AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL?

IS THE 'RACE', GENDER, AGE AND PERSONALITY OF THE ANTHROPOLOGIST SIGNIFICANT?

Many anthropologists believe that autobiography is mere narcissism. That view is challenged by the contributors to this volume, whose detailed accounts of fieldwork and their relationships with the people they were observing provide unique insights into how anthropologists really work. They show that the 'race', nationality, gender, age and personal history of the fieldworker do affect both the process of fieldwork and the production of the final text. The book is a stimulating contribution to current debates about reflexivity and the political responsibility of the anthropologist.

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Anthropology/Cultural Studies

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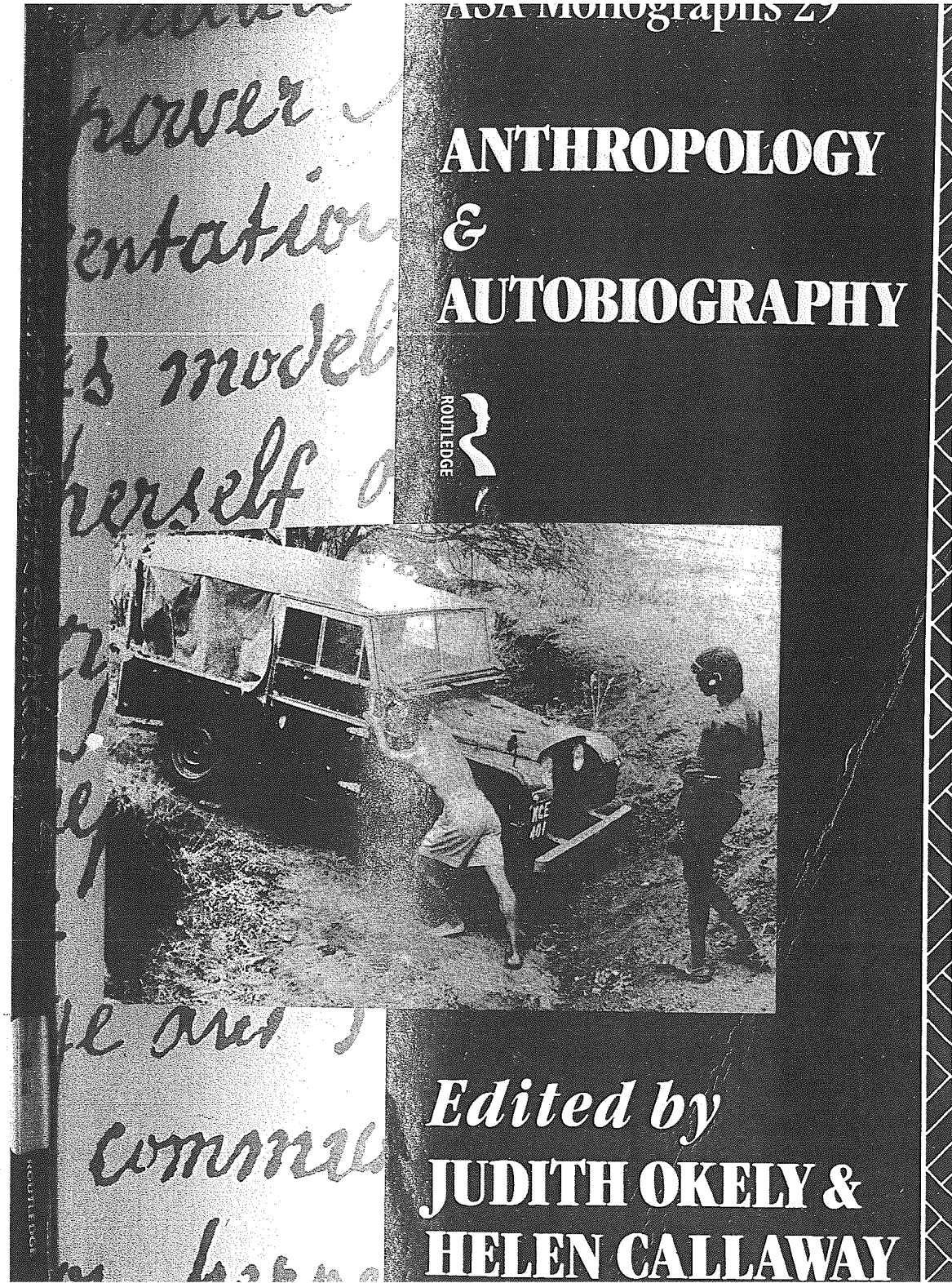

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Chapter 1

Anthropology and autobiography

Participatory experience and embodied knowledge

Judith Okely

This collection is not concerned with the autobiographies of individual academics who *happen* to be anthropologists. It asks questions about the links between the anthropologist's experience of fieldwork, other cultures, other notions of autobiography and ultimately the written text. Autobiography for its own sake is increasingly recognised by the literary canon as a genre (Olney 1980) and, together with individual biographies, is being used within history (Bertaux 1981; Vincent 1981; Bland and John 1990). Doubtless anthropologists could make innovative contributions in those domains. Within the discipline of anthropology, there is further scope for its insertion. Here the anthropologist's past is relevant only in so far as it relates to the anthropological enterprise, which includes the choice of area and study, the experience of fieldwork, analysis and writing.

In the early 1970s, Scholte saw reflexivity as a critical, emancipatory exercise which liberated anthropology from any vestige of a value-free scientism:

> Fieldwork and subsequent analysis constitute a unified praxis ... the ethnographic situation is defined not only by the native society in question, but also by the ethnological tradition 'in the head' of the ethnographer. Once he is actually in the field, the native's presuppositions also became operative, and the entire situation turns into complex intercultural mediation and a dynamic interpersonal experience. (1974: 438)

Scholte did not specify how this 'interpersonal experience' should be written up, but his advocacy of a reflexive approach can be seen as a necessary preliminary to the inclusion of the anthropologist in the analysis. In this volume, Kirsten Hastrup draws attention to the peculiar reality in the field. 'It is not the unmediated world of the "others" but the world between ourselves and the others.'

While reflexivity or some autobiographical mode may have been incorporated within specific interest groups elsewhere, there is considerable reluctance to consider autobiography as a serious intellectual issue within

British anthropology. In a pioneering paper, David Pocock (1973) suggested a reflexive examination of anthropologists' texts in the light of their biography. He gave examples from his own work. The details remain unpublished, although the notion of a personal anthropology is used imaginatively in an introduction to the discipline (1975). Fifteen years since Pocock's paper, Ernest Gellner has written against a reflexivity of the mildest, least personal form found in Geertz's *Works and Lives* (1988):

> My own advice to anthropology departments is that this volume be kept in a locked cupboard, with the key in the possession of the head of department, and that students be lent it only when a strong case is made out by their tutors. (1988: 26)

A popular put down is that reflexivity or autobiography is 'mere navel gazing', as if anthropology could ever involve only the practitioner. The concern for an autobiographical element in anthropology is to work through the specificity of the anthropologist's self in order to contextualise and transcend it. In other instances autobiography or reflexivity in anthropology has been pejoratively labelled 'narcissism' (Llobera 1987: 118). This use of the classical Greek myth is even more confused. Self-adoration is quite different from self-awareness and a critical scrutiny of the self. Indeed those who protect the self from scrutiny could as well be labelled self-satisfied and arrogant in presuming their presence and relations with others to be unproblematic. Reflexivity is incorrectly confused with self-adoration (Babcock 1980).

A fundamental aspect of anthropology concerns the relationships between cultures or groups. The autobiography of the fieldworker anthropologist is neither in a cultural vacuum, nor confined to the anthropologist's own culture, but is instead placed in a cross-cultural encounter. Fieldwork practice is always concerned with relationships (cf. Campbell 1989). The anthropologist has to form long-term links with others across the cultural divide, however problematic. All of the contributors to this volume, in so far as they write of themselves, consider the self in terms of their relations with others. The autobiographical experience of fieldwork requires the deconstruction of those relationships with the rigour demanded elsewhere in the discipline. There have indeed been poor autobiographies by anthropologists who have perhaps believed that the genre is more exhibitory than exploratory, especially where 'the other' is used as a trigger for the writer's fantasies. Where the encounter is exoticised, the autobiographical account merely embodies at an individual level the discredited practice of fictionalising the other in order to affirm western dominance.

In promoting dialogical modes, Clifford retains a defensive and pejorative view of autobiography; the former 'are not in principle autobiographical; they need not lead to hyper self-consciousness or self-absorption' (1986a: 15). While recognising the validity of 'acute political and epistemological self-

consciousness', he is obliged to reassure the reader that this is not 'self-absorption' (ibid.: 7). The 'armchair' anthropologist, as sedentary and solitary researcher, has tended to interpret anthropological autobiography in this way. By contrast, the autobiography of fieldwork is about lived interactions, participatory experience and embodied knowledge; whose aspects ethnographers have not fully theorised.

Recent developments of the 'production of texts by means of texts, rather than by means of fieldwork' (Fardon 1990: 5) and a near exclusive focus on the writing as activity risks diverting attention from fieldwork as experience. Geertz (1988) has, for example, reduced fieldwork to an instrumental account. As Carrithers has noted: 'on Geertz's showing, research seems only a frustrating and solipsistic appendage of the supreme act itself, writing' (1988: 20). The new emphasis on fieldwork as writing sees the encounter and experience as unproblematic. When Fabian (1988) cleverly distinguishes fieldwork as 'writing down' from the construction of a monograph as 'writing up', there is none the less a danger of simplification.

In an extreme stance, fieldwork has been downgraded to the mechanical collection of ethnography which is contrasted with the superior invention of theory (Friedman 1988). Anyone apparently, can *do* ethnography, it is for the desk-bound theoreticians to interpret it. This brahminical division assumes that the field experience is separable from theory, that the enterprise of inquiry is discontinuous from its results (Rabinow 1977). Participant observation textbooks which reduce fieldwork to a set of laboratory procedures rest on the same assumptions. Before the textual critics, fieldwork was also considered theoretically unproblematic by much of the academy. Its peculiarity, drama, fear and wonder were neither to be contemplated nor fully explored in print. Neophytes were simply to get on with the job with tight-lipped discipline (cf. Kenna). Veracity was confirmed by faith in what Fardon calls 'experiential positivism' (1990: 3). Here, positivism destroys the notion of experience which I wish to evoke. The experience of fieldwork is totalising and draws on the whole being. It has not been theorised because it has been trivialised as the 'collection of data' by a dehumanised machine. Autobiography dismantles the positivist machine.

An interest in the autobiographical dimension of the anthropological encounter has been conflated with a suggestion that ethnography has no other reality than a literary make-believe (e.g. Gellner 1988). Yet, as Smith argues, the autobiographical contract is not as fluid as that which binds the fiction writer and the reader:

> In autobiography the reader recognises the inevitability of unreliability but suppresses the recognition in a tenacious effort to expect 'truth' of some kind. The nature of that truth is best understood as the struggle of a historical rather than a fictional person to come to terms with her own past. (1987: 46)

Another confusion is that between textual concerns and an apolitical dilletantism. Scholte came to regret a fusion between literary 'scholarly gentlemen' and reflexivity (1987). Yet a reflexivity which excludes the political is itself unreflective. A critique of the anthropologist as 'innocent' author can be extended to the anthropologist as participant, collaborator or, in some cases, activist (Huizer 1979). The existing and future personal narratives of anthropologists in the field can be examined not only for stylistic tropes and their final textual construction, but also as a record of the experience, the political encounter and its historical context (see Huizer and Mannheim 1979; Okely 1987). In this way the anthropologist as future author is made self-conscious, critical and reflexive about the encounter and its possible power relations (Street 1990).

Postmodernism which challenges master narratives and total systems has itself been understood as an extreme form of relativism where, in an atmosphere of valueless cynicism, anything goes. The disintegration of totalities, however, can be differentially interpreted as the unleashing of the full range of creative possibilities (Nicholson 1990). The cultural past can also be re-examined. Alternative paradigms have always existed at the margins; in this case, autobiographical texts which defied the master canon. Postmodernism may have created a climate where different autobiographies elicit new interest, but the former did not create the latter.

Hesitations about incorporating and expanding the idea of autobiography into anthropology rest on very western, ethnocentric traditions. Autobiography, as a genre, has come to be associated with a 'repertoire of conventions' (Dodd 1986: 3). The tradition has been constructed by 'inclusion, exclusion and transformation' (ibid.: 6). This is not to deny that autobiography can ever be more than a construction (Spencer, Kenna, Rapport, this volume), but the specific criteria for its acceptance within a genre has been confined to the Eurocentric and literary canon. The western origin of the form is St Augustine with other major examples from Rousseau and J. S. Mill. A 'Great Man' tradition which speaks of individual linear progress and power has defined what constitutes a meaningful life (Juhasz 1980: 221). While there will have been historical fluctuations in the tradition, western writers have worked within and against it. Dodd suggests:

> vocation ... is central not only to St Augustine's *Confessions*, but to Victorian autobiography ... the point of closure ... is vocation, the resolution of self-determination. (1986: 5)

Other forms of autobiography are marginalised or excluded. Working-class autobiographies have tended to be excluded from the literary genre and 'bequeathed to social historians' (Dodd 1986: 7). Autobiographies from seemingly vocationless women have been judged neither culturally nor aesthetically significant by earlier normative criteria (Smith 1987: 8). Women have 'internalised a picture of themselves that precluded the kind of self

attention which would generate autobiography' as recognised by the canon (Kolodny 1980: 241). There is another non-literary category by politicians which is explicitly addressed to political historians, but is still a message of individual public success.

What has been labelled the 'confessional', as opposed to St Augustine's or even Rousseau's, is not included as part of the genre (ibid.: 240), and implies a series of indiscretions which give the lie to prevailing assumptions and dominant ideals. The confessional has also come to be regarded as concerned only with salacious indiscretions. Instead, in the context of anthropological fieldwork, it could be an attempt to analyse the actual research process in place of an idealised, scientised presentation. The confessional also implies loss of control. This again defies a carefully constructed tradition in which 'Omissions and deletions have constituted the very art of the form' (ibid.: 240) and where 'detachment' is 'a prescription that comes ... out of the entire accepted canon of western autobiographical writing' (ibid.: 239). A genre of autobiography has focused on a constructed public self with the private made separate and discussed in terms of its threat to the public persona. Alternatively, the private is confronted only to be highly controlled and rationalised, as for example Rousseau's confessions about auto-eroticism (Derrida 1967/76).

The linear public progress established within the dominant western tradition has emphasised the individual as all-powerful isolate. Edward Said has voiced regret over an increasing interest in autobiography precisely because the subject is presented as outside time and context (1982: 17). But as Dodd argues, Said has 'confused autobiographies and the Autobiography constructed by the Tradition' (1986: 11). Similarly, anthropologists who are reluctant to consider autobiography may be reacting to the carefully constructed tradition which sees autobiography as 'egoistic'. Raymond Firth's controlled, near invisible insertion of personal narrative as part of his 'background to anthropological work' in Tikopia is followed by an apology for a:

> somewhat egoistical recital not because I think that anthropology should be made light reading ... but because some account of the relations of the anthropologist to his people is relevant to the nature of the results. (1936/65: 10)

Firth thus has to overcome several western associations with autobiography – that it risks being 'light' or trivial and that it is self-inflating. The western tradition both defines autobiography as egoism and in turn demands it.

Anthropologists have inserted the 'I' only at key junctures in ethnographic monographs in order, it is argued, to give authority to the text (Clifford 1986b; Pratt 1986; Rosaldo 1986). Otherwise they produced accounts from which the self had been sanitised. To establish authority, it seems, requires only the briefest of appearances. The 'I' is the ego trip, and in

'arrival' accounts emerges not so much from the practice of fieldwork, but more from writing traditions in western culture (ibid.). That the anthropologist soon disappears from the text is, as I have argued above, consistent with the belief that autobiography is no more than the affirmation of individual power or confessional self-absorption.

The western tradition of autobiography has been most clearly articulated by Gusdorf, writing in the 1950s, and validated by Olney (1980: 8–9). Gusdorf either ignores non-western autobiographies or dismisses them as 'a cultural transplant' (Stanford Friedman 1988: 35). Autobiography is associated with western individualism and, according to Gusdorf:

> is not to be found outside of our cultural area; ... it expresses a concern peculiar to Western man, a concern that has been of good use in his systematic conquest of the universe. (1956/80: 29)

Gusdorf asserted that autobiography does not develop in cultures where the individual:

> does not feel himself to exist outside of others, and still less against others, but very much *with* others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community. (1956/80: 29–30)

Gusdorf's definitions of the genre, effectively the Great White Man tradition, drew upon pre-existing western assumptions both about autobiography and about other cultures. Despite their rejection of the monolithic stereotypes of non-western cultures, western anthropologists have not escaped these assumptions.

A corollary of the autobiographical tradition which emphasises individualistic and public linear development, is a clear demarcation between the autobiography and the diary. The latter is the place for the personal, if not the secret. A diary is also the 'classic articulation of dailiness' (Juhasz 1980: 334). Gender differences noted in women's autobiographies carry aspects otherwise consigned to diaries. Juhasz suggests that:

> women's stories show less a pattern of linear development towards some clear goal than one of repetitive cumulative, cyclical structure ... dailiness matters – by definition it is never a conclusion always a process ... The perspective of the diary is immersion not distance. (ibid.: 223–4)

It is that very dailiness and immersion, along with insights into the personal, which make Malinowski's *Diary* (1967) so informative about the experience of fieldwork, his relations with others, and the cultural encounter. In an earlier paper, I advocated that self-awareness of the anthropologist in the field be explored through such forms as the diary, which should be seen as integral to the anthropological endeavour. Malinowski did not treat his diary as such, but as a place where the self could be split from the would-be scientist which his official publications had aimed to present. The fieldwork

practice recorded in the diary did not fit the methodological exhortations outlined in *The Argonauts* (1922).Thus for example, Malinowski mingled intimately with white men, while officially abjuring contact (Okely 1975). The posthumous publication of the diary surprised and scandalised many of his followers. Geertz's response diverted a discussion of the self to generic notions of the person (1974). In his postgraduate Malinowski course at Cambridge in 1970, Leach declared to us that it should never have been published. His later interest in autobiography (1984, 1989: 45) suggests a change of mind.

The anthropologist, imbued with western notions, is torn between the Tradition of Autobiography as public achievement by lone hero and its antithesis which undermines it. Once autobiography is set up as the celebration of power then its opposite always threatens, namely the loss of power, the loss of face. The confessional, belittled by the canon, then becomes what autobiography is defined to exclude – namely the loss of control. That in turn is invidiously confused with self-analysis. So long as the self is rigorously split off and secreted in diaries, then self-analysis in anthropological practice is perceived as loss of professional armour. Yet anthropologists, more than most, are in a position to question western definitions of autobiography, since they are made aware of cross-cultural alternatives.

In the Great White Man tradition, the lone achiever has felt compelled to construct and represent his uniqueness, seemingly in defiance of historical conditions, but actually in tune with the dominant power structures which have rewarded him. By contrast, those on the margins may first learn through an alternative personal experience their lack of fit with the dominant system. Their individual experience belies the public description at the centre. Out of their experience have arisen alternative forms on the margins. Autobiographies from the marginalised and the powerless – those of a subordinate race, religion, sex and class – have not inevitably been a celebration of uniqueness, let alone public achievement, but a record of questions and of subversion. The most personal, seemingly idiosyncratic, hitherto unwritten or unspoken, has paradoxically found resonance with others in a similar position. A solidarity is found through what seemed only an individual perspective. Stanford Friedman notes that:

> the individualist concept of the autobiographical self that pervades Gusdorf's work raises serious theoretical problems for critics who recognise that the self, self-creation and self-consciousness are profoundly different for women, minorities, and many non-western peoples. (1988: 34)

Contrary to the expectation that an autobiography which speaks of the personal and specific should thereby elaborate uniqueness, autobiographies may, as has been found among the marginalised, evoke common aspects. The reader is invited to recognise similarities, 'individualistic paradigms of

the self ignore the role of collective and relational identities in the individuation process' (ibid.: 35). In a study of de Beauvoir's autobiography, I have argued that the *Mémoires* (1958) invite the woman reader to identify with common aspects of a young girl's childhood (Okely 1986: 22–50). Stanford Friedman explores how the autobiographies of women and members of minorities may expose historically generated differences from dominant groups, depending on sex and race:

> Isolate individualism is an illusion. It is also the privilege of power. A white man has the luxury of forgetting his skin color and sex. He can think of himself as an 'individual'. Women and minorities have no such luxury. (1988: 39)

Neither do anthropologists have such luxury when in another culture. But the specificity may be lost in the thinking and the writing.[1] Any autobiography by the anthropologist, while emerging from a unique and personal experience, evokes resonances of recognition among others. There are solidarities as well as contrasts to be examined, and systematised for the enrichment of the discipline. The autobiography is not a linear progress of the lone individual outside history, let alone outside cultures and the practice of anthropology. There are ways of breaking from the individualistic western paradigm both in the autobiography of the anthropologist and through autobiographical forms in other cultures. Other peoples have varying notions of self and ways of describing them through experiential narrative in both oral and written traditions. These await fuller exploration.

Whereas in literary studies a concern has been to move the analysis of others' autobiographies into the literary canon, if autobiography were fully incorporated into anthropology, it would be about the construction of both the anthropologists' autobiographies in the field and those of others. An anthropological perspective concerns reflexivity in the field and the process of autobiographical construction, not simply the critique of others' existing texts. Here social anthropology has characteristics especially apt in relation to any genre of autobiography. The practice of intensive fieldwork is unique among all other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. The bounded periods of participant observation conducted by sociologists bear no comparison. Long-term immersion through fieldwork is generally a total experience, demanding all of the anthropologist's resources; intellectual, physical, emotional, political and intuitive. The experience involves so much of the self that it is impossible to reflect upon it fully by extracting that self. Under pressure to be 'scientifically objective', anthropologists have traditionally compartmentalised that fieldwork experience.

An example appears regrettably in the Marxist *Critique of Anthropology*. Kielstra regrets the confusion in status between anthropologists as specialised professionals and as general intellectuals:

> Fieldwork is a strongly emotional experience. If a fieldworker has some creative talents that does not necessarily make them interesting from a scientific point of view ... People who are insecure about their academic positions and doubtful about their status as intellectuals may mix them up ... One should not be afraid to accept that anthropology ... is a partial activity, dealing with only part of human experience. (1987: 90)

The splitting of reasoned from emotional activity which Kielstra advocates is embedded in the European Enlightenment. He also confuses 'creative talents' with (denigrated) emotions. I would suggest the very opposite to Kielstra, that those who are most insecure about their identity as intellectuals may cling to a professional and instrumental facade. Moreover, a division of labour advocated in a Marxist journal which privileges professional activity, as opposed to intellectual and other work, goes against the spirit of Marx's celebrated passage in *The German Ideology*: (1846, 1960 edition: 22). Marx was arguing against a division of labour which separates critical thought from action, mental from manual labour and one intellectual pursuit from another.

In 'The Self and Scientism' (1975) I argued that the emotional and personal cannot be so easily separated from intellectual endeavour. Malinowski's response in moments of anger against the Trobrianders, recorded in his diary, cannot be seen as merely idiosyncratic and private, since it reveals the racist overtones of his European cultural heritage. In the 1970s, the Women's Liberation Movement argued that 'the personal is political'. I contend also that in an academic context 'the personal is theoretical'. This stands against an entrenched tradition which relegates the personal to the periphery and to the 'merely anecdotal': pejoratively contrasted in positivist social science with generalisable truth. Yet, anthropologists are steeped in the anecdotal.

The pressure to split off the self and the autobiography of fieldwork from its total practice owes a great deal to the positivist history of social anthropology which emphasised the neutral, impersonal and scientific nature of the enterprise. This involved a peculiar combination of intensive fieldwork by means of participant observation with the ideal of the objective observer. Dumont has noted the paradoxical consequences:

> more 'empathetic involvement' was achieved in the field experience ... At the same time, the more that 'involved sympathy' emerged during the fieldwork experience, the more 'disciplined detachment' was found in the published reports under the pretext of objectivity. (1978: 7)

The self's engagement in fieldwork could not be naturally suppressed, but had to be self-consciously worked at. The autobiographical mode was highly controlled within mainstream ethnographies. But the self would leak out; in the oral culture of the academy, secreted in diaries, transformed as fiction or

split into separate and hitherto marginalised accounts. In this volume, Helen Callaway examines in greater detail some of these earlier texts by women.

In the now classic *Return to Laughter* (1954) by Laura Bohannan, alias Smith Bowen, we see the transformation of autobiography into fiction under a pseudonym. In the preface, Bohannan describes the familiar split between the academic and the whole person, one of which others such as Kielstra might approve:

> When I write as a social anthropologist and within the canons of the discipline, I write under another name. Here I have written simply as a human being, and the truth I have tried to tell concerns the sea change in one's self that comes from immersion in another and alien world. (1954: xix)

Thus Bohannan's reading of 'the canons of the discipline' excluded autobiography and analysis. The self and its narrative of experience had to be split off into 'fiction'; a creative mode viewed with suspicion by social science.

Powdermaker's *Stranger and Friend* (1967), breaking from pseudonym and fiction, integrated autobiography with theories and methodologies in her varied fieldwork. Of an earlier generation than Bohannan, but writing at a later stage, she successfully analyses relevant aspects of her earlier life and her academic training under Malinowski to confront the implication of class, sex and ethnicity in her work. This happy integration of the anthropologist's self with fieldwork practices was rare and, significantly for academic orthodoxy, was written near her retirement. Later texts on participant observation either ignore the self (Wax 1971) and gender of the researcher (Freilich 1977), or tend to recognise gender in order to control for 'bias' (Whitehead and Conaway 1986). Now that so-called qualitative methodology is being increasingly institutionalised within the social sciences, it seems that social anthropologists have either abdicated responsibility in describing it or deferred to those (especially sociologists) who would routinise the practice in the form of simplistic flow charts. Yet there are ways of reflecting upon and theorising the total experience of fieldwork which cannot be reduced to a set of neo-positivistic techniques. And that would include autobiographical reflection.

From the 1960s, and especially the 1970s and 1980s, some anthropologists, mainly outside Britain, began to write separate semi-autobiographical accounts. Some gave chronological accounts of the fieldworkers' entry, immersion and departure using the 'I', but not necessarily showing reflexivity (Okely 1975). Some are explicitly addressed to a popular readership with no interest in the rest of anthropology (Barley 1983). They risk exploiting the very stereotypes about exotica and eccentric academics which anthropology would hope to dismantle. In a postmodern era when the orthodoxy of classical ethnographies has been more readily challenged

within the academic canon, later autobiographical accounts have been unconvincingly hailed as innovative contributions (e.g. Rabinow 1977). Their acclaim within specific academic circles may be in part explained by patronage and peer group solidarity (Geertz 1988: 91). Others have remained on the margins. Caplan (1988) has echoed the outrage felt by many women anthropologists at Clifford's exclusion of women anthropologists (1986a) on the grounds that feminists had contributed nothing to his definitions of theory and experimental texts. In fact, many of the later autobiographical accounts lack the breadth and subtlety of Powdermaker or Bohannan who were experimental in an era when this quality was not judged relevant within the academic canon. Others have again been published under pseudonyms (e.g. Cesara 1982) and classified as a confessional; too embarrassingly uncontrolled or unedited for mainstream acceptance.

An outstanding contribution to the autobiographical mode integrated within a monograph about the people, the other culture and the fieldwork encounter is Dumont's *The Headman and I* (1978). This was in part a response to *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) which held the promise of an autobiographical account, but where Lévi-Strauss – 'remains outside . . . There is no back and forth movement between experience and consciousness' (Dumont 1978: 10). Given this absence of the self as problematic and personal, *Tristes Tropiques* was correctly read as part of the heroic questing tradition which western autobiography celebrates, and is confirmed in the collection title, *The Anthropologist as Hero* (Hayes and Hayes 1970). Consistent with this absence of self, Lévi-Strauss (1988) has rejected the specifically personal in any autobiographical mode.

In Britain questions of reflexivity and personal aspects of fieldwork were made most apparent during the 1985 ASA conference Anthropology at Home (Jackson 1987), because the anthropologists were obliged to be self-conscious about the similarities or contrasts in the context of fieldwork in their native country. Alongside political concerns of intrusion and partisanship, questions of national, ethnic origins were confronted and, in some cases, gender by women. Those who pursued these implications were in effect writing autobiographies, but in few of these cases had the anthropologists approached fieldwork at the outset with thoughts about having to analyse and write these details in an academic context. Reflexivity has rarely been seen as significant for the total project in the same way that pre-fieldwork acquaintance with 'the ethnographic literature' has been prescribed (Fardon 1990). We have rarely gone into the field with the self-consciousness of preparing an autobiographical account either within or in conjunction with a monograph. Some examples from European anthropology attempt to interlink the two, e.g. Favret-Saada (1977/80, 1981), Favret-Saada and Contreras (1981) and Loizos (1981).

Dumont, unlike for example Fardon (1990: 7–8), has suggested a significance in the fact that it was women who wrote the earlier accounts of fieldwork, as has Helen Callaway in this volume. Women were:

> left with the task of conjuring the impurities of experience. They had to cope with the blood, sweat and tears aspect of fieldwork – feelings and sentiments included – while the men were exclusively doing 'the real thing'. (1978: 8)

Although an explanation which draws on expressive roles stereotypically associated with women is unconvincing, none the less there is a hint in Dumont of the contrast, described by women, between public presentation and lived practice. To describe the dailiness and minutiae of personal encounters in the field is to question the 'fine distinctions' between public and private which Kolodny (1980: 240) suggests have served as guides for the male autobiographer. The split between public and private self has been contested as gender specific. Theorists of sexual and textual difference have explored how men and women have acquired a differing sense of self and relationship to a master discourse. Given that both sexes, at least in dominant western cultures, have tended to have had a female adult as primary carer in infancy, Chodorow (1978) suggests that the resulting 'feminine' identity is marked by more flexible, permeable ego boundaries than those for a 'masculine' cultural identity (*pace* Bordo 1990). There are differing narratives of the self; the 'feminine' one being open to representing experience as interpersonal while the 'masculine' one privileges individualism and distance (Smith 1987: 12–13). Moreover, the girl/woman enters a world where the dominant paradigm is that of masculine experience. The differing formation and life experience of persons according to their sex/gender have implications for theorising and for self-presentation. Women writing about anthropological fieldwork may show aspects similarly considered unacceptable in the literary canon of western autobiography. Significantly, earlier fieldwork texts were written by women whose professional position was relatively marginalised (Silverman 1989: 294).

When women have difficulty in seeing themselves as self-important and with less professional face to lose, it follows that the use of 'I' and its dailiness in the text are expressions of neither authorial authority nor of egoism. Rather, the I is the voice of individual scepticism from the margins; in many instances not only the I of *difference*, but one of subversive *diffidence* in the face of scientism. The individual 'I' is not making claim to generalisations within a dominant discourse (cf. Davis). The 'I' says 'but in my experience …'. This, in the final analysis, cannot be falsified from the outside. It is knowingly but defiantly open to a critique of being non-representative. This specificity challenges also the orthodox canon of autobiography which demands that the supreme example be a 'representative' and 'eminent person' (Misch 1951). The woman ethnographer does not fit the norm of the generalised male. This is a different 'I' from an impersonalised authority. In the most creative sense it is a way of exploring an alternative identity and 'those previously, silent, unrecorded

areas of experience' (Anderson 1986: 64). The master narrative both for autobiography and for ethnography is subverted.

The suggestions offered by Pratt (1986: 32–3) for overcoming the contradictions in ethnography between personal and scientific authority, the repression of the experiencing 'I', and the ensuing impoverishment of knowledge focus primarily on matters of style. The concern is more a matter of writing, especially the finished product, than also thinking about the content and experience of fieldwork. Both the style and the content are affected by the extent to which the anthropologist has privileged some aspects at an early stage and not others. While it is taken for granted the fieldworker writes extensive and personal notes in the field about the others, it is not considered necessary to analyse and take notes about his or her relationship with them (Okely 1975). We simply do not know how to explore the specificity of the fieldworker in those relationships, in order to theorise participation. Autobiographical accounts, when they do appear, are judged in terms of professional ethics, or as voyeurism or humanistic testimony. We are like pre-Freudians presented with the plain narratives of dreams whose significance we are not called upon to decipher. The personal narrative and encounter need to be confronted far earlier than the writing stage. The dilemma and internal struggle for example between self and positivist, noted by Pratt (ibid.), is there long before pen is placed on notepad.

The focus on culture and anthropology as written rather than experienced is consistent with Derrida's deconstruction theories (1967/76). Derrida suggests that in the west, speech is considered superior to the written and that the latter has been taken to be an unproblematic record of speech. Instead, Derrida argues that the written text is a construction in its own right. His insights have made us more self-conscious about the production of texts and, in this case, the production of ethnographies. These may be read as inevitably partial and historically specific. The author is also decentred, since a text may have a life of its own in ways which the author did not intend (*pace* Davis, this volume). Derrida looks for contradictions with which the author may be consciously and unconsciously grappling. Similar observations can be found in Freud (1900, 1914/48).

The suggestion that the author is no longer in control of the text has been resolved for some by mechanistically interpreting Bakhtin's dialogical mode where a text might be envisaged as the product of multiple voices (1981). Whereas Freud offered forms of analysis to expose hidden conflicts and wish fulfilments, the move to multiple voices, or dialogue, presented like tape transcriptions, may avoid all authorial intervention. In so far as interpretation is left entirely to the vagaries of the reader, we are back to a pre-Freudian era where dreams and statements are considered plain tales and stories without underlying significance. As Hastrup reminds us in this volume, ethnography involves more than mere recording. The informants'

voices, however many direct quotations are included, do not penetrate the ethnographer's discursive speech.

The 'arrival' stories where the anthropologist/author has been most visible, but is not yet in dialogue, are only the start of it. The anthropologists' opening descriptions focus predictably on the superficial, visible contrasts and first encounters. The account cannot by definition convey the responses and insights from the hosts. In the long run it is important to know how they viewed and related to the anthropologist as stranger, guest, then apprentice, perhaps friend and scribe. The key incidents, where the anthropologist is initially treated as outsider, rebuked for rule breaking and by varying degrees incorporated or rejected, all speak of the self-ascribed marks of one culture and its relations with representatives of others.

The relations with the anthropologist as outsider reveal both the specificity of that rapport and its potential generalities. The relationship between the anthropologist and hosts is ever changing, with continuing implications for mutual comprehension. While an anthropologist's gradual disappearance from the monograph is commented on with approval (Carrithers 1988: 20), what we do not learn is how the changing daily relationship and experience give sense to an accumulation of illustrations forming a coherent whole. Where the anthropologist continues to insert (or reflect upon) the particularities of her discussions through the length of the field experience, the material does more than describe the type of relations between the anthropologist and the people concerned. We are also able to see how the interrogator acts as a catalyst in eliciting defining aspects for specific members (Rabinow 1977: 119; Omvedt 1979). That continuing dialogue is worked out both between persons as representatives of differing cultures *and* between specific individuals. Here the 'race', sex (Golde 1986),[2] class origins, age and persona of the anthropologist are significant. All ethnographers are positioned subjects (Hastrup this volume).

An early exclusion of reflexivity has implications for the later texts. Since anthropological questions of autobiography or reflexivity were never raised in the academy before or during my fieldwork in the early 1970s, this absence therefore affects the subsequent writing. Some examples already exist (Okely 1975, 1983: ch. 3, 1984, 1987). There were several reasons why self-awareness was excluded and they are not personal, but consistent with the historical, political and academic context. When approaching the Gypsies, I found myself acting and thinking *against* the romantic tradition epitomised by George Borrow, Merimée, Bizet and all the stereotypes which are significant in the dominant society's construction of Gypsies. Borrow and others were the equivalent of the exotic travel writers that anthropologists seek to distance themselves from (cf. Kenna), or the only equivalent to the ethnographic 'regional' literature with which the orthodox anthropologist has to engage (Fardon 1990). Like other anthropologists, I

needed to establish my identity as a social *scientist* and maintained a sceptical distance from the folklorist literature; the 'orientalism' of Gypsies. Perhaps there was a fear of contamination, the exoticism could be overwhelming. The need for distance was not merely a reading and library matter. Most non-Gypsies I spoke to, were themselves caught up in the romance. Their eyes lit up when they heard what I was doing. They projected their longings on to me, and were compelled to tell me about the Gypsies. I was treated as the silent therapist who triggered off their fantasies and monologues. This projection was continuous: I was typecast and given a fictive Gypsy identity, not among Gypsies but among Gorgios (non-Gypsies). This even happened at a university party for social anthropologists where I had dressed up for the festive occasion. It was not interpreted as my celebration of being away from the field and its constraints – including the necessary frumpy and controlled clothes required among Gypsy women. Instead my long velvet dress was labelled 'Gypsy' by one of the lecturers.

Forced into this stereotyping, I decided to push it to its limits, to test the Gorgios' reactions. At a suburban party, a few miles from the Gypsy camp, I was talking to a young solicitor. After some preliminaries, I informed him that I was of Gypsy descent. Tears came to his eyes; brimming with uncontrollable emotion. He seemed unable to reconcile the juxtaposition of my educated, middle-class talk with my alleged genetic origins. His reactions were unnerving and informative. Through this vicarious experience of being 'the other' to others, I was perforce led back to the stereotypes, which are part of the Gypsies' reality made by Gorgios. The Gypsies also, I learned through participatory experience, manipulate those stereotypes.

These glimpses into the non-Gypsies' need to project their fantasies on to Gypsies, despite of or because of the lack of day-to-day acquaintance with the people who actually live as Gypsies, help to explain something which has puzzled me for some time. Why is it that certain stories about my fieldwork, certain events have become my personal repertoire? I have indeed constructed a personal narrative through selected memories, selected stories which I repeat when asked by non-Gypsies, by students and friends about my fieldwork. Others have described how they have dined off a number of tales from the field (Kenna). The temptation is to respond to the demand for tales of 'the anthropologist as heroine'. I recall spontaneously telling a university interview committee for a research award how I had been drawn into some illegal activities in the field and that I had been a character witness for a Traveller at the Old Bailey. He had been charged with attempted murder by shooting and kidnapping, although found not guilty. I was uncontrollably recounting the sensational in a highly controlled academic encounter.

My stories about fieldwork with the Gypsies have been embellished through the telling, with exclusions and inclusions through oral delivery. Some evoke laughter and I ask why. In all cases my listeners are non-

Gypsies. Thus the fashioning of the oral autobiography, even before any written autobiography for specific readers, is affected by the listener's demands and shared meanings (cf. Spencer). The anthropologist as heroine, or 'honorary male', is only in fact a minor aspect. The major themes in the stories relate to the differences between Gorgio and Gypsy (Okely 1983: ch. 3, 1984). Listeners are intrigued, just as I am, with the predicaments of crossing class, ethnic, gender and cultural boundaries. These are all the more paradoxical because they take place within a shared geographical space which the listeners appear to inhabit with the Gypsies. I am speaking to a tradition of differences. As narrator, I become amusing through those differences. The listeners help to create the autobiographical account with its specific emphases. To prove this we must ask: could the stories be told to the others (the Gypsies) we have lived with and written about? What kind of autobiography of the anthropologist could be or is constructed and told to them? A quite different autobiography of the anthropologist would be created.

Reflexive knowledge of fieldwork is acquired not only from an examination of outside categories, but also from the more intangible inner experience (Turner and Bruner 1986). Anthropologists, immersed for extended periods in another culture or in their own as participant observer learn not only through the verbal, the transcript, but through all the senses, through movement, through their bodies and whole being in a total practice (cf. Jackson 1983; Littlewood, Kenna, this volume). We use this total knowledge to *make sense* literally of the recorded material. Writing up is more than the 'pure cerebration' it has sometimes (Fardon 1990: 3) been made out to be. Fieldnotes may be no more than a trigger for bodily and hitherto subconscious memories. We cannot write down the knowledge at the time of experiencing it, although we may retrospectively write of it in autobiographical modes. The specific ways in which we learned awaits the recounting (Okely 1978). Bourdieu notes how the body can be treated 'as a memory' (1977: 94), it cannot always be consciously controlled. Anthropologists acquire a different bodily memory in fieldwork experience as an adult in another culture. The commonplace analogy between the anthropologist and a child learning another culture is misleading since the anthropologist is already formed and shaped by history. He or she has to change or superimpose new experience upon past embodied knowledge (Mauss 1938), and come to terms with a changing self embodied in new contexts. In recent discussions, denigrated visualism has sometimes been replaced by another privileged sense; orality (Fardon 1990: 23). The more general physicality is not embraced.

One example of embodied knowledge is physical labour. Fieldwork is so often among groups where manual labour is a significant part of production, in contrast to the anthropologists' sedentary academic milieu. Participant-observation does not mean mere observation, but often shared labour

(cf. Rapport). Fieldwork takes on its original meaning: work in fields. In both my major periods of research – among the Gypsies (Okely 1983) and among Normandy farmers (Okely 1991), participation in production brought a major breakthrough. I was perceived differently by the people and I learned through participation, however incompetent, in for example, potato picking, scrap metal dealing, harvesting and hand milking.

When I asked to learn how to hand milk cows in a small Normandy farm, the woman who has done this for forty years left the stable for a few minutes. She returned with a flash camera and took several photos of me. The unsolicited act reversed the usual relationship between anthropologist and 'informant'. My attempts at manual labour, which continued for several months, undermined for peasant farmers the stereotype of the metropolitan *professeur*. It gave embodied knowledge of a daily practice and created a shared experience for ever-unfolding discussions between us.

The fieldworker both consciously and unconsciously responds to certain rhythms and patterns as immersion proceeds. In a photograph of a Gypsy woman and myself taken by a stranger Gorgio, I have unknowingly imitated the Gypsy woman's defensive bodily posture. We are both standing with arms folded, looking away from the lens. In some more explicit instances the anthropologist is drawn by the hosts into performative ritual and shared embodied knowledge. At key moments both Smith Bowen (1954) and Powdermaker (1967) were called upon to participate in dancing. Ignorance or unfamiliarity with the group's rules or rhythms brings key crises. These are also informative. After noticing a young Gypsy woman in trousers, I gladly wore some to avoid the cold. But I was reprimanded and told that trousers were permitted so long as I wore a dress to cover the hips. With Gypsy values inscribed on my body, I was led to thinking about the body and female sexuality (Okely 1983). After ending long-term fieldwork, I would occasionally visit some families for the afternoon or evening. I had lost the unconscious rhythm of day-to-day experience. On one of these visits, I was truly conned of my gold earrings – I would not have been so gullible if I had still been sharing the rhythm of co-residence. For them I had become an ignorant and despised outsider again.

Many contributors to this volume, analysing their seemingly individual identities, reveal themselves as social categories in the cross-cultural encounter.

Paul Spencer places relevant aspects of his individual history as English and middle class in the broader context of British postwar history. The Suez crisis exposed 'the ugly side of ideas' with which his generation had grown up and his past gullibility. An earlier unquestioning acceptance of the supremacy of the British Empire, the sanctity of the family and the unambiguous truth of Christianity was replaced by an ambivalence about being English. By contrast, and because of this, he found among the

Plate 1.1 In this photograph of a Gypsy woman and Judith Okely (left), taken by a stranger, the author has unknowingly imitated the Gypsy woman's defensive posture. Southern England, 1970s

Samburu a completeness and a seemingly unchanging concept of tradition which the people themselves elaborated (cf. Riches on the Inuit 1990). Spencer's changing identity, whether as of young or subsequently older age category, is found to be a resource both in his relations with and for his interpretation of the Samburu *moran* and the Maasai elder. The careful connections made by Spencer between individual life history and cross-cultural encounter are neither narcissism nor the uncontrolled confessional which the profession so fears, but a demonstration of the profound resonances between the personal, political and theoretical.

Both Pat Caplan and Margaret Kenna examine the implications of age, outsider status and gender through the course of fieldwork periods which span over twenty years in the same locality.

Both went first as young unmarried women. Unlike a number of male contributors, their categorisation as unmarried appeared so crucial that it features extensively in their accounts.

The women's return field visits as wife and later mother changed the nature of the encounter. Their movement through individual life cycle, historical changes at home and in the field, and shifts in the discipline of anthropology also transformed their earlier enquiries.

Caplan switched allegiance from a specific male informant to his wife. Her changed identity as mature woman/mother elicited approval. Kenna, who, as a young woman, had passed time with older chaperoning women, moved subsequently as public expert to mixed gender events.

On their return, both were confronted with the naïveties and misinterpretations of their earlier fieldwork. For Kenna, sufficient trust had been generated, for the people to inform her about the past. She was to learn that her seemingly modest bodily posture was associated with that of a prostitute. As with Spencer, the women's categorisation and experience as either young or middle aged became specific resources for each period.

As young single woman outsider, Caplan, I suggest, was most suited as neutral, innocent confidante for projection by the self-styled Don Juan. On her subsequent trips, Caplan's greater interest in gender divisions reflected a political and academic momentum from feminism. Kenna's 'confessions' to an earlier political and historical naïvety revealed no idiosyncratic failure, but the limits of British anthropology at the time. The islanders on their migrations, rather than the academy, 'dragged' her to the city and towards the relevance of sociological material.

Kenna's earlier outspoken objection to injustice reflected her own political upbringing, but in the long run was useful for understanding the islanders' long-established strategies of caution in the face of political repression. Her return with her long-awaited child was celebrated in the people's idiom by a personal pilgrimage. Walking barefoot up a rocky path to make a thank offering at the Monastery, she was drawn to 'a greater understanding ... of the connections which the Greek Orthodox tradition perceives between outward form and inner meaning'. Thus the purely instrumental aspects of participant observation were transcended. Knowledge was experiential and through bodily action. Caplan's and Kenna's changing perspectives of the field area and people through several decades highlight the historical and individual specificity of each encounter and ethnography. These can never be total accounts, never definitive (see Watson) in time or space, but their specificity enriches rather than undermines the enterprise.

Both Roland Littlewood and Julie Marcus were explicitly confronted by their own identity as white in societies with a history scarred by racism, slavery and genocide. Littlewood's classification as White man was inescapable

in a Trinidadian community, the Earth People, who were preparing for the return of the Black Nation. The charismatic leader, Mother Earth, used Littlewood's arrival to reconsider her opposition of negative science against positive nature. Littlewood arrived as their 'other'; male, White and a scientist. His biography as nonconformist in his own culture drew him to a millenarian community and empowered him to challenge their stereotypes. It was no great step as former 1960s radical to walk naked from his sea bathe into the unclothed community. Rather than undermining their classification, Littlewood's presence led to changing notions of Black and White; the Earth People later believed that Whites could be Black 'inside'.

Marcus uses her identity as White female anthropologist as a pivot between her discovery of a White woman anthropologist, active among Aborigines in the 1930s, and her own encounter with an Aboriginal woman. Like Olive Pink before her, Marcus's biography is situated in that of the White settler society. In exchanging confidences and comparing experiences, the Aboriginal Louisa Montgomery is astonished at the absence of police punishment for the delinquencies in Marcus's suburban childhood. Marcus's understanding of Olive Pink's life rests both on her present day knowledge and on her own autobiography. The Aboriginal woman is shown to be living under a terrorising surveillance which the White woman recorded fifty years earlier, in a different language.

Nigel Rapport is classified as offcomer in a rural English community but is perceived as originally French rather than Jewish. His childhood ambivalence about belonging is resolved at first by seeing fieldwork as a passage to 'genuine' Britishness. Within the field, he chooses another kind of conformity by minimising difference: avoiding tourists, and participating as manual labourer rather than as contemptible penpusher. Contrary to expectations, this does not turn out to be anthropology at home. Like Rapport, Malcolm Crick passed as another form of 'other'; an Australian, for fear that English was a marked colonial category in Sri Lanka. Dramatically, in response to another Sri Lankan categorisation, Crick changed his original research project from Buddhist notions of social action to tourism, when he was mistaken for a hippie by a novice monk. The subsequent parallels he makes between the tourist and the anthropologist arise in part from his clearly bounded relationship with Ali. For we learn through his candid account that he prefers not to meet Ali on his family territory in a context outside tourism.

Anthony Cohen, in resisting external categorisation by others, distinguishes between what is known *about* a person and what is known *by* the self. The self is used to study others. To argue that anthropology is informed by the anthropologist's self is not the same as any suggestion that the discipline should be 'about the anthropologist's self'. Using autobiographical experience and inspired by a discussion with a Whalsay islander, he contrasts others' external categorisation with the inner driven self. Far from

worrying about any accusation of self-absorption, he uses knowledge acquired from his 'most solitary, Cartesian soliloquy' as a resource to comprehend others' resistance to simple archetypes.

Bill Watson confronts the question of unequal power. As soon as he introduced himself as an anthropologist in Indonesia, he was made aware of the vehemence among Indonesian intellectuals towards the inequality of academic exchange. Watson's previous observations in print had, he was informed, been pre-empted by Indonesians, but theirs had not been given comparable recognition. Like Cohen, Watson draws attention to the mistaken assumption that the other is undifferentiated, that for example the Javanese speak with one voice. Ways of letting others speak have been hampered by the pretension of a totalising ethnography. An alternative approach, midway between indigenous text and academic production, is through shared experience and the mutual exchange of personal knowledge through friendship; 'the rest will follow naturally'.

Such optimism appears to be belied by examples from other contributors, especially those of Crick and Hendry. However, Watson, starting from the lessons of autobiographical experience in Indonesia, proposes that friendship take precedence. For Hendry and Crick, friendships were always constrained by or subordinate to the conventions of the research project. Marcus's account of her relationship with Louisa Montgomery brings a certain realism, placing the encounter of two individuals in the context of contrasting histories and social categories from which neither could escape. Liking each other was a prerequisite, but not the central ingredient. Hope of a genuine 'friendship' was abandoned.

Joy Hendry's cautionary tale of a friendship, destabilised by collaborative research, is not a straight rebuttal of Watson's utopian solution. The example reveals the ingredients of 'studying up' (Nader 1969). Whereas Crick feared giving too much remuneration to his poorer collaborator, lest the anthropologist lose face and authentic knowledge, Hendry's wealthier Japanese friend and assistant soon resented payment, since she appeared to lose equal status. Sachiko had believed anthropology to be the study of people lower down the hierarchy and now found herself to be the object of study. Ultimately, the élite graduate was in a strong position to block the invasion of her privacy. Hendry's account has parallels with those of Caplan and Kenna in that she traced her experience over two decades, in her case, through a single relationship which shifted from friendship to professional collaboration and then to mutual mistrust. At the start, they shared identities across the cultural divide as university educated women, and later as married mothers. They had each lived in each others' home territories before the research. Differences emerged as their careers took different directions which were acted out in the research.

The detailed relationships selected and described here by the contributors are in the majority of cases between persons of the same sex (Spencer,

Marcus, Kenna, Hendry, Crick, Cohen, Callaway and Okely). Helen Callaway made brief life histories of three men and three women in Western Nigeria, then found herself drawn more fully into the women's lives. This, she contends, was not because of the stereotype of a 'natural empathy' nor shared physiological experience, but because she was intrigued by what seemed to her then the women's remarkable autonomy. I suggest that she was implicitly contrasting her own gendered and culturally specific experience with theirs. Caplan's shift from a male to a female informant reflects and creates a fundamental change in her ethnography. Littlewood's link with Mother Earth replicates that of the recruits, the majority of whom were young men. Rapport, unusually, gives equal space to his relationship with both a man and a woman.

Beyond the general categories within which the anthropologist and indigenous persons must negotiate, there were degrees of individual exchange and reciprocity. The texts show different ways of giving voice to others. The autobiography of the anthropologist runs alongside others' autobiographical interventions. The Maasai elder creates his current identity through narratives of his past whose embellishment, concealment, and selectivity reveal the values of his culture (Spencer). Littlewood records Mother Earth's biography as presented to him and where it resonates with others' personal experiences. Her life is the text for others' lives. Mohammed's diary is both individual confessional and culturally revealing text (Caplan). None the less its personal form cannot be independent of the ethnographer's appropriation – its very existence came about through her intervention. Having explored how other life histories have kept the researcher and the one-to-one encounter outside the frame, Callaway scrutinises Julianah's story. The material became a resource for abstract analysis. Callaway considers that she suppressed Julianah's voice and, two decades later, is conscious of the alternative texts that might have been generated. Other contributors, notably Marcus and Hastrup, argue that whatever form the dialogue might take, the text is the final construct and responsibility of the author. Even Rapport's scrupulous attention to how the others experienced *his* presence, is perforce his own textual construction.

In a number of instances the anthropologist's power of textual production was treated as a resource. Ali wanted to be named in Crick's text, in defiance of the anthropologist's espousal of professional ethics. Littlewood's arrival was predicted in a dream by Mother Earth who asked him to write their story. His identity as white doctor was seen as a vital protection against medical or police harassment. The dialogue between anthropologist and people continued through the writing. The response by a Whalsay fisherman to Cohen's manuscript was profoundly instructive. After reading and changing Marcus's text, Louisa Montgomery requested that her details be published. Kenna returned part of the islanders' history to them through her video, which in turn created debate.

The textual analysts' critique of the brief autobiographical insertions in classical monographs is contested by John Davis. They conflate *being* an authority and *having* authority, and assume that having authority is reprehensible. Davis defends not so much the autobiographical mode, but the device for demonstrating that the anthropologist was there. Unlike photographs, literary representations do not prove that the author was there. In addition, Davis questions the uniform interpretation of an authority-establishing introduction in the past tense. Against the deconstructionists, he contends that attention should be paid to what the writer intended. Evans-Pritchard's description of his 'Nuerosis' like others' brief insertions, could alternatively be read as a caveat. Perhaps Evans-Pritchard intended to convey a less secure authority than in the Azande monograph where the introductory passage is even briefer. This interpretation does not, however, appear to extend to the personal insertions scattered through the Azande text.

Both Davis and Hastrup address the question of tense. Davis catalogues the multiple and varied tenses to be found in ethnographies. It is misleading to describe anthropologists as using '*the* ethnographic present'; in English at least, there is a repertoire: participatory, observational and true, either by definition or by experience. He concedes that anthropologists might consider using the past tense more frequently. On the other hand, Hastrup contends that the ethnographic present, in its widest symbolic sense, is the only appropriate tense, because it speaks of an encounter fixed at a certain moment and created by the juxtaposition between the anthropologist and others. Rapport's essay depicts such an encounter in its most immediate form. Whereas Fabian (1983) argues that the ethnographic present denies history to 'the other', Hastrup points to a confusion between genre and epistemology, and one which implies that representation is taken for reality. The experiential nature of fieldwork cannot be excluded. Fieldwork is marked by a betweenness both for the anthropologist and the 'others'. What they recount in the ethnographic dialogue is spoken from a liminal space. Hence the notion of an informant of unmediated cultural truth evaporates.

Whatever the potential in mutual encounter, Hastrup argues, the ethnographic project involves a degree of symbolic violence. The anthropologist hardly respects the other's right to remain silent. Hastrup learned, through a unique personal experience, what becoming the subject of another's text entailed when her autobiography and fieldwork in Iceland were staged as a play. The performance reframed her in an alien discourse, and she sensed an appropriation when the theatre company departed on a world tour. Her experience was used to comprehend that of the 'other' in anthropological discourse, as in examples from her work elsewhere (Hastrup 1987).

The contributors explicitly or implicitly, although without consensus, address questions of unequal power relations or 'the systematic imbalance in the creation of knowledge' (Watson). With the possible exception of

Hendry, those who discussed the experience had done fieldwork among people with a history of colonial rule, or with vulnerable minority status, or subject to a greater metropolitan control. This political reality affected the nature of the encounter. In some instances people with power or relative privilege were incorporated or hovered around the text. Marcus argues that the politics of representation and texts be confronted by focusing on politics and the gaze of the state. Her account of racism and terror finds echoes in the results of the Australian Royal Commission in 1991 into deaths in custody of Aborigines. Her critique of earlier ethnographic omissions of the political persecution of Australian Aborigines is confirmed elsewhere (McKnight 1990).

Reflexivity may seem comfortably neutral for some. That depends how it is interpreted. In its fullest sense, reflexivity forces us to think through the consequences of our relations with others, whether it be conditions of reciprocity, asymmetry or potential exploitation. There are choices to be made in the field, within relationships and in the final text. If we insert the ethnographer's self as positioned subject into the text, we are obliged to confront the moral and political responsibility of our actions.

Generally, the notion of autobiography or reflexivity is seen as threatening to the canons of the discipline, not because it has been interpreted as having political consequences, but because of its explicit attack on positivism. The reflexive I of the ethnographer subverts the idea of the observer as impersonal machine. The autobiographical insertion is different from the stamp of author's authority: not simply 'I was there', but the self and category whom the others confronted, received and confided in. The people in the field relate to the ethnographer as both individual and cultural category, whether or not the ethnographer acknowledges this. Autobiographical accounts of fieldwork are not confined to self-understanding in a cultural vacuum. They show how others related to the anthropologist and convey the ethnographic context.

Theoretical links lie between the anthropologist's experiential, embodied knowledge, its continuing resonances and the ultimate printed text. The extent to which autobiography can be written into the ethnography is a matter for creative experimentation. There are ways of exploring new forms appropriate to the anthropological endeavour. The genre need be fixed neither in a Great Man, western tradition nor within established literary conventions. Other traditions have existed as sceptical testimony and as celebrations from the margins. There are alternative possibilities which anthropology might imagine.

NOTES

1 At the first conference of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (Coimbra, 1990) when the issue of gender was raised at the general meeting, an eminent male anthropologist announced that he had never thought of himself as a man, only as a human being.

2 Consistent with the editors' cavalier attitude towards feminist anthropology in *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), the sex/gender of the anthropologist is given short shrift for theoretical analysis by the contributors, whereas the political status, history and even ethnicity of the anthropologist are seen to have theoretical implications for the final text.

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