or one looking over the shoulder of the other kind of] relationship" (Crapanzano 1986:74). It will be observed that while Crapanzano problematizes how people are positioned within the framework of Geertz' model ethnographic encounter, he fails to problematize Geertz's root metaphor—the idea of events as texts. This idea is accepted quite uncritically. Nevertheless, Crapanzano's critique is exemplary of the stylistic shift from description and interpretation to dialogue and negotiation, which is what distinguishes the secondary textualist position from the primary one. Clifford (1988:43) also stresses that "ethnography [is] located in a process of dialogue where interlocutors actively negotiate a shared vision of reality." It is curious in view of this assertion that no one, next perhaps to Geertz (1988) himself, has done more than Clifford to convince anthropologists of the centrality of writing to what they do "both in the field and thereafter" (Clifford 1986:2); "one must bear in mind the fact that ethnography is, from beginning to end, enmeshed in writing. This writing includes, minimally, a translation of experience into textual form" (Clifford 1988:25).

As implied above, it is somewhat paradoxical that Clifford extols the virtues of dialogue *and* insists upon the centrality of writing at once. As a second glance at the frontispiece of *Writing Culture* illustrates, the one excludes the other. Indeed, no photograph could give the lie to the so-called "principle of dialogical textual production" (Clifford 1986:14) better than that of "Stephen Tyler in the field." This raises the question of whether the

dialogue form might not be a transposition of a textual form into experience rather than a translation of experience into textual form.

It is interesting in this regard to note that what is distinctive about Marcus and Fischer's "experimental" writing is also characteristic of early writing. As Ong (1982:103) observes: "Early writing provides the reader with conspicuous helps for situating himself imaginatively. It presents philosophical material in dialogues, such as those of Plato's Socrates, which the reader can imagine himself overhearing." What this formal correspondence implies is that even the most dialogical of accounts continues to bear the (metaphorical) imprint of the text as model for experience, hence that the secondary textualists remain caught within the hermeneutic circle.

There are other things which disturb about the picture "Stephen Tyler in the field," at least when viewed from the perspective of what has gone before in anthropology. Métraux, for example, would be quick to point out that Tyler is not learning how to modulate his sense perceptions (Indeed, it is as if his senses had imploded, so absorbed is he in his writing.) And the early Geertz would probably note that Tyler's posture relative to his informants is the exact reverse of that required for "reading" culture (i.e., Tyler should be looking over *their* shoulders).

The conclusion I would draw from both these ante-post-modern reactions and what was said above about "early writing," is that the dialogical anthropology of the 1980s has not succeeded in liberating itself from the epistemological anaesthesia that characterized its predecesssor, the interpretive anthropology of the 1970s, but merely represents a continuation of that anaesthetized epistemology by other voices. Thus, for example, it is all very well for Clifford (1986:12) to write: "Once cultures are no longer prefigured visually—as objects, theatres, texts—it becomes possible to think of a cultural poetics that is an interplay of voices, of positioned utterances. In a discursive rather than a visual paradigm, the dominant metaphors for ethnography shift away from the observing eye toward expressive speech (and gesture)." Dialogical anthropologists *do* appear to have exchanged an ear for an eye. But this is only because of the demands of textualization which, "from beginning to end," remain their most abiding concern. For this reason, they have not been able to escape from the (metaphorical) prison-house of literacy, the foundations of which were laid by Geertz in the Balinese cockfight article. Indeed, that prison-house is more a pleasure-house for them, given the way the word "text" now seems to arouse all of the same excitement the word "sex" used to spark in the 1950s. But were the secondary textualists able to repress their textuality for just a moment, they would recognize that culture is not *created* out of an "interplay of voices" but *constructed* out of the interplay of all the senses.

They would also recognize how it is possible to "register" and "make sense" of a culture in other ways than through writing, as Michael Jackson (1983) has so eloquently demonstrated in "Thinking through the Body." The latter essay, which treats metaphors as extensions of bodily experience, would make immediate sense to that colleague of Métraux's who used to "muscularly feel in rhythmic patterns the activity of others—singly or in groups—reading them as I read written material, in chunks, consciously registering only shifts of cadence or expectancy violations, internalizing all the rest which is relatively easy to recall" (Métraux 1953:361). Of course, what would most stand out about this passage to anyone who has read *Writing Culture* is its textuality (the reference to reading) not its corporeality, but that is because the reader is not transposing his or her perceptions in a fitting sense.

The point of the preceding discussion is that no amount of experimenting with one's writing style is going to make up for the deficiency of failing to experiment with one's perceptions or "sensory ratio" first. To understand a culture is to "make sense" of it (Howes 1986 and 1987). Making sense involves more than a "rejection of "visualism"' (Clifford 1986:14; Tyler 1984), or exchanging an ear for an eye. Making sense involves, minimally, learning how to *be of two sensoria* at once and reflecting upon how the interplay of the senses in another culture's perceptual system both converges and diverges from their interplay in one's own (Howes 1991).

There exist a number of model studies in this respect, such as Anthony Seeger's (1975 and 1981) inquiries into the different degrees to which the five senses are "symbolically elaborated" among the Suya, or Ohnuki-Tierney's (1981) careful study of the use of multiple senses in the classification of illnesses among the Ainu. One also thinks of Steven Feld's *Sound and Sentiment*, which is more a sounding of Kaluli experience than a monograph, as befits a culture which attaches so much importance to auditory communication. One thinks, above all, of the "excursions into sensuality" embarked upon by Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes (1986 and 1987) in their work among the Songhay. What distinguishes this writing is the extent to which expositions on odours, sounds and tastes are treated as intrinsic to the ethnographic message rather than extraneous. To analyze these expositions as textual markers of having "been there" (Geertz 1988) would be to miss their point.

Anthropologists are thus faced with a choice. Either they may continue down the path of the text opened up by Clifford Geertz, which culminates in a book like *Tales of the Field*, in which John van Maanen contemplates his own texts, sorting them out into their appropriate genres (realist, confessional, etc.). Or, they may come (back) to their senses and learn to smell,

taste, touch, hear and see the world in alternative ways. To opt for the latter route would be to vindicate the approach of Métraux and her peers.

Where might this other route lead? Paradoxically, it will lead to a further refinement of anthropological writing because that writing will come to be based on a truly inter-cultural (albeit less literary) epistemology, again. The essays which follow, by Sylvain Pinard, Ian Ritchie, Kit Griffin and Constance Classen—all members of the Concordia Sensoria Research Group, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the work of which has been exemplary in this regard. These essays take the "construction" (in Métraux's sense) of the sensory models or ratios of the cultures concerned—Hindu, Hausa, Moroccan and Andean—as their primary object and then seek to demonstrate how these models inform the discourse and practices of everyday life in the cultures under study. As I think the reader will find, these essays make for sensational reading, because they are addressed to all of the reader's senses, though not in quite the proportions he or she is accustomed to using them.[2]

Notes

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2. Another direction in which the "path of the senses" can lead involves the exploration of other modes for the presentation of ethnographic findings than the textual (or verbo-visual). Such "experiments" *beyond writing*, include having students prepare an ethnographic meal, or stage a ritual, as has been tried by an innovative group of professors at York University. Their example deserves to be followed.

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