Abstract

In this paper it is argued that the proliferation of ethnographic genres is the result of deliberate textual inventions by postmodernists, on the one hand, and a natural consequence of the method of participant-observation by experiential ethnographers, on the other. This implies that experimental and experiential ethnographies are distinct approaches to doing and writing fieldwork and culture. Consequently, experiential ethnographies have to be reclaimed from the textualist lock-in to which some experimental ethnographers have led the discipline. Distinguishing between the two types of ethnographies invites us also to puzzle about the role of rhetoric, empathy, and the dangers and uses of experimental and experiential ethnographies.

In 1986 Clifford, Fischer, and Marcus published two books that were instrumental in shaping a new culture of anthropology [Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986]. For Clifford [1986:2], the cultural marker of a new anthropology was a photo of Malinowski in which he “recorded himself writing at a table.” For Marcus and Fischer [1986:1-3] it was two publications. One was by Said [1979] who criticized western representations of Orientalism. The other was by Freeman [1983] who criticized Margaret Mead’s research in Samoa. The consequences of Freeman’s revelations...
shook public trust in the adequacy of using anthropological knowledge as a form of home critique. Rather than address methods, Marcus and Fischer addressed representation.

Ignoring the historical fact that Malinowski, at the time that the photo was taken, contemplated becoming a selling writer because “there was no career as an ethnologist” [Kramer 1986:10], Clifford read the photo’s appearance in a 1983 Stocking publication as “a sign of our times not his (Malinowski’s)” [Clifford 1986:2]. To Clifford, Fischer, and Marcus the photo and books signalled “a crisis of representation” which expressed a general “state of profound transition” within the West [Marcus and Fischer 1986:8, 9]. This intuitive assessment required a radical response from the discipline, a shift away from the focus on participant-observation, empirical research, and “writing up,” to text making and rhetoric [Clifford 1986:2].

According to Clifford [1986:2], an old “ideology” had “crumbled,” a new one was born. This new ideology, argued Clifford, sits on the following assumptions: culture as a composition of “seriously contested codes and representations”; poetics and politics as inseparable; science as part of a historical and linguistic process; written cultural descriptions as “properly experimental and ethical”; authorial authority as a thing of the past; writing as invention of cultures [ibid].

Like political radicals or anarchists who have a ready label for all they oppose, so too postmodernists label everything they oppose “ideology” and “privileged” [Clifford 1986:2; Tyler 1986:126]. Thus privileged ideological categories include: monologue, “observer-observed,” monophonic performance, “positivist rhetoric of political liberalism,” power, and author [Tyler 1986:128]. They must be done away with. Their
substitutions include categories like: “mutual dialogical production of discourse, of a
story of sorts” [p.126], “cooperative story making,” “ethical discourse,” and a specified
ideological attitude toward the ethnographic other [p.127]. Rather than being built from
the rubble of South African townships as the activist anthropologist Scheper-Hughes
would want [1995:417], postmodern ethnography is built from the “rubble” of the
“deconstruction” of Michel Foucault, Theodor Adorno, Jacques Derrida, and Richard
Rorty, among others [Tyler 1986:131; Surette 1993:3, 6; Grenz 1996:123].

Ethnographic Genre Proliferation

The problem

Experimentalists have generated,¹ or appropriated as “experimental,” numerous
ethnographies which they classified into several ethnographic genres. In the process,
they blurred experimental and experiential ethnographies. But is the motivation for the
proliferation of ethnographic genres the same for experimental and experiential
ethnographies? To gain insight into this problem, we must de-blur three groups of
ethnographic writing: ethnographic fiction, experimental ethnographies, and experiential
ethnographies. In this paper, we want to focus only on experimental and experiential
ethnographies. Ethnographic fiction or narrative anthropology is based on specific
techniques that achieve blurring between fact and fiction. The goal of achieving just the
right amount of blurring to arrange ethnographic facts into a story without denying the
story’s factual foundation, create such subtle problems for social science as to warrant
writing a separate paper [Bohannan 1995:147-158; Richardson 1996:623; Bruner 1986,
1995; Jackson 1986; Reck 1984].

Are they all experimental?
Olivier de Sardan [1992] suggests that the blurring of experimental and experiential ethnographies results from the fact that textualists do at times make the claim that their personal involvement and their subjectivity as narrator bring “to light hidden facts which would not be revealed by a classical anthropological approach” [1992:6]. Given their focus on text and rhetoric, however, it is not clear whether this rhetoric corresponds to an actual illuminating experience or whether it is artifice and mystification. Therefore, our first point of distinction between experiential and experimental ethnographies is this: to experiential ethnographers the self and especially experiences in the field are “epistemologically productive” [Kulick 1995:20]; to experimental ethnographers the self and especially rhetoric are textually productive.

To the experiential ethnographer facts, data, and real experiences are central because one’s contact with their reality raises vital epistemological questions about how we know what we know. As Hastrup [1987:294] says, “The reality of anthropology is not text-bound but life-bound.” By contrast, to the experimental ethnographer “facts and data are merely products of ethnographic construction” so that there is nothing to prevent the ethnographer from “attributing one’s own aesthetic preoccupations to people of other cultures” [Olivier de Sardan 1992:7, 10]. Rather than the self being epistemologically productive, it functions as a device for realism [p.10]. Thus, Marcus and Fischer are not concerned with questions about the epistemological productiveness of experience. Nor do they subject the question of whether or not cultural difference exists or is significant to empirical and experiential research. Instead, they argue that one radical trend in their new anthropology is concerned “with how cultural difference is to be represented in ethnography” [1986:43, my emphasis]. Cultural difference is not
only assumed, it and its representation are, in their lingo, ‘privileged.’

The sources of experimental and experiential ethnographies are found in different streams of thought. Postmodernism has its roots in the politics of radical rejection whether this rejection was directed against the Enlightenment, Modernism, Individualism, Universalism or simply that which is present. On the way, postmodernists made some strange bedfellows, including anarchists, critical theorists, and fascists. The end result is uncertainty and pessimism. Because the basic motivation of post-ists was the urge to break-down, deconstruct, and critique, their only cheerful bedfellow became hermeneutics, the art, or skill, or theory of the interpretation of text. Interpretation is simultaneously criticism and creation. In the fragmented world of the post-ists, interpretation shows itself to have three positive qualities: (1) it is relational or perspectival; (2) it offers a never ending task; (3) it is done through the use of a common tool, namely, language. But if language is to be more than a tool for aimless prattle, it requires another companion, power. The combination of language and power is found in discourse that is in the use of language by a community, profession, or institution to constitute its own representation of its world or the other and to make it count. In this sense, a discourse, (especially the way style, rhetoric, and contextualization are used in a specific discourse to create an effect), becomes worthy of criticism, deconstruction, and a challenge to create ad novo. [Fabian 1983].

Because they are preoccupied with language and text, experimentalists regard external reality as of no account. Some deny objective reality and with it the correspondence theory of truth [Searle 1995]. The epistemological quest, which is so important to experientialists, is abandoned. Since knowledge is a matter of how we use
language and participate in language communities, language becomes a tool for dealing with reality rather than explaining it. Textualists are not concerned with the question of whether or not their text most closely represents or explains external reality, but with what difference their text will make to our conduct or to a critique of it. Thus, while the postmodern pragmatist Richard Rorty [1979:373] called for an “edifying philosophy,” one might argue that some postmodern anthropologists call for an edifying anthropology.

By contrast, external reality is central to experientialists. Rather than deconstruct language worlds, experientialists explore and discover external reality. Only, in addition to Enlightenment concerns with the knowing self, objective reality, and reasoned argument, experientialists added concerns with aesthetic intuition and discovery. They did this, because experientialists acknowledge two roots, one in the Enlightenment, the other in Romanticism. One might say that participation is to observation as Romanticism is to the Enlightenment. Let me explain.

If British empiricists focussed on observation, German Romantics highlighted participation not, however, in the pragmatic sense of Rorty [1979], but in the aesthetic sense of the painter Caspar David Friedrich. To Friedrich participation meant Hingabe (surrender) to one’s subject of study so that “a painter should not only paint what he sees before him but also what he sees within himself” [Kleßmann 1979:8]. He should heed what specific feelings, emotions (Empfindungen), moods (Stimmungen), and memories his perceptions of external reality called forth internally.

The two roots of Romanticism and Enlightenment informed the work of Bronislaw Malinowski. In his Diary (1967), especially, Malinowski applied the painter’s dictum to
himself.

Hence the Diary is not only a record of Malinowski’s feelings, emotions, moods, and memories called forth and brought to awareness by his Hingabe to external reality, it is also and most importantly a record of his quest for a theory of knowledge, of his epistemological quest. The Diary is a record of Malinowski’s intention to discover or uncover something, namely, the “Triebfeder meines Lebens” [Kohl 1986:46]. Malinowski intended “to discover what are his [the native's] main passions...His essential, deepest way of thinking...” because in doing so “...we are confronted with our own problems: What is essential in ourselves?” [See Malinowski 1967:119; also quoted in Stocking 1986:26-27]. The underlying dynamics of Malinowski’s reflections move from looking at the “native” to the anthropologist and back again. The process is one of reciprocal illumination. As we shall see later, this has implications for a redefinition of empathy away from projection.

The simultaneous activity of observing what goes on before one while heeding what is happening inside one led to what Handelman recently called the deconstruction of Anthropology “from within” [1994:369]. It is an epistemologically productive deconstruction that remains centred on participant-observation [Abrahams 1986; Handelman 1994]. It maintains not only our commitment to “living persons and living collectivities” [Handelman 1994:356], it also prevents our falling “prey to the expansionist aims of cultural studies” [p.341]. In sum, experiential ethnographies are distinct from experimental ones and should be removed from the textualist lock-in [Bohannan 1995].

_Why so many experimental genres?_
Experimentalists create new ethnographic genres for several reasons. First, they encourage “reexploring, in the course of writing,” terrain covered by those who wrote within the scientific discourse [Marcus and Fischer 1986:48]. These new texts aim to break the “privilege” of the visual-spatial rhetoric by balancing it with emphases placed on sound, smell, taste, or feeling. Emphasis is not so much on new research or testing of theories as on new ways of displaying discourse, for example, “indigenous discourses about emotions” [p.54]. Rather than discovering psychological universalities [Kakar 1982:10], postmodernists want to display “the most radically distinctive level of cultural experience for any society” [Marcus and Fischer 1986:54].

Second, experimentalists encourage reexploring realist texts to create awareness about “textual-display devices” and “frames of reference.” The aim is to create new kinds of texts framed on dramatic incidents, like homicide, on “the eliciting discourse between ethnographer and subjects” [p.64, 67], or on an “altered state of consciousness” of an anthropologist affected by the other culture’s “categories” [p.69]. As above, the aim is to make texts that are framed on those dramatic incidents, “indigenous discourses,” and “collaborative dialogues” which are most conducive to highlighting radical distinctiveness. Because they shock or place an unexpected value on a sense or experience, these kinds of ethnographic genres are always also critiques and deconstructions of past approaches, attitudes, and assumptions.

Concerns about Experimental Ethnographies and Postmodernism

Concern about politically sensitive anthropology

Anthropologists no longer write only classical ethnographies based on a general empathy for, or sensitivity toward, the ethnographic other as was done by the British
School of Social Anthropology and carried forward by students of Boas [Gatewood 1984:8]. Scott Heller [1992:A7-A9] wonders whether we are in the presence of a new brand of scholarship that freely mixes personal experiences and research expertise. Rao [1988] observes and Rorty [1979] advocates leaving behind a science based on propositions and true description of a domain for a practical science of advocacy concerned to tell us not only how things, like sorcery for example, work but advocating their doing. Barbara Tedlock draws our attention to the fact that the nineteen seventies saw a “shift in emphasis from participant observation to the observation of participation” that brought with it new kinds of experiential ethnographies [1991:78, 79]. Having tired of “author-saturated” accounts, Geertz argues that we should shift “part of our attention from the fascinations of field work” to the fascinations of “authoring” discursive fashions [Geertz 1988: 6, 21, 24, 20].

Marcus, Fischer, and Tyler cut through the confusion about ethnographic writing by completing the shift from fieldwork to “pure discursivity” [Probyn 1993:72]. They want a politically and historically sensitive anthropology that takes account of a changing world order [Marcus and Fischer 1986: vii, 45-76]. This edifying anthropology of cultural critique would challenge established theories and research programs, question established ways of representing the world [p. 9], and in the process invent more genres.

But what has changed in the world order and what kind of anthropology would capture this change? To the last half of the question, Marcus and Fischer answer an anthropology that pays less attention to social action and more attention to the categories, metaphors, and rhetoric embodied in the accounts informants give of their
Marcus and Fischer's answer to the first part of the question is not easily discerned. What is changing is not the world per se as communicated to the public by politically indifferent or distanced scientists preoccupied with observing and measuring change. In their view, there are no disinterested knowers. Rather, what is changing is the ethnographic other's “will to knowledge” to which we must defer if we are to edify [Foucault 1977:162; Said 1979].

One wonders, however, whether displaying the most radically distinctive differences of ethnic groups, or deferring to their “will to knowledge,” has had the balancing effect desired by postmodernists. Some might argue that far from easing tensions among ethnic groups, our century may have increased them. The last decades of the twentieth century remind one uncannily of Julien Benda's [1928:27] characterization of the nineteenth century. He called it the “age of the intellectual organization of political hatreds.” In his words:

Anti-Semitism, Pangermanism, French Monarchism, Socialism are not only political manifestations; they defend a particular form of morality, of intelligence, of sensibility, of literature, of philosophy and of artistic conceptions ... every one to-day claims that his movement is in line with “the development of evolution” and “the Profound unrolling of history” [1928:27-8].

Furthermore, argued Benda [1928:99], “the cult for the particular and the scorn for the universal is a reversal of values quite generally characteristic of the teaching of the modern (intellectual).” Intellectuals, he lamented, exhort “the peoples to feel conscious of themselves in what makes them the most distinct from others” [p.83]. It
would result, he predicted quite accurately, in race, ethnic, and national wars.

Concern about inattention to method.

Experimentalists want to level the hierarchy of senses associated with the Enlightenment. Therefore, instead of continuing with the visual-spatial rhetoric of the anthropological discourse established by a colonizing Britain, a politically sensitive anthropology might heed the sound, smell, taste, or feeling rhetoric of the colonized or post-colonized other. Just as the discourse of other people acts as a corrective to scientific rationalism, so other senses act as correctives “to the metaphor of sight as the sense of reason” [Tyler 1996:617]. The invention of politically and historically sensitive sound-and-smell genres of anthropology are a fascinating consequence [Feld 1982; Classen, Howes, and Synnott 1994].

Given these political-cum-discursive preoccupations, it will come as no surprise to learn that alternative senses-ethnographies may sit on poor research. For example, in a recent publication, Classen [1993] made the following statement: “The Hausa of Nigeria divide the senses into two, with one term for sight and one for all the other senses” [p.2]. Having never encountered such a phenomenon among Africans I researched, I checked her footnote expecting to find details about her fieldwork or other fieldwork on which this statement was based. Alas, none existed. The footnote refers to another general introductory book about “the diverse sensory systems of different societies” [p.139].

Method was also not of concern to the reviewer of the Classen, Howes, and Synnott volume [1994; Tyler 1996]. While Classen et al want to make the point that the Andamanese assigned greater importance to smell than Westerners, something that
was ignored by anthropologists, the smells they describe were those smelled by the anthropologist and not the Andamanese. At other times in their volume, they do not clearly distinguished between what Radcliffe-Brown smelled and what the people being researched smelled [Classen, Howes, Synnott 1994:95-97]. Nor are the concepts used to "constitute the olfactory landscape," for example, "'smellscape,'" [p.97] those of the Andamanese. Footnotes refer one to other Western scholars who did the classifying.

And while ethnographic ‘others’ are said to divide their world according to smell, observational materials about how these people pick up scent, what postures they take up during it, are entirely lacking. Indeed, the issue is not quality research, the issue is to right a wrong: “Our singling out of scent for attention serves to redress this long-standing imbalance” [p.9].

3. Concern about politically motivated moral totalitarianism

Sensitivity to the politics of levelling and balancing implies that we must subject ourselves to the political judgements of ethnographic others, committed colleagues, or both, rather than to the canons of science [see D'Andrade 1995 versus Scheper-Hughes 1995]. But political judgement is based on commitment to an ideology\(^2\) or a cause. In South Africa before 1991, it meant commitment to bringing down apartheid; in South Africa today, it means, somewhat more ominously, “service to the state” and its politically prescribed goal of inventing a “new South Africa” [Bekker 1995:7]. Not surprisingly, the abandonment of a broad sensitivity for a narrowly political one has led to complaints about “moral posturing” [Hugo 1985:56, 57] and “moral totalitarianism” which is, furthermore, “presented as an academic virtue” [Bekker 1995:7; Scheper-Hughes 1995]. Are these complaints fortuitous or do they say something about
postmodern anthropology?

Early in his book Waiting: The Whites of South Africa [1985], Crapanzano announces that he “did not come to South Africa as a neutral observer” [p.23]. He came “morally and politically outraged ... horrified by the depths to which humans will sink to preserve their trivial privilege” [p.23]. The word horror or horrified occurs four times in one paragraph as does the word disgust. The word fear is pervasive. Since textualists intend to display radical difference, Crapanzano’s rhetoric is not accidental.

We are familiar with naive self-descriptions of researchers in diaries and fieldwork memoirs. They are part of the initial bumbling of participants as they describe their quest for knowledge and understanding [Malinowski 1967; Cesara 1982]. It is quite a different matter, however, to walk into a painfully complex political situation and naively pronounce one’s political judgements and condemnations. This naiveté is altogether different. It also has everything to do with postmodernism. It is the premise of textualists, as we saw earlier, that politics, poetics, and properly experimental and ethical written cultural descriptions are inseparable [Clifford 1986:2]. It precludes doing what most of us have done in the past, namely, suspend one’s own political predilections while trying to understand, and hopefully explain, that of the people being researched. Textualists also assert the existence of radical difference so that the ethnographer who follows their program is obligated to display the sharpest possible difference between himself and the “other.” Since the whites of South Africa are in fact not all that different from white Americans and since Crapanzano is obligated to maintain the right political credentials for the “culture writing crowd,” he has to set his politics off from theirs in the sharpest possible way.
Underpinning this approach is a naive view of empathy. It has to do with the anxiety of researchers that researching people who belong to an opposite political camp will rub off. Alternatively, since some people assume that empathy is projecting one’s own feelings onto others, the researcher may fear that colleagues and other readers might assume that he is researching, say racists, because he has sympathy for their position or is a crypto-racist himself. Hence postmodernists tend to dismiss empathy altogether and put dialogue, carefully edited dialogue that highlights other voices, in its stead. More will be said about empathy later.

It is my view, that scholars of this ilk are limiting research to "ideological lock-ins" [Bohannan 1995:181]. Let us remember that the favourite cause of the political left at the turn of the century was the small Afrikaner nation that fought to survive imperialism [Hobhouse 1901, 1984]. The only problem is that the same small Afrikaner nation instituted legal apartheid that robbed millions of people of their basic human rights [Poewe 1993, 1994, 1996a and b]. Nor can one argue that this consequence was unforeseen. The Berlin missionary Merensky [1875, 1899], among others [Bachmann 1957], consistently warned that Afrikaner nationalism would harm South African blacks. But, Afrikanerdom ceased being monolithic long ago. Serious researchers of Afrikaners [Hugo 1985], will not have been surprised that it was precisely a conservative Afrikaner, former State President FW de Klerk, who took the extra step to release Nelson Mandela and dismantle apartheid.

Concern about deception and rhetoric

Part of the problem of deception is linked to the insistence that ethnographic writing is dependent on cultural differences [Marcus and Cushman 1982]. At best,
experimentalists argue that the feelings and experiences of the native are mediated by indigenous discourses and commentaries, the radical distinctiveness of which the ethnographer must capture through innovative writing strategies. Text is therefore thrice removed from research; first, by the fact that we do not know whether the “radical” difference occurs naturally or is a stylistic device, second, by the indigenous discourse and, third, by the researcher’s discursive rendering of the indigenous discourse with an eye to displaying radical distinctiveness.

My research experience of African and New Independent Churches in South Africa leads me to question aspects of this approach. I wonder, for example, whether the idea of a mediating indigenous discourse is not too convenient. It could, for example, protect experimental ethnographers from the charge that their discourse could have been written without their doing fieldwork, a possibility first raised by the work of Castaneda [Fikes 1993]. After all, it was thought that Castaneda described the most authentic archetypal mediating discourse to date [Marcus and Fischer 1986:69]; when in fact his work was a hoax [Castaneda 1969, 1971; Fikes 1993].

Furthermore, research of African Independent Churches made me question whether all feelings and experiences are mediated by local culture. One might argue, for example, that there is such a thing as “pre-categorical” or “acategorical” feeling and experiencing which people cannot initially define or categorize [Green 1989; Poewe 1989, 1994]. Especially in the religious sphere people talk about receiving sudden insights, revelations, visions, dreams, and voices which confound existing local categories and encourage adepts to borrow categories from a foreign discourse [Barnes 1989; Hackett 1989; Hexham 1994]. Two things require further discussion: the
experienced phenomena and the sense of receiving them from an external reality.

Recent research shows [Kakar 1982; Searle 1995] that religious experiences are intrinsic or ontologically objective mental activities whose observer-relative features (or ontological subjectivity) come into play when those who heed these phenomena want to label them. Identification, labelling, or defining is discourse dependent, but the discourse may be local, foreign, or about to be invented. Because these phenomena are experienced as being received, as coming from somewhere, believers see them as part of an external reality that is tacitly known but only partially revealed [Polanyi 1964]. The phenomena are revealed in the above mentioned ways or in mundane events that were seen by interviewed believers as signs of something bigger. One could say, therefore, that charismatic Christian thought is based on a revelationist epistemology. The observer-relative features of revelation are, however, epistemically objective [Searle 1995].

Second, if the epistemology of African religious practitioners and of African charismatic Christians is revelationist, as I found it to be, it is not metaphor that transforms their belief into “knowing,” but metonym. Yet a discussion of rhetoric in general and of metonym in particular, is virtually ignored in these works.³ Important exceptions to this claim are Ohnuki-Tierney [1991:175-178], Durham and Fernandez [1991:192], Friedrich [1989:306-307], and Jackson [1989]. Ohnuki-Tierney discusses the uncomfortable shift in meaning when a metaphor may “bring to the fore an inherent metonymic relationship” [Ohnuki-Tierney 1991:176]. Friedrich [1989:306] and Jackson [1989:138] discuss the power of synecdoche which may be used to substitute as easily a whole for a part (as when Goldhagen [1996] accuses “the Germans” for a crime
committed by some “Germans”), as a part for a whole (as when Kakar [1982:156]
interprets coitus as the ultimate state of “enlightenment”). Ohnuki-Tierney’s focus is on
the Janus-like ambiguity of symbols, including synecdoche. Thus “the Germans” may
also refer to a small elite which, however, comes to be taken for the whole population
with the subtle implication that “minorities” are excluded [Ohnuki-Tierney 1991:179].
Likewise, “enlightenment” may refer to the illusion that the “simple pleasure of
intercourse” is more than what it is literally, namely, coitus [Kakar 1982:156]. While
Ohnuki-Tierney and Jackson discuss these tropes in relationship to analogy, allegory,
contiguity, and ambiguity, they seem to miss the characteristic of metonymy that was
most important to the charismatics I interviewed, the characteristic that made their faith
real. I mean, of course, causality: their assumption of an active link between an event
and the reality that caused it. An assumption which the researcher is obligated to
respect [Probyn 1993:77]. Instead of continuing to play with symbolically based
meanings of metaphor, metonym, and synecdoche, let us look at the existential reality
of metonym.

**Metonym and the Receptive Imagination**

Metonym is a figure of speech (a way of saying something) which allows one to
interpret an event or a happening as a sign that the whole, of which this event is a part,
also caused it. It should be kept in mind that my empirically grounded definition is
somewhat different from the textual one, which simply says that metonym designates
one thing by an object closely associated with it (e.g., the “King” is called the “crown,”
Horner 1988:447). On one hand, my use of metonym is based on observed practices of,
and interviews with, charismatic Christians of African and New Independent Churches [for detail see Poewe 1994]; on the other, it is based on a theory of rhetoric. This theory argues that rhetoric is most effective when it imitates life, nature, or when figures “demonstrate feeling” and are “signs of a state of mind in the speaker,” not necessarily in the listening anthropologist [Vickers 1989:304, 303]. As Cicero purportedly said: “For nature has assigned to every emotion a particular look and tone of voice and bearing of its own” (quoted in Vickers [1989:66]).

It is this theory of rhetoric that persuaded me to give figures another look in the context of my research of charismatic Christians. For example, charismatics are prayed over and fall down which is referred to as “resting in the spirit”; this happening is experienced and interpreted by black, white, “coloured,” and Indian believers as a sign that the Holy Spirit, who caused their falling, is working in their spirit and life. To their mind, this small event is therefore a part of and caused by a much larger whole, namely God’s presence. Researchers usually miss the causal aspect. It is because of this oversight that I emphasized the importance of metonym [Poewe 1989, 1994], even though charismatics and Africans belonging to Independent Churches otherwise symbolize like any other human being with all the ambiguity of meaning highlighted by Ohnuki-Tierney [1991].

What charismatic Christians told me in numerous interviews were things that happened to them, and that they experienced as coming from the Holy Spirit. Analysing these interviews persuaded me that the outstanding (but not sole) characteristic of this form of religiosity was what I called a metonymic pattern of thought [Poewe 1989; 1994]; the habit, as outlined above, of seeing a simple happening as an aspect of a whole that
caused it, even when the whole itself is but tacitly known. A similar thing is argued by Hastrup [1987:294-5], except that she calls the larger whole “world” and refers to what I call happenings as “events.” Furthermore, following Ardener [1982:6], but in disagreement with my findings, Hastrup too denies causality. To quote:

We should be careful here not to imagine arrows of causation from symbols or categories to the material situation, including actual behaviour. Rather than causing each other, the material and the categorical realities form a simultaneity [Ardener 1982:6].

But the point is, interviewed charismatic Christians did imagine causation, except not from “symbols and categories” but from what they tacitly knew to be reality. The power of this kind of literalness was brought home to me by science students in Atlanta, Georgia, who were also charismatic Christians. Distinguishing “knowing” biology, algebra, or geometry from “knowing” chemistry, they said about the latter [Poewe 1994:246]:

With chemistry “you have to learn the way things happen. And you can only make things happen when you discover something in the formula that makes it happen.” In chemistry, and matters related to chemistry, “things aren’t just the way you observe them. What you do and what happens are separate. The teacher tells you, ‘if you do this something will happen,’ and you learn to expect it and believe it will happen.”

What surprised these students was that even doing science involved faith, that if the teacher were taken literally, something would happen that was abstract. In this sense metonymic thought is revelation and metonym a vehicle that makes known
personally and experientially a reality that is otherwise invisible and independent [Poewe 1994:235]. Provided other researchers understand what I mean by metonym, my conclusion is testable, even falsifiable. Above all, there is nothing spectacular nor mystifying here. Human beings of any make up are simply using a faculty that is clearly available to anyone anywhere who wants to access it.

Given the above, and the fact that African ontology tends to be realist, by which is meant that Africans (certainly those who were interviewed) assumed, as many of us do, that there is one reality out there which is independent of them (although it may affect them), then it cannot be said that African belief systems support the postmodern belief in “multiple realities” [Stoller 1989:118]. While knowledge may be said to be personal for both experimental ethnographers and African religious practitioners, it is so in very different senses. For a postmodernist, knowledge is personal because it is interpreted by him or her from within the position of postmodernity which “is ... a culture of imitations and simulation where copies predominate over originals and images over substance” [Tyler 1996:619; Handelman 1990]. Here the link to originals and substance is lost and “multiple realities” are multiple copies and images. Thus, in the example of a smell evoking “things that are not there” [ibid], a postmodernist puts the emphasis on an “absence,” a seemingly disconnected image. By contrast, charismatics put the emphasis on the experience, not only because the experience is real, but also because the evoked images reveal something that was real or will be real: something rooted in personal history, past experience, memory, things, actions, or perceptions of past and future time. In short, to the African believer knowledge is personal because it is revealed in very specific personal experiences [Hastrup 1987].
Recent anthropological literature does not only research the use of the receptive imagination by the ethnographic other; it can also be said to sanction its use by anthropologists. It goes with the assumption of Kakar [1982:10, 24], for example, that common understandings or psychological universals are “masked by superficial idiomatic differences.” In other words, if the ethnographic other experiences something, so can, indeed should, the anthropologist. This reciprocality of experiencing is described eloquently by Jill Dubisch [1995]. The context is an unexpected visit by Marcos, a man whom she had not previously met in a private setting or persona. Rather than assuming the role of researcher, Dubisch decided to let this meeting be simply one between herself and a friend. Dropping her mask turned into a revelatory experience:

... by letting myself reveal what I experienced as my 'authentic' self to a degree I had not before, and by acknowledging, however subtly, that we were a man and a woman in a sexual way, I was treating Marcos more an equal, more as I would treat a man in my own society than I ever had before [1995:47].

Most striking is Dubisch’s final conclusion:

To the degree that the female anthropologist takes account of her own sexuality in the field, she may create or enable contexts in which a more 'authentic' self can be revealed, and thus perhaps a more authentic 'other' as well [1995:48, my emphasis; cf Cesara 1982:60, 224; Newton 1993:8].

It is Don Kulick [1995:1-28], however, who makes most explicit the epistemological importance of reciprocal experiencing. He does so in the context of an edited volume where “anthropologists discuss desire, erotic relations, and sexual
encounters” [p.1]. Writes Kulick “erotic subjectivity in the field is a potentially useful source of insight” [p.5], because it compels “... reflections on the nature of fieldwork, relationships, and knowledge” [p.15].

It is precisely about matters of experience, and not only tabooed ones like sexuality, that experimental ethnographers are ambivalent. Let us look at Stoller and Olkes’s [1989] work dealing with sorcery. It is an important work, because we are left guessing whether its rich use of rhetoric has its source in experience or authorial artifice. Stoller and Olkes use such rhetorical devices as sign [for example, p. 23-24], suggestion [p. 32, 36, 38, 55, 57], literalness [p.32], and leading questions which they ask and answer themselves [anthypophora, p. 37, 52-53]. It is fair, therefore, to ask whether Stoller’s and Olkes’s use of tropes and schemes is a consequence of their determination to evoke as faithfully as possible the reality of Songhay sorcery which they and the Songhay experienced personally, or whether it is calculated to create belief in one of “multiple realities”? In fairness to Stoller [1989:xii], he does say in the Prologue that the book “is an account of my experiences in the Songhay world.” But who is the “my,” Stoller or Olkes? And while narrative strategy is mentioned, it is not explained of what exactly it consists. Furthermore, Stoller talks about “my experiences” in one paragraph, only to belie them in another. Thus they or he or she write, “In Sorcery’s Shadow is a memoir fashioned from the textures and voices of ethnographic situations” [p.xii]. It leaves one with the interesting question of whether the book is about sorcery or whether sorcery is practised on the reader? Criticizing Tyler [1986:128], Östberg reached a similar conclusion: “If ethnographic particularism had put anthropologists at risk of becoming what Geertz [1984:275] called ‘merchants of astonishment,’ they now
seem to have turned into magicians" [1995:15].

To be more explicit, is Stoller locking the reader into a discourse thus persuading him or her that this discourse is one of many distinct realities? Or is he trying to render an experience-near description? If it is the former, it is as Olivier de Sardan says, deception and the deception is broken when readers become aware of the rhetorical techniques or “charms” used to channel their perception. If it is the latter, there is more to be explored.

Unfortunately, Stoller’s work does not point to an unambiguous answer of this question. By contrast, the work of Jackson [1986; 1989] does. Barawa [1986] is a clear example of an experimental (mixed genre) ethnographic novel, written in the third person, in which rhetoric is a deliberate methodological device used to create the reality which Jackson wants to create. But his claim, that writing Barawa was a “totally authentic” task [1986:3], is not self-evident. More so than first person narratives, third person narratives in which the anthropologist makes himself the main character come across as contrived precisely because they are a purposefully constructed discourse [Wolcott 1995: 206-7]. A fascinating exception are Hastrup’s [1992a] reflections about the play Talabot which was based on her biography. Her account of its production and effect starts in the third person but then shifts to the first person in order to enhance reflexivity. It is the occasion of useful insights into vulnerability, being “fieldworked upon,” concealment and revelation [1992a:336, 337].

If Jackson’s Barawa is a questionable success, he does succeed with his method of “radical empiricism” [1989: 4-5]. This method requires that we treat both their and our experiences as primary data in order “to grasp the ways in which ideas and words are
wedded to the world in which we live” [p. 5]. What is interesting about this approach is that it links the rhetoric used in the construction of an ethnography to the fieldwork that preceded it.

At this point it is important to look more closely at experiential ethnographers. We can do this by asking the following question. Is the blurring and proliferation of ethnographic genres solely a consequence of deliberate experimentation with literary styles and discursivity, or is it also a consequence of heeding field experiences?

**Participant-Observation and the Proliferation of Genres**

In 1982 I published Reflections of a Woman Anthropologist: no hiding place under the pseudonym Cesara. The book portrayed an epistemological quest in the tradition of Malinowski [1967]. The aim was to show how doing research affects the researcher [p.vii, 48]. I was working with the oxymoron of “being fieldworked upon” while doing fieldwork. It was done by highlighting several things: (1) experiences that were epistemologically productive, as Kulick [1995] observed; (2) understanding without undermining nor excluding science [Cesara 1982:216-221]; and (3) discussing writing strategies that were integral to existentialism [p.33, 49; Gill and Sherman 1973:10, 16].

As mentioned earlier, experimentation with writing was also part of German Romanticism going back to the seventeenth century [Kleßmann 1979; Poewe 1996c]. Furthermore, it was hotly debated among German missionaries to South Africa in the nineteen twenties [Poewe 1996c]. Finally, like Probyn [1993] and Kulick and Willson [1995], I highlighted the importance of considering the partiality of knowledge, not in the sense of being ideologically locked-in, but in Malinowski’s [1967] sense of being open to the disclosures, insights, and creativity that participation brings.
According to Rao, science consists of doing (as in doing empirical research) and happening (suffering or experiencing it) [1988:347]. The division into doing and happening is important because it reminds us that a specific kind of ethnography is not merely the outcome of deliberate text making. It is also the result of a deliberate choice of style of fieldwork. More so than the collection of data, paying attention to happenings may lead to new disclosures, revelations, and insights about the people, discipline, and researcher [Cesara 1982; Hastrup 1987, 1992a, b; Kulick 1995].

Metonymic faculties are exercised when we take an experienced happening to be part of a whole that is tacitly known, and puzzle about how things, events, and people are reduced to parts and what this implies [Polanyi 1964, Hastrup 1987]. The dialectic is not complete, however, until we also see the part as a sign illuminating the whole. From this angle, “thick description” of a happening may help elucidate the cultural whole or lead to a breakthrough of a major cultural theme.

Fieldwork assumes a metonymic structure, when it is experienced by the anthropologist as the actualization of the cultural schema or “the world” of the other in the anthropologist’s life and world view through a series of happenings [Hastrup 1987:294]. Alternatively, anthropologists’ empirically collected data and their exploration of remembered happenings allow the researcher (whose epistemology or identity has become ambiguous in the field) to use the imagination to create a gestalt or story [Hastrup 1987:297]. The story is illuminated by major, often newly discovered themes about the researched people, the ethnographer, and human beings generally.

According to Kant, it is a function of the imagination, without which we should have no knowledge, to complete the necessarily fragmentary data of the senses, just as
it combines our remembered experiences into a single connected whole. Not
unexpectedly, the researcher’s life, world view, and theoretics can undergo significant
change, which is a story as important for the history of the discipline, as is the story
about the researched people important for the accumulation of ethnographic knowledge
[Kulick 1995:14-15].

It is not surprising, therefore, that the very nature of intense fieldwork lends itself
quite naturally to the creation of several different kinds of experiential ethnographies or
genres even before the anthropologist deliberately experiments with styles of writing.
The heuristic table below depicts the different ethnographic genres that are possible by
simply working out the permutations of participant-observation or kinds of data with
ethnographic foci. Participant-observation allows us to record empirical data (doing),
experiential data (heeding happenings), or both. Ethnographic focus means that we can
focus solely on the ethnographic other, on the ethnographic self, or on both [Tedlock
1991: 79, 82]. Ethnographic self can refer to the ethnic group of the researcher or to the
person of the researcher. Before we begin to write, sometimes prodded by a strong
preference, we make a deliberate decision on which of these permutations to focus the
book. The result will be different genres as indicated in each box of the table. Naturally,
the permutation chosen will also affect our style of writing.
## TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS</th>
<th>DATA</th>
<th>ethnographic other</th>
<th>ethnographic self</th>
<th>ethnogr. self &amp; other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>empirical data (doing)</td>
<td>classical ethnography</td>
<td>native ethnography</td>
<td>auto-ethnography</td>
<td>comparative ethnography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experienced data (heeding happenings)</td>
<td>interpretive ethnography</td>
<td>fieldwork memoir, diary</td>
<td>reciprocal illumination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both (doing &amp; happening)</td>
<td>ethnographic case study</td>
<td>ethnographic autobiography</td>
<td>accommodative ethnography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the permutations shown in the above table, writing classical (or general) ethnographies, which were a specific invention of the British School of Social Anthropology [Langham 1981], was but one possibility among many. It was the specific predilection of that school of thought to place emphasis on observation and to produce works that were written in a clear and appropriate style for what was then considered to be science. Ornament by which is meant the “study of the figures of speech, language devices such as metaphor, that enhance or change meaning” [Horner 1988:12], were generally discouraged except where they were part of the experiential data of the ‘other’.

None of the other permutations were attached to, or sanctioned by, schools of thought, although one could associate some permutations with specific approaches, for
example, ethnographic case studies with Oscar Lewis’s culture of poverty approach. The permutations in the last two boxes of the Table are associated with an old tradition. Thus the superb book, Healers in the Night [1985], by the Jesuit priest and scholar Eric de Rosny, is based on reciprocal illumination (above the last box in the Table). Reciprocal illumination is associated with the Jesuit scholar Joseph François Lafitau (1670-1740). The accommodation method (last box), an extreme form of participant-observation, was developed by P. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), a Jesuit and eminent missionary scientist to China [Mühlmann (1968)1984:44, 45; Poewe 1994:7-12]. Coming out of a continuous tradition of scholarship, these methods and the ethnographies based on them are fresh and innovative. Other examples of works falling into each permutation exist, but are differentially tolerated. Space does not allow giving examples for all categories.

It is important to remember, however, that alternative anthropological writing always existed, but fell into other literary categories like: poetry (Sapir, Benedict [Handler 1986]), narrative and journalism [Herskovits 1934], novels (Laura Bohannon [Bowen 1964]), letters [Mead 1977], and diaries [Malinowski 1967]. For excellent overviews of the history of alternative writing done by anthropologists in the past see Tedlock [1991], Reck [1984], Gatewood [1984], Schmidt [1984], Handler [1984], Swidorski [1984], Bruner [1995]. Gateway’s paper discusses different ethnographic genres in terms of four “constraints on the form and content of the final product” [1984:5]: [1] “what natives do and what they think”; [2] “Ethnographer’s own values, motives, life ambitions, theoretical prejudices, and so on”; [3] “the author’s estimation of the intended audience”; and [4] “the currently preferred literary form” [p. 5]. The first and
second constraints are close to what I mean by focus on the ethnographic other and self, respectively. We differ in that I make explicit what he leaves implicit, namely, the kinds of data (empirical, experiential, or both) that ethnographers choose to use in their specific ethnography. By contrast, what I leave implicit, he makes explicit, namely concern for audience and anthropological fashions.

In sum, probing what happens (inside and outside of the self) while doing something is very much a matter of reading signs and signals, of engaging the symbolic faculty of metonymy in the context of the cultural schema of the other. As I point out elsewhere, it is what happens when we formulate hypotheses or hunches [1994]. Thus an ethnographer who participates in an event heeds what is happening (to self and other) while s/he is participating [Hastrup 1987:292-294]. Given the foreign cultural schema, what is happening during an event is the result of the effect of that culture on the researcher and the researched. To my mind, this effect has to do simultaneously with metonym and empathy. Ethnographers who surrender themselves to the happenings, therefore, really experience the workings of that culture in their lives [Malinowski 1967; Cesara 1982]. It opens in them an area of sensory perception that was hitherto unused. Should one be surprised that they might want to step away from a school of thought and explore this new area of perception in another style of writing?

**Empathy and Memory**

The story of ethnography is like the story of Adam and Eve. We bit into the textual apple of the tree of the knowledge of experience and rhetoric, and now there is no going back. Nevertheless, the causal and experiential aspects of metonym are often missed [Durham and Fernandez 1991:192], while empathy, in some ways associated
with metonym, is almost completely misunderstood. Thus in North America, experimental ethnographers tend to focus almost entirely on metaphor and intersubjectivity [Schultz and Lavenda 1987:46].

If metonym has to do with the actualization of a schema through happenings so that the happenings are signs of, and/or are triggered by the schema, then empathy is the faculty that allows us to experience the happening. Broadly speaking, empathy is the ability to share in another's emotions and feelings. It is not, however, as it tends to be defined in Webster’s dictionary, a matter of projecting one's own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him or her better. More frequently, the reverse is the case. Empathy has to do with the projection, in the sense of impact, of the other’s personality and culture on one’s own. The other’s personality and culture create a happening in the open-minded or receptive researcher that requires thoughtful exploration [Hastrup 1987:293]. The result may be an increased illumination of both the other’s and one’s own personality, culture, and epistemology. Clearly, if an ethnographer wants to give expression to this increased illumination, the ethnographer is compelled to write a different kind of work from the kind that Evans-Pritchard made famous without, however, denying the important and essential, if separate role played by the latter.

The meaning of empathy is in fact more complex than that given above. It is also more than the expectation that the anthropologist be “an unmitigated nice guy” with “extraordinary sensibility, an almost preternatural capacity to think, feel and perceive like a native,” as Geertz would have it [1983:56]. And while I would contend that fieldwork is a journey of discovery, it is not quite the quest story as satirized and

According to T. Lipps [1851 - 1914], empathy is based on the assumption of a common humanity. This assumption is quite the opposite of that of reflexivity which depends on cultural differences and distance (even when none exist or are of minor importance) and is concerned with intersubjective meaning.

Empathetic researchers can experience themselves, in some manner, in the other’s experiences and vice versa. As I converse or interact with the other, the other and/or I will recognize things in accord with our respective inclinations and needs.

It is not the case, as is often assumed, that experiencing oneself in the other’s experiences and vice versa makes for identity. Nor is it the case that the experience is necessarily positive to be empathetic. Lipps distinguished between positive empathy or pleasure and negative empathy or pain. Positive empathy refers to agreement between the stimulus derived from interaction with the other and one’s inner activity. Negative empathy occurs when the suggestions implied in the interaction conflict with one’s inner self. “Inner activity” or “inner self” refer to the complex activity which involves thought, feeling, intuition, sensation, imagination, and suspected or unsuspected attitudes. In other words we use all human faculties to make sense of other (and self) and then translate these into written, oral, or visual media—if that is what we want to do.

Lipps [1902, in Zweig 1967: 485-486] distinguishes at least three kinds of empathy each of which can be experienced negatively or positively.⁶ [1] Empirical empathy occurs when sounds of natural objects remind us of, for example, “howling” or “groaning.” They can result in such metaphorical descriptions as “howling storm,” “groaning trees,” which call forth similar feelings in the experiencing self and other. Note
the involvement of memory in matters of empathy. One person, however, may experience “groaning trees” positively, the other negatively. The reminder becomes more powerful, that is metonymic, when it is experienced as, for example, the “groaning of all creation” or “the groaning” of the spirit, as charismatic Christians in Africa and elsewhere might say.

[2] Mood empathy occurs, for example, when colour, music, art, conversation, and so on, call forth similar feelings or moods in the researcher and researched. Thus I experienced Herero tunes as haunting, melancholy, and on the whole sad, which is what the Herero showed and said they felt [Poewe 1985]. It increased my understanding of their culture, centered as it was on defeat and death, although it also distanced me personally from them.

[3] Empathy for the sensible (in the sense of perceptible) appearance of living beings occurs when we take other people’s gestures, tones of voice, and other characteristics as symptomatic of their inner life [Malinowski 1967]. We can talk about “appearance empathy” when we recognize, as in a flash, by a gesture, or something external, the other’s inner life; when we know that it could be, but need not be, part of our inner life. For example, this kind of empathy led to a real breakthrough in my understanding of the Herero. It struck me that their dress made a statement simultaneously about their superiority, sense of failure, and self-protection. This was confirmed by subsequent research and discussions with Herero women.

To counter postmodernist anxieties about empathy, let us look at some examples of negative empathy from the anthropological literature. For example, Malinowski was attracted to native women. His diary contains several sensually evocative descriptions
of their bodies in walk and gesture. “I liked naked human bodies in motion, and at moments, they also excited me” [Malinowski 1967:281; Kohl 1986:50-1; 1987]. Yet, as Stocking [1986:26] and Kohl [1986:46] point out, it is precisely this sensual arousal that separated Malinowski from the Trobrianders. At the most empathetic point, Malinowski was aware of the gulf between him and the human beings around him. Furthermore, he saw this precisely because he knew himself to share in a common humanity.

The awareness of a gulf between self and other, at moments of intimacy, is what negative empathy is all about. It has much to do with surrender to the human condition and with making oneself vulnerable even at the risk of pain [Wolff 1964]. An example of negative empathy that was, however, transformed into positive empathy and led to a theoretical breakthrough will illustrate the point. The case is that of the Afrikaner dominee, Nico Smith, who moved to the black township of Mamelodi “to experience the other side of South African life” [personal interview, Mamelodi, summer 1989]. He had an extraordinary empathy with blacks. Yet he suffered severe depression, a form of negative empathy, not only because the needs of blacks in townships were overwhelming, but because he learned that: “young blacks are becoming more brutal,” that the “majority of black children are embittered,” that they “do not value their own lives and therefore do not hesitate to take the life of another” [de Saintonge 1989:178; personal interview, 1989]. “They did not mind committing suicide, nor did they mind killing each other,” said Nico Smith during the interview.

What is curious about the Nico Smith story is that his negative empathy which resulted in severe depression came in time to be transformed into positive empathy. He achieved this by coming to terms with what he formerly regarded to be an unacceptable
reality, namely, that South Africa would not escape some sort of drastic violence.

Following his surrender to this threatening reality, he turned to action. It involved both doing something new and rethinking his theology. He remembered German Christians who in early 1930 foresaw that Germany was headed for a catastrophe. They began then to build up a new system of values and relationships. When, in 1945, Germany was in ruins, its people demoralized, its industries and cities destroyed, these Christians played a vital role in the rebuilding of their country. They had already discovered an alternative way as, by the way, has Nico Smith [personal interview, 1989; de Saintonge 1989:218]. At a time of terrible violence in the townships, he built up a contact group among black and white families that extended substantially their involvement with one another.

The unexpected gulf between ourselves and those to whom we are humanly committed or physically attracted, the recognition of difference despite “mutual erotic attraction” between “an anthropologist and a person in the field” [Kulick 1995:19], epitomize negative empathy. Far from forcing ethnographers to pretend to something we are not, negative empathy may make us more human. Reflecting on her experience of “falling in love with an-Other lesbian” in the field, Blackwood writes:

The ethnographic experience is about experiencing oneself with others, of knowing we are all different, yet recognizing the bonds among us rather than reifying the difference to make Others exotic or inferior [1995:72].

Lipps talks about other forms of empathy. Suffice it to say here that empathy has to do with those moments of clear perception of the other which powerfully stimulate our imagination. Consequently, we experience the other as part of something greater or of
something in us, our past, our theoretical assumptions, our approach to research, or in
the other’s past, the other’s way of life, that we could not see or face before. As Kulick
[1995:20] emphasizes, this challenge is epistemologically productive. It encourages
social scientists to examine their assumptions, methods, and theories, or to formulate
hypotheses and hunches that are thereafter subjected to falsification.

Conclusion

Experiential and experimental ethnographies may overlap, but at the core they
are fundamentally different. For the production of knowledge and for epistemological
reflection, experiential ethnographers depend on how the “self” of the anthropologist
interacts with experiences, people, and the flow of events in the field. This multi-level
reciprocal dynamic between anthropologist and the field is the source of the proliferation
of experiential ethnographies and genres. By contrast, for their text-making,
experimental ethnographers depend on rhetoric and on using “the self” as a device for
realism or as a “source for narrative strength” [Stoller and Olkes 1989:xii]. Deliberate
invention of textual strategies is the source of the proliferation of experimental
this experimentation with the creation of a new anthropological culture and program. But
while some experimental ethnographies are successful, the experimental program is a
“cultural trap.”

Restriction of writing style is most effective when it is imposed by a school of
thought based on a clear sense of goals, methods, and resources. But the
anthropologist has invested too much intellectual power in the field, to give up exploring
fully its potential for discovery of knowledge and styles of conveying it. Look at what we
still do not have. Solid comparative works based on as firm a knowledge of one’s own history and tradition, as on that of the other [de Rosny 1985]. Consequently, critiques of things Western are hardly credible, except, that is, to those who share the same ideological persuasion as postmodernists. We have not yet learned the simple lesson, that criticism is more effective when it is implicit and mutual, as in the method of reciprocal illumination, than when it is explicit and directed to those who are, or that which is, safe to criticize. Serious memoirs, biographies [Clifford 1982], histories [Stocking 1987; Langham 1981], and historical novels by anthropologists are rare. Those that exist are focussed almost entirely on British and American anthropology. Furthermore, the time has come to stop treating societies and countries, South Africa for example, as special cases when they have been part of global processes all along [Furlong 1991; Featherstone 1991; Hexham and Poewe 1997; Poewe 1996c]. Participant-observation, “actual physical presence in their world” [Hastrup and Hervik 1994:3], immersion in archival material written in other languages, these methods of presence will continue to be central to the “anthropological project of comprehending the world” [ibid:3].

So long as we are a social science, our primary concern must be to maintain a clear link between the reality we research and what we write. To eliminate this link means eliminating anthropology.
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Notes

1. Numerous alternative terms are used for experimental ethnographers. They include: experimentalists, ‘new ethnographers,’ textualists, postmodernists, and deconstructionists [Probyn 1993:72; Olivier de Sardan 1992:7]. Tyler [1986] also uses the term anarchists.

2. According to Bohannan [1995:181, 185], “An ideology is a set of doctrines, assertions, and intentions that undergird a social, religious, or political position.” To quote further: “Ideologies differ from science (including social science) in that their propositions are not presented as theory to be criticized, tested, and improved, but rather as premises to be accepted on faith” [p.185]. It is a superb criticism of Clifford [1986:2] without referring to him.

3. I use metonym the way Leach [1976] defined it, but modify it in accordance with my field observations. According to Leach, metonymy includes sign, natural index, and signal. In the first, A stands for B as part for a whole; in the second, A indicates B; in the third, A triggers B so that the relationship between A and B is mechanical and automatic. What makes the metonymic operation powerful is the fact that, in practice, we do not carefully distinguish among sign, index, and signal, so that A stands for and indicates B, while B is seen to trigger A. In a happening, the happening [A] usually stands for and indicates the schema being actualized [B], while the schema [B] is seen to trigger the happening [A]. For charismatic and African Christians, this schema is centered on the activities of the Holy Spirit so that events [A] are interpreted as evidence of the Holy Spirit [B] working in the life of a person. For experiential anthropologists, the schema [B] being actualized in happenings [A] is that of the culture or “world” of the people under study.

4. In Barawa [1986] Jackson uses hypotyposis, vivid description appealing to the sense of sight, to great effect [p.11-12, 29]. While I am not going to define each term here Jackson uses epizeuxis, anaphora, gradatio [see p.19]; ploche, epistrophe and epanalepsis [see p.22], among many others. Indeed, in my classes I found that students tend not to understand Jackson’s books, especially, Barawa until the world of rhetoric is opened to them. In Barawa Jackson is the main character.

5. Joseph François Lafitau (1670-1740) illuminated the customs and institutions of native Americans in terms of those of ancient Greece, at the same time that he illuminated the customs and institutions of ancient Greece in terms of those of native Americans [Mühlmann 1984:4].
6. According to Zweig [1967], Lipps retains the idea that empathy means projection of our feelings onto others. In the Romantic tradition that is precisely what empathy is not.