

as individuals and as a discipline, refused our embodied complications a field of play in our work and, in so doing, sacrificed—at the least, Geertzian “growth,” and at the most, glimpses of the marvelous and the treacherous suffusing textual, performative, interpersonal and collective communication practice—for the sake of some precarious, because so frantically fortified, inward ease?

Our task, as those who, perhaps, make life complicated for a living, is not the simple liberation of the sexual; commerce did this long ago, and to the extent that the formulation is banality. The task is, rather, to embrace the prospect of eroticizing the social, including the sociality of scholarship, and of finding, in such a prospect, the possibility of remaking the pleasure of knowing a complex world.

The essays in this issue take up the tasks of writing, subverting, making and reading pleasure and desire across a wide range of textual and performative sites. Stephanie Nelson explores tactics for textualizing the pleasures of the erotic, embodied sociality of fieldwork. Laura Severin offers us an analysis of a segment of performance/-ative history, inhabited—as Hayden White posits all histories are—by a “monstrous,” uncanny body and persona deployed by Stevic Smith (233). Dale Cyphert maps the pleasure and cultural pedagogy etched onto a(n also Whitean ‘monstrous’?) motorized picnic table. Robert Asen reads the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe through the tropes of the allegory and the nude. And Craig Gingrich-Philbrook concludes with an analysis of the embodied sociality of consumption, empirical and rhetorical, in the solo performances of Rae C. Wright. In the best sense, each essay complicates both its methodological task and its respective site and, in so doing, adds generative complication to performance studies as well.

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Intersections of Eros and Ethnography

Stephanie Nelson

This paper argues that making love is a form of shared cultural knowledge, and explores how researcher-authors might speak and write about this shared knowing. Specifically, it examines how knowledge may be generated, and subsequently represented, when a researcher and informant have a sexual encounter in the context of fieldwork. Exemplars, fiction and nonfiction, are examined as possible strategies for representing this shared knowledge. Keywords: ethnography, sexuality, anthropology

Introduction

The world doesn't fear a new idea. It can pigeon-hole any idea. . . The world fears a new experience more than it fears anything.

—D.H. Lawrence “The Spirit of Place” (7)

I have a confession to make. I haven't been blurring my genres. For many years now I've been researching and performing the music of another culture, the Ewe-speaking people of West Africa. I work to understand how the Ewe people use music and how meanings are made from it, but there is a problem. Music, in Ewe culture as well as in most cultures, is a tool of courtship. And sometimes when I'm in the field, diligently doing nothing more than what I should be doing—singing, dancing, asking, listening, puzzling, coping—sometimes music works its particular magic on me too. How am I to explain what happens next? Where to fit that into my journals and ethnographies? What is this music for, and just how do I know, anyway? For many years I have also been writing fiction about these other ways of knowing and these other experiences in the field.

Meyee nam loo, edevima	Bring that one here
Meyee nam loo, edevima	Bring that one here
Edevima ko lena, bezo bezlo ko	The girl with a neck like a deer
Mikple ma melia ga deka giloo.	That I may lie down with her.

Ewe Atsia song (Ladzekpo, trans.)

I want to begin a conversation here about something that is rarely talked about outside of the lyrics of the songs themselves—something that we who make a profession of observing and writing about Others seem to prefer leaving to psychologists, movie producers, preachers, and rock stars. What I explore here is not what *kind* of learning and knowing, or what *kind* of communication is going on when we make love, since I believe we know already that it *is* communication and thus it doesn't need to be defended as such here. What I do want to explore is how we might speak about these ways of communication as shared cultural knowledge, and find words to write about the ways that our bodies make love and knowledge and culture together.

I'm not the only one, of course, who's been sleeping with some of the people I profess to study. There are ethnographers of popular culture who are not only talking about sex, but doing it in the field with abandon. Tom Wolfe has been writing about it for years, following in the footsteps of Jack Kerouac and others. And of course romance seems to be a necessary ingredient of many documentaries. If and when Hollywood gets around to making a film about Margaret Mead's fieldwork in Samoa, it is likely that if the Samoans aren't doing it in living technicolor on the big screen, Mead surely will be. Yet somehow the intersection of eros and ethnography has remained taboo in many academic fields that employ ethnography as textual praxis.¹ This undiscussability of the erotic in ethnographic texts apparently extends to the field of performance studies, as the remarkable castigations of Corey's and Nakayama's "Sextext" (*TPQ*, 17.1 1997) on the CRTNET Internet bulletin board have made amply evident.

Yet as Clifford Geertz has remarked, "anthropologists don't study villages, they study *in* villages" (22). We are bodies in fields, and it seems to me that if we truly care about and are open to the other bodies we encounter in those fields, then sometimes what happens between us may be sexual, or at least charged with the energy of such possibilities. I think it's unrealistic to pretend that it doesn't happen, in part because it's been going on for a long time, and also because we miss out on an important way of knowing if we refuse to acknowledge what we learn from sex in the field, or marginalize it to conference hall gossip. We can catalogue and categorize the minutiae of cultures to our heart's content, but after all, as James Hillman has remarked, the world is made less of nouns than of verbs. "It doesn't consist merely in objects and things; it is filled with useful, playful, and intriguing opportunities" (*The Soul's Code* 86). From all I have heard and experienced, opportunities for sexual encounters are part and parcel of fieldwork.

When the drummers and dancers go home, when the lights and the lanterns and the fires go out in the cities and towns and villages, where we spend the night (or where we long to) is arguably as much a part of the research experience as anything we do by day. To believe that these pleasures and desires are extraneous to the knowledge we are seeking as professionals is to forget what Foucault and others have taught us: our pleasures are also our politics—they are the sites of our power/knowledge relationships with Others. Perhaps they too are in need of excavation and acknowledgment, in the sense that to acknowledge means to credit where one's claims to knowledge arose from.

Anthropology has long taken the sexual practices of the Other as its object of scrutiny, just as fiction writers have routinely undertaken examination of the sexual

practices of their own cultures. In this paper I explore how both fiction writers and ethnographers have written about romantic encounters and culture simultaneously. As mentioned earlier, when I feel inspired to write about the more personal ways of knowing an Other, I have done so within the genre of fiction. I've come across several other ethnographers who do the same (or something close to it) and I'll re-inscribe a few of their words here. There are also a few who are beginning to talk about sex in the field within the ethnographic genre, and I will reproduce some of their words as well. First, however, let me anticipate some objections to eroticizing our ethnographies.

The Problems

We must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power.

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* 157

To which we may add, another advantage to the African woman, that her feelings, like those of barbarians and the uncivilized generally, are by no means so highly developed as among Europeans. A scanty diet, a life of toil, and the petty cares of domestic duties, blunt, if they do not destroy, the sexual appetite.

From the journals of Sir Richard Burton, in *The Erotic Traveller*, Edward Leigh, ed. 142

First, some background about my motivations. I initially began writing this article after returning from my third field trip to West Africa, where I was studying women's musical organizations. As had happened on the previous two occasions, I became romantically involved during that summer in the field, this time with a Togolaise medical student who was home for the summer from his training in Europe. It had been a joyous relationship—one not designed to last, but encouraged by the community nonetheless. Now, I realize that we were very much in the same place in our lives (both students on leave from our pursuits of advanced professional degrees), that we held similar values, and that we saw the world not all that differently. I recall sitting with him at sidestreet cafes on numerous charcoal-scented evenings, unpacking in his stilted English and my abominable French and Ewe our shared views about Marxist political economy and women's reproductive issues. What we shared most fundamentally perhaps (besides our promising futures), was a deep love of music. We danced as much as we could afford to in Lome's worldbeat nightclubs, or on the rooftop of his house in leaner times. I have never danced so well with anyone as I did with him, and the memory of that summer remains hauntingly sweet. We corresponded for about a year or so, until he married a German woman and went to do his medical internship there. I have since lost touch.

More recently, while completing two years of fieldwork on a controversial utopian organization for my doctoral dissertation (*Synanon Women's Narratives: A Bakhtinian Ethnography*), I became romantically involved with the community's appointed philosopher. Our relationship fulfilled both his need to sort through his relationship to the failed community with someone who would listen, and my passionate desire to understand what fueled the remarkable commitment of Synanon's members to a radical alternative lifestyle. I would not have felt the heartbeat of his community, nor achieved the depth of understanding about what had been won and lost, without our erotic relationship. Ultimately, his commitment to living a communal lifestyle was as entrenched as is mine to autonomy and privacy, and so we parted.

Both times, I came from the field thinking about the richness of my erotic encounters, perplexed about the kind of knowledge of the Other that romantic knowledge is or could be. What I struggled with most immediately was how to write these issues into my ethnographies. So I set out to see what other researchers in the field had written about such encounters. My original paper was a rather naïve celebration of the possibilities and potentials of such unions, even in instances when their participants share less of a worldview and are unevenly positioned instrumentally, as was the case with many of the relationships described in the literature I reviewed. One such relationship of radical alterity and power relations was that of anthropologist Kenneth Good and his Yanomama child-bride Yarima. I originally ended my paper with the following review of Good's book, *Into the Heart*. I offer this except from my original work as a cautionary tale that points out the inherent problems of authoring from a professional stance one's intersections with personal emotions and ethnography.

"[Y]ou come here all the time to visit us and live with us. . . I've been thinking . . . that you should have a wife. . . Take Yarima. You like her. She's your wife." (Good with Chanoff 120-121)

Yarima had become exceedingly dear to me, almost like a daughter, yet not like a daughter. It wasn't something I understood completely. Nothing in my life had prepared me to understand it. Yet there it was, a feeling as deep as anything I had ever experienced, a feeling, I knew, that was very, very Yanomama. (12)

*Like Margaret Mead 65 years before, Kenneth Good chose to write his ethnography for popular audiences. He had also written a powerful and nearly impossible love story. It is worth noting that in the subtitle to Good's book, *One Man's Pursuit of Love and Knowledge*, love comes before knowledge. This is a dangerously political juxtaposition for anthropology, and such implications resurfaced for me when I read a recent indictment by two Brazilian anthropologists that the renowned characterizations of the Yanomama as "fierce" and warloving by reigning Yanomama "expert anthropologist" Napoleon Chagnon have further encouraged Brazilian government policies of domination and suppression of them (see Asch). Good's ethnography will do much to re-shape attitudes about the Yanomama, as well as introduce many non-academics to the political plights of these people and their lands.*

Good spent 12 years in Venezuela among the Yanomama people. He accepted the gift of a child-bride, Yarima, as a politically correct gesture (young girls are often given to men as tokens of male solidarity), and had no intention of taking this young girl, whom he knew well and was quite fond of, as a mate. But gradually over many years, the relationship deepened and shifted into conjugal love. It was then that the problems began—problems that centered on the fact that Good was not a permanent part of Yarima's life and culture.

"I am coming back. I am coming back." . . . I pointed to Yarima. "No one is to touch her. No one is to touch her! No one!" I could feel the anger coming over me. Pacing up and down, I threw my arms around, slamming myself hard on the sides and back with my open palm, punctuating the words. "She has been given to me! She is my wife!" Slam! "I have never touched any of your wives." Slam! "You do not touch my wife! You do not touch my wife! You do not touch my wife!" (143)

Strong words do not last long in a culture where any unprotected woman is routinely raped, and Yarima paid dearly every time her husband left the field. Eventually she agreed to the only choice she had if she wanted to remain Good's wife—learning to wear shoes and clothing and becoming a professor's wife in New Jersey. How this choice becomes reality is the focus of the book.

"Do you like me?" I ask her. "Do you want to be married to me?" These are not questions Yanomama ask of each other. Marriage is marriage. No one asks if the other person likes them or wants to be married. They are ludicrous questions. . . . "Okay," she said, stopping suddenly and looking me straight in the eye, "now you go home. Now it's time for you to go back to your village. Go back to Pennsibaniateri." My heart leapt, as if jolted by electricity. But when I look at her lips she was smiling, and when she saw the expression on my face, she started to giggle. Some joke. A Yanomama joke. She picked up some sticks, put them in her nose and lips, and turned to me. "Do I look good?" she asked. "Yes," I said, "You look good." (196-197)

*The question might arise as to whether Good has written a traditionally "useful" ethnography—one that details the mindsets and life patterns of a people, or whether he has simply written a love story. But this is indeed powerful ethnography. We come to know through Good's emotional responses, fueled by deep and intimate commitment, how the Yanomama live and what they think about their lives and what they are willing to fight for. Importantly, Good challenges Chagnon's interpretation of the Yanomama as "the fierce people" (*Yanomomo: The Fierce People*). Good effectively undermines Chagnon's anthropological authority with just a few telling anecdotes about Chagnon's unsavory field and professional tactics (see especially 26-58).*

One of the nicest things about Good's book is that Yarima's voice is also in it. This is how she describes her wedding, just days after arriving in the States and only a week before the birth of their son.

Then Kenny told me that the pata asked if I wanted him to be my husband, if I would be his wife even if he became sick, and even if he became old, even until we both died. I said, "Tell the pata that I am your wife. Tell him that even if you cannot leave our hammock, I will go down to the river and get you water. I will harvest plantains and roast them for you on the fire. Tell the pata that I will gather fruit and honey for you. I will cook your meat. I will care for you and do all these things even when you are very old. Even then I will be your wife." (333)

The end of Good's book seems to read happily ever after, but ironically, my initial description of Good's love odyssey as "nearly impossible" was prescient. Several years after Good's book was published, Yarima became disenchanted with the life of an urban American college professor's wife and returned home to the rain forest with her three children. Good hired a lawyer and successfully sued for child custody, claiming that Yarima would likely betroth his eldest daughter at an early age (just as she had been betrothed to him). Currently, there are a number of anthropologists who are upset with Good and this infelicitous turn of events, claiming, among other things, that he is subjecting Yarima to a double standard.

I hope I have demonstrated above that there are numerous precarious issues regarding sex in the field (or sex anywhere, for that matter) awaiting all who would stray their way. I want only to stake out a small clearing in this dark and thorny forest. While I will pay some of these issues their due before willfully bracketing them, what I want to make clear at the outset is that this is not a monograph about whether or not we should sleep with our informants. Ultimately, that is a highly personal and highly contextual decision. What I do want to explore are the choices that arise after it has happened—specifically, whether or not, and how, we might write about it.

Most dangerously perhaps, sex in the field can raise issues of inequality. I acknowledge wholeheartedly that there are real issues of power in the field—sexual desire and its satisfaction being just one of them. These issues have certainly been present for me in West Africa, where many men want to meet and mate me because

they see dollar signs in my eyes or other opportunities for personal advancement. I acknowledge too that there is other meta-bracketing going on; e.g., whether the researcher is male or female, or engages in hetero- or homosexual practices, will greatly impact the reception of the relationship in the field and within the Academy. For instance, a man in the field may feel less free than a woman researcher to write about his sexual encounters because he may be more readily accused of being exploitative.

There are other issues: of morals, of personal ethics, of impropriety within the norms of the host culture, of control of one's self or the Other. Then there is the litany of critical inquiry issues: Who gets to write about sex and love? Whose pleasures, values, and knowledges are privileged and whose are left on the margins? As feminist musicologist Susan McClary has remarked, "[s]truggles over musical propriety are themselves political struggles over whose music, whose images of pleasure or beauty, whose rules of order shall prevail" (28). The same holds true for struggles over sexual propriety, and these contests are often more highly charged. While I have no easy answers to the issues raised by choosing to write our love lives into our professional discourses, I would like to point out that writing about our intimate experiences raises our own personal stakes in our claims to knowledge. Our texts take personal risks, and at their best blur the boundaries between public and private, self and Other, mind and body, knowledge and desire—boundaries that are currently under siege as troublesome barriers in Western academic thought. I am not making claims for what some have called "the cult of true love" as a more legitimate or deeper form of truth than other ways of knowing. Indeed, some of the sexual relationships described below, including my own, might arguably be described as "shallow" and brief by ethnographic fieldwork standards, and claims to cultural knowledge garnered by them might be suspect as well (see El-Or). Further, writing openly about what is considered a private matter in most cultures risks turning representation of the Other toward depersonalization and commoditization.

Ultimately, sexuality is socially constructed, and sexual decency presupposes social decency, including representational decency. Problems abound in social and sexual arenas in this culture as well as in others, problems that require a continuing rethinking and remaking of "the general life conditions under which our sexuality comes into play" (Schur 202). This acknowledged, perhaps by writing about our intimate relationships we can help to link knowing to caring and shift disinterested scrutiny to responsible engagement.

To re-iterate, my principal task here is to explore possibilities for writing love and sex into ethnographic ways of knowing, so I will now move away from problematizing, adding only that some of these issues will surface again in the stories and ethnographies I investigate.

The Possibilities

Lore has it that the philosopher William James once dreamt that he had discovered the key to the universe. He roused himself from the dream to write down its message, and when he awoke he found he had written the following words:

Higamous, hogamous
 Women are monogamous
 Hogamous, higamous
 Men are polygamous.

While the secrets of the universe may more likely be keyed to physics than biology, since Claude Levi-Strauss at least, sexual transactions have been considered the cornerstone of culture. It was Levi-Strauss who posited that human culture began with the incest taboo, when men determined it was less socially profitable to keep their daughters for themselves than to form alliances with other men by trading female offspring. As far as my own fieldwork is concerned, William James' clerihew does indeed seem a key to understanding the cultural conflicts and musical messages of much of the Ewe women's music I study (see Nelson and Ladzekpo).

Man, man, you are the cause of your own problems.
 Is any wife better than the mother of your child?

Aiyeye, Togo Habobo song, *ibid*

I argue in my dissertation that the goal of ethnographic inquiry should be to engender appreciation of difference rather than to achieve hermeneutical understanding (i.e., shared meanings). Shared experiences and communal feelings are possible without shared understandings, and can be more instrumental for invoking cooperation and promoting change (see Eisenberg "Jamming: Transcendence through Organizing"). These are the kinds of experiences that music and lovemaking can evoke so well; these are also the sites of praxis where fine lines are drawn between domination and co-optation, or friendship and caring—boundaries that post-colonial ethnographers struggle these days to negotiate in their aim to produce texts that remain legitimate without impoverishing or decomposing the Other. As James Clifford puts it, the "predicament of post-colonial ethnography" is that "[s]ome authorizing fiction of 'authentic encounter,' in Geertz's phrase, seems a prerequisite for intensive research; but initiatory claims to speak as a knowledgeable insider revealing essential cultural truths are not longer credible" (*The Predicament of Culture* 90). For Geertz, the problem is simply a literary one. He claims that "the difficulty is that the oddity of constructing texts ostensibly scientific out of experiences broadly biographical, which is after all what ethnographers do, is thoroughly obscured" (*Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* 9–10). But interpretation is not simply a problem of genre. It is, as Edward Said has remarked, "a politics" (135). I believe that post-colonial ethnographers still need to challenge the central claims of hermeneutics, i.e., Hans Georg Gadamer's tenet that to understand is to agree on worldviews—to "fuse horizons" (see *Truth and Method*).

For there are times when we cannot understand, but when it is desirable nonetheless to walk in another's shoes for awhile. "We come to Sodji's shoes" says an Ewe women's processional song performed in honor of a deceased group member (Nelson and Ladzekpo). This is an embodied knowledge—a knowledge tied to caring, appreciation, and acceptance without shared meanings. It is the kind of knowledge that music and sex impart, for it evokes pleasures and creates possibilities that can engender a sense of community while remaining ambiguous enough to encompass difference (see Eisenberg). I am suggesting that some of these embodied ways of knowing have been woefully under-articulated within the ethnographic canon.

What has been inscribed on American bodies representing the various American

ethnographic professions in the field? During a grant interview for a Fulbright Fellowship, I was asked to describe my short story "Friday Girl," which is about a previous research trip. When I remarked that it was about an affair with an African man and its implications, I was told in no uncertain terms by the Dean of my graduate school that the Fulbright Foundation frowns on that sort of thing in the field. After all, she explained, I would be representing my country's values and norms. While I nodded in assent, inwardly I wondered just what sort of "normal" unattached American woman abstains from sex for nine months at a time? Certainly, that would be considered an abnormality in the culture I was doing my fieldwork among. Other Fulbright scholars assured me privately that nobody, in fact, was keeping tabs, and quite a few, in fact, were doing otherwise. From "Friday Girl:"

"Please forgive me for keeping you," he said, addressing me. "When I am in your country, my god is far away. But here I must pray, for he watches too closely over me."

He smiled the instant I did, then crossed the room and took my hand. Our eyes met again, and I understood that he expected to sleep with me. I understood also that Davi was in love with him. (Nelson 102)

In his novel *The Sex Diary of a Metaphysician*, Colin Wilson has remarked that "we can create a new language, and language and sex will become allies, language clarifying and purifying the sexual impulse, sex powering language to achieve a new complexity" (35). What are ways that words about sex and culture and knowledge can be written together? How does one go about writing one's love life and sexual practices into ethnographies, and what sorts of rhetorical functions do such tellings take on for their readers? Edward Said has noted that "invariably very little of the circumstances making interpretive activity possible is allowed to seep into the interpretive circle itself" (135, emphasis in the original). Perhaps it is time we wrote about what our hearts and our bodies do in fields as well as our minds. What follows is an examination of how others have written about sex, love, and culture simultaneously.

Exemplars of Erotic Ethnography

I begin with the recent critique by anthropologist Derek Freeman of America's premiere ethnography of sex, Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* ("There's Tricks I' the World: An Historical Analysis of the Samoan Researches of Margaret Mead"). Freeman's contention is that Mead got it wrong. He supports his claims with an attack on Mead's sexual conduct and character, culminating in an accusation that Mead was guilty of sexual misconduct in the field, a compromise that ultimately undermined the accuracy of her research.

From Freeman's polemics, I move on to two fictionalized ethnographies by anthropologists: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a novel centered on the love-life of a black woman in the rural South; and Manda Cesara's *No Hiding Place*, an account of her fieldwork with only the names and places changed. Also, I will examine what is for me the penultimate ethnographic look at America by a European Other: Nabokov's *Lolita*. The purpose of this section is to explore how intimate relationships shape and frame ethnographic knowledge and rhetorically bond the reader with the researcher/writer and the ethnographic Other.

Next, I examine the ethnographies of two anthropologists who have openly written about their sexual experiences in the field: Paul Rabinow's brief encounter

with a young prostitute in Morocco, and Tobias Schneebaum, a gay man, with his male informant in New Guinea. My argument will be that these intimate encounters and the acknowledgment of them in a professional context aids in legitimizing and humanizing the ethnographic knowledge claimed.

Margaret Mead Under the Palms

In the strictly clandestine affair the lover never presents himself at the house of his beloved. . . . These affairs are usually of short duration and both boy and girl may be carrying on several at once. . . . These clandestine lovers make their rendezvous on the outskirts of the village. "Under the palm trees" is the conventionalised designation of this type of intrigue. (Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* 51)

. . . Polynesians will not hesitate to approach a European Woman, and women field workers may be tempted into inappropriate friendships. (Mead, in *Women in the Field* 322)

The continuing quarrel between anthropologists Derek Freeman and Margaret Mead over her fieldwork in Samoa in 1925 (yes, she is dead, but the debate continues) recently took a turn to the issue of sex in the field (Freeman in *Visual Anthropology Review* 103-128). The quarrel is about whether or not Mead's Samoan teenage girls had sex in abundance, as Mead described, or whether in fact they were "fibbing" about their promiscuity, as Freeman insists. Why would they do a thing like that? Well, says Freeman, because 24-year-old Mead, newly married and now alone for the first time in the field, was sleeping with their potential boyfriends, and they were angry about it. Freeman cites sworn testimony (on a Bible, no less) gathered from two aged informants who can still remember the young anthropologist from 65 years back. These two elderly Samoans allege that Mead had not one but two lovers in Samoa. During the course of her fieldwork, Mead (who, Freeman informs us, was married to a minister but simultaneously carried on affairs with two anthropologists—one male and one female) accepted not one but three honorary bestowals of the title of *taupo*, or ceremonial virgin princess, a title for which she was obviously overqualified. According to Freeman, Mead accepted these titles, which required her to dance bare-breasted at local festivities, because it gave her "rank to burn" and she could "order the whole village about" (112).

Was Mead promiscuous in the field, and was her data sullied because of it? Since Freeman is examining research that was conducted over 65 years ago, it is unlikely that anyone will ever know for certain. But it is interesting to note that Freeman's attack is crucially aimed well below the belt, and that while he lambasts Mead for "scrotomizing the realities of Samoan life" (115), he simultaneously and lustily plays by the same rules. Will the book that changed the way America thought about sex finally be discredited because of the sexual misconduct of its author? It seems, at least, a delicious irony.

But buried deep in the thick of Freeman's lengthy tirade is what seems to me a crucial piece of information:

Mead's own data, incidentally, "reveal" that 52% of her sample of 25 girls were virgins, a conclusion not significantly different from my own. . . . (120, emphasis mine).

So perhaps Mead did not get it so wrong after all, and perhaps the quarrel is rather

one of *interpretation*—of whether the focus should be on the 13 virgins or the 12 palm tree frequenters. A point that Mead advocates strongly in her original ethnography is that Samoan girls are free to *choose*. The adolescent girls Mead knew in Samoa were free to say “I am but young” when uncomfortably pressed toward sexual precocity. Mead cites this freedom of choice as one possible explanation why premarital pregnancy rates were so low, implying that these girls did not feel pressured to comply with male patterns of desire (as described by Mary Catherine Bateson in *With a Daughter's Eyes: A Memoir of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson* 90). Because Mead was focused on the relevance of sexual behavior among Samoan teens to the sexual mores of American teens in her era, it seems credible that Mead understood both sides of her data, but made a political choice to focus her 1920's ethnography on those who did rather than those who didn't. Again, we are reminded of Edward Said's words that interpretation is a politics. Yet Freeman remains insistent that:

... Mead's unwarranted conclusions, based on what are now known to be deeply flawed data, in a book that came to be regarded as a “scientific classic,” greatly impeded the progress of twentieth century anthropology. (121)

Anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson defends her mother and differing interpretations among ethnographers thusly:

The discrepancies that Freeman found are comparable to those that female ethnographers have discovered in many places where their predecessors had believed for years that the women cowered in fear of the bullroarers or the terrifying masks brought out by the members of the men's clubs while, as often as not, the women were fully aware of the deception and amiably allowed the men the pleasure of their mystification. (225)

Bateson feels that there are flaws in *Coming of Age in Samoa*, but that they are theoretical flaws based on the expectation—popular in anthropology at the time—of a pervasive kind of homogeneity. “It is as if an entire picture of American culture were filtered through the vision of a group of teen-age girls in a small town before the invention of television” (225).

In her biography of Mead and Bateson, Mary Catherine Bateson wrestles with revealing her mother's sexual habits, and finally decides to do so, despite her mother's lifelong policy that the correct and responsible practice was secrecy (even from her own daughter). But Bateson has decided that her mother has “walked into a thousand bedrooms, has been a touchstone for parents trying to understand the sexuality and sexual orientation of their children, has both helped and hindered women trying to understand themselves and their potential” (120), and thus she was determined to reveal what she knew of her mother's intimate encounters and her mother's responses to Bateson's own early sexual experiences:

She said to me as a child, “You may someday find yourself feeling that you are in love with two people and think that is impossible. If two people are really different you can indeed be in love with both” (121).

Bateson comments that both her parents tended to see sex as a natural expression of intensity of relationship (93) [think here about the intensity of relationships in the field]. Speaking of her mother's sexuality, Bateson comments that “she went through her life not with a sense of impoverishment but with a zestful sense of asking for more, for experience enriched and intensified. . .” (118).

Reading between all these lines, it seems safe to grant Freeman his contention that Mead may well have slept with men in Samoa; indeed, some of her confidence in her data may have been derived from these alleged intimacies. And the negative connection that Freeman has made between Mead's sexual practices and the outcome of her fieldwork remains largely without evidence, and seems instead to be a figment of Freeman's moral outrage and perhaps professional jealousy.

In his essay “On Ethnographic Authority,” James Clifford wonders about the process in which the “unruly experience” of fieldwork, “shot through with power relations and personal cross-purposes,” is “transformed into an authoritative written account” (25). This process is at once strategic and emotionally charged. Our sense of self worth as ethnographers and as social beings depends equally on getting the data and on being liked by our informants. Most of us who have wrestled with our data know by now that it can speak with forked tongues, and can all too easily be molded into the story one wants to tell about it. Given strikingly similar data, and forced to choose between Mead's interpretation or Freeman's, the choice may ultimately rest on what appeals to our own personal, professional—and sexual—politics.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

In 1936, ten years after Franz Boas's protégé Margaret Mead had made her mark in Samoa, another of his Barnard-schooled disciples, folklorist Zora Neale Hurston, completed her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* while she was in the field studying Haitian voodoo practices. The book is not about her fieldwork, though Hurston's deep insights about religion seep into it:

... [F]ear is the most divine emotion. It is the stones for altars and the beginning of wisdom. Half gods are worshipped in wine and flowers. Real gods require blood (139).

If Mead suffered difficulties as one of few female anthropologists, Hurston faced an even greater challenge, for she was a black woman. Although both her fiction and her ethnographic work were widely acclaimed, she struggled financially all her life and ultimately died alone and penniless, buried in an unmarked grave. Hurston's fiction is deeply political, for she was committed to portraying black people as *subjects* with distinct voices—complete, complex, undiminished—rather than as objects who live out their lives in reaction to white society. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* reflects this philosophy in a personified way. It is a story of the transformation from object to subject of Janie, a young black woman in the rural South, who is finally strong enough to name and live love as she sees fit. Janie's love is oppositional, self-oriented, and risky. She remarks to her closest friend at the end of the book:

Then you must tell 'em dat love ain't somethin' like a grindstone dat's de same thing everywhere and do de same thing tuh everything it touch. Love is lak de sea. It's uh movin' thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from de shore it meets, and it's different with every shore (182).

Janie's stolid, patriarchal husband believes that “somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows. I god, they sho don't think none theirselves.” Upon his death, however, Janie abandons her comfortable social stature and heads off for seasonal fieldwork in the Florida Everglades with Tea Cake, a younger man,

who hits her eyes "like a glance from God" (125). This new life ends with the tragic death of Tea Cake, but not before Janie has found a voice for herself and her desires. Hurston's fiction is more than a simple extension of her richly detailed ethnographic work—it is as if she breathed life into her data. Intimacy plays a key part in this invigoration, for the genre of fiction gives Hurston license to speak Janie's desires without standing in as mediator. Without this buffer, they metamorphosize into our desires too. As we come to care about Janie, we identify her as more like us than we had hitherto thought possible. Hurston expresses not only the deepness and richness of her ethnic heritage, but also of her own mind and heart, and teaches us not only to know, but also to feel and care.

Lolita

And so we rolled East, I more devastated than braced with the satisfaction of my passion, and she glowing with health, her bi-iliac garland still as brief as a lad's, although she had added two inches to her stature and eight pounds to her weight. We had been everywhere. We had really seen nothing. And I catch myself thinking today that our long journey had only defiled with a sinuous trail of slime the lovely, trustful, dreamy, enormous country that by then, in retrospect, was no more to us than a collection of dog-eared maps, ruined tour books, old tires, and her sobs in the night—every night, every night—the moment I feigned sleep. (Nabokov, *Lolita* 175)

Vladimir Nabokov's fictional story of a marathon flight through the heartland of America to hide a doomed illicit sexual affair with a nubile stepdaughter has been called by his publisher "the story of hypercivilized Europe colliding with the cheerful barbarism of postwar America." *Lolita* can also be read as an ethnography—perhaps one of the best ethnographies of this country by an Other. Importantly, however, it is the love story that shapes and colors the vision of our culture that Nabokov paints for us. Nabokov did what most ethnographers fail to do—he elevated the *relationships* between the teller and those who are told about to the forefront of his tale. The diners, the motels, the caves, and the canyons he describes are indelibly colored by these relationships. Our standardized reading of the familiar sites he invokes is undermined by a nervous trace, like an augmented chord, signaling that what is truly behind the wheel is the wrenching drive of an unattainable desire. Nabokov uses the literary device of a confessional—he chronicles places and passions from a jail cell for the edification of his lawyer. We, in turn, are addressed as his jury. We are asked to judge, torn between pity and disgust and forced to navigate with our personal ethics through an all-too-familiar landscape. Nabokov has succeeded in doing what I believe ethnographers ultimately should strive to do—compel their readers to see their own values and standards uncomfortably implicated in the Other's horizons.

I believe the poor fierce-eyed child had figured out that with a mere fifty dollars in her purse she might somehow reach Broadway or Hollywood—or the foul kitchen of a diner (Help Wanted) in a dismal ex prairie state, with the wind blowing, and the stars blinking, and the cars, and the bars, and the bartenders, and everything soiled, torn, dead. (Nabokov 185)

This is Nabokov's vision of America: pure but corruptible by foolish desires, bright and young but doomed to aging gracefully, or perhaps—like *Lolita*—to die young. It

remains a hauntingly powerful ethnographic vision of ourselves, reminding us that our desires leave their traces on all that we see and do and claim to know about it.

No Hiding Place

People here are always concerned that my sex life be healthy. To them, a sexually deprived person becomes erratic and emaciated, and is likely to go mad. And I am always losing weight. Good Lord, mother, did I have to do research in Lenda? (Cesara, 146)

Manda Cesara's *Reflections of a Woman Anthropologist: No Hiding Place* is an attempt to write an ethnography that conveys her raw experiences in East Africa. The emotional, physical, and intellectual are combined in Cesara's ontology, for she wants to challenge the idea that "[b]eing scientists, we are to observe phenomena, not experience them with every part of our body" (48). The book is flawed for my purposes here, however, because anthropologist Karla Poewe chose to author it under a pseudonym, also fictionalizing her site and changing the names of all of her informants.² Thus I must categorize her work as fiction, for this is not the voice of a professional speaking to her colleagues with candor and commitment.

... I felt that if only I could overcome that fatal attraction to the opposite sex, if only I could overcome men, then my brain would soar freely and brilliantly across the mental landscape unencumbered by sticky emotions. The day came; and as I was bathing in the sweet victory of this overcoming, there appeared at the periphery of my consciousness, barely discernible, the icy threat of sterility and alienation... Instead, I decided to tell a rather embarrassing story that will put our brain back into our body and all of us back on the ground. (24-25)

Cesara's story is about the dissolution of her long-distance marriage and her relationships with two Lenda lovers while in the field. She juxtaposes the painful end of a marriage, chronicled in letters from a fading reality far away, against the empowerment she feels from her new relationships that provide her with an embodied knowledge of the people she is struggling to understand. These juxtaposed relationships are evoked most clearly in letters from home and letters written in the field:

God I do love you. Please love me too. Together we're the best I could wish to be.

Bob (91)

I watched the smoke of our cigarettes dance on our bodies. Our oblivion mellowed the air. Body and brain were one, as were mind and flesh, the past and present, life and death. I experienced the cerebral in the flesh. In Lenda, nothing is ever purely cerebral, it is always mingled with flesh. (55)

The book is as valuable for the problems it confronts as for those it evades or cannot solve. Importantly, Cesara speaks to other ethnographers and attempts to write from her body—long before the value of doing so was acknowledged by feminists and cultural critics. Nonetheless, Cesara has chosen to write covertly about her experiences. These gaps between personal openness and professional accountability highlight problems which still remain within ethnography as a literary,

rhetorical, and scientific genre: Cesara sums these problems up well in a letter to her mother, written toward the end of her fieldwork:

I write this because this is how I feel now, tonight. Tomorrow I will be asked to pull it all apart, and when I come home and write my dissertation I shall barely be permitted space between the lines. The work will stand alone, I will have absented myself from it. (194)

Anthropologist Karla Poewe did indeed write her separatist dissertation, and that she felt compelled to take her body out of her fieldwork remains a problematic rite of passage from person to professional for those of us who would like to challenge this troubled paradigm.

Affect or Effect

Where do *poesis* and *mimesis* intersect? As a fictionalized persona, Manda Cesara has made the point that literary and emotive forms of expression, which are marginalized in traditional ethnographic discourse, are in fact crucial for exploring the nuances of subjective experience (49). Poet/anthropologist Dan Rose wrestles with this division in his essay about forms into which experiences are shaped as they are recounted ("Occasions and Forms of Anthropological Experience" 220-273). "In each culture and each epoch," remarks Rose, "there are modes for self-expression and for making experiences available to others in socially acceptable ways" (220). Rose takes the position that the writing of social science and the writing of poetry are "two very different acts that require two fundamentally different attitudes towards one's experience of the world" (233).

Rose shapes his argument by describing his experience as a "spy for anthropology" (250) while doing fieldwork deep in the black ghetto of South Philadelphia under the advisorship of Erving Goffman. To develop the necessary mindset to do anthropology, Rose becomes "deliberately lobotomized" (240), repressing the poetics of his fieldwork experiences. To explain to us what this process feels like and how it is different from a poetic stance, Rose offers a series of poems that depict his "before" mode. Most of these poems are deeply personal and focus on his sexually impassioned (but doomed) marriage. Rose's poetry-writing epoch ends when he lands a job in a black-run auto shop. In his essay, poetry is now replaced with a narrative about the challenge of staying alive in an environment where men, women, and children are armed. Rose's fieldwork is a trial by fire and a ceremony of passage into the anthropological discipline. In the arduous journey toward his anthropological credentials, Rose claims he is purged of the desire to write poetry (271).

As poetry and ethnography become mutually exclusive for Rose, he does not appear to lament his conversion much. "Anthropology," he remarks, "requires a willful giving up of the self in order to capture another type of understanding of human life" (240), and poetry for Rose has always been too much about the (for Rose-un-anthropological) self. But, as Rose restlessly discovers, all is not well with anthropology either. Something is still not quite right with his new positionality—something Rose can't quite put his finger on. "My search for a meaningful way to combine anthropology and social concern has in retrospect proved futile," Rose gloomily remarks at the end of his essay. He confesses that he still struggles to fit

together in some politically meaningful way the experiences that he came away with after two years in that South Philly garage (272).

I came away with pockets and hands full of fragments, shattered shards of another way of life, of ways of making do in America; I emerged from the deep debris of the highly piled bottom of United States society with an armful of random samples that it became my job to make sense of. (272)

I leave Rose here with his dilemma (he has since taken a strong professional interest in promoting ethnographic fiction) and examine next how other ethnographers have tried to bridge the gap between self and Other, affect and effect, poesis and mimesis. Increasingly, postmodern ethnographers are addressing Rose's concern about how to bridge the gaps between their search for understanding the Other, their own personal searches for self-understanding and fulfillment, and the politics of such endeavors (cf. Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*).

Bodies in Fields

Writing about her fieldwork in Tanzania, Miriam Slater describes her initial encounter with the man who was to become her principal aide and informant, Chief Gilbert Nzowa:

Gilbert and I returned to his house for the night. We stopped at Stanley's to buy beer on the way. After we had drunk for a while, he said: "This choice is up to you. Will you share my blanket or shall we be enemies?"

"I have my own blanket," I answered.

"Then you are not a friend," he said.

"I want to be a friend, not a lover."

"What is love?" he asked.

"Who knows." (Slater, *African Odyssey* 57)

Slater carefully gathers and reports information about sexual relations among the Nyika people (ibid, see especially 211-219) but says nothing about her own sex life. Yet her conversation with Gilbert and many other physical experiences she describes remind me deeply of my own experiences in West Africa, and my sense is that fieldwork is often steeped with these kinds of physical encounters, expectations, and negotiations.

The following excerpts are from my fieldnotes of only one day's experiences in Lome, Togo (August 10, 1990). (Note: Yeko is an Ewe-American, the 14-year-old daughter of my research colleagues. Yeko and I were accompanied in Lome by her 20-year-old cousin, Yves, who acted as our guide and translator.)

Yves told me the story of Willie and Charlene [an American woman who had visited the family the previous summer]. Now Willie's mother thinks I'm going to take Yves home as a houseboy/concubine, like she imagines Charlene and Willie. The age difference between them is about 25 years, but Yeko tells me a different story. She thinks Willie loves Charlene, but Yves can't believe it is possible for him to love a woman that old.

I'm getting tired of dodging all these earnest young men. Yves' friend from the border is sitting silently in the livingroom—they give me the creeps. This morning Yves' friend asked me if he could stay at my house in America! They don't understand the difference, or else are used to hearing no, and so are hardened to it.

I opened Lyotard [*Postmodern Condition*], but Christian reappeared. I told him I was busy, but he asked why I didn't like him. I finally told him to leave me alone—I wasn't interested in talking with him now or later. I said I was trying to be polite but that I would soon be rude. That finally did it, and he went off, theatrically wounded. He was sitting on our front steps when we left with Anane.

This whole courtship thing is quite interesting. We are too popular! . . . Yeko this afternoon just folded up [in the presence of] Anane—painfully shy and petulant because of it, but with [her cousin] Daniele she felt safe and flirted extremely physically with him. Anane watched carefully—I can see he's possessive. He's very patient with Yeko but I think he's just after an American, ultimately. Why else would he be wooing someone so young? I'm sure he's sexually active. But she eventually warmed to him at the disco—they held hands and she draped herself on him, and she told me excitedly when we got home that he was so sweet—he told her that he loved her. He “tried something,” she said, but she told him no and he apologized. I told her it was good to learn how to say no and that this whole experience was good practice.

I went out for a walk with Expedite and we finally had our long awaited rendezvous in an alley. Oh, Lome! It was not the way I'd wanted to make love with him, but exciting anyway. Painfully brief, but it was then or not at all, and I think we both wanted to seal the bond. He is strange—unreadable at times. I wonder what he thinks of our relationship—I really haven't a clue.

Not only are bodies often viewed sexually in fieldwork, but physical otherness in general is highlighted. My hair, my skin, my body shape, my physical strength or lack of it, etc., were commonly and openly scrutinized and commented upon. Slater mentions an encounter of this type with Chief Gilbert:

After I had known him a long time and we were drinking coffee in my compound, he suddenly asked, “Which skin looks dirtier, black or white?” “White,” I answered immediately. . . . “Hold out your hand,” he said, taking my eternal cigarette. He flicked ashes onto the back of my hand and his, rubbed them in and was pleased at the contrast. (58)

One of my more painful experiences of difference in Lome was that I was often an object of terror for small children who were unfamiliar with whites and who usually took me for a witch. Slater writes that when a Nyika baby burst into tears at the sight of her, his father chided him, “Be brave, don't cry, for that is only a woman, and you are a man” (103). Crowded into the back of a lorry one day in Ghana, I noticed that a baby was staring fixedly at the blonde hairs on my arms. I studied the arms of my companions, and realized with discomfort that by comparison I was a very hairy person. I am not an attractive woman by Ewe standards—too thin and completely lacking the rounded buttocks and full thighs that are the primary objects of male admiration in that culture. “Look at you two,” grumbled Yeko's aged grandmother about Yeko and me, “your bodies are just like a man's and you dress like men too.” I didn't look in many mirrors while in West Africa, because invariably what I saw made me unhappy. I knew, however, that my difference was a source of fascination and pleasure to those who knew me and cared for me. I preferred to be mirrored in their eyes, and even preferred the gaze of the curious and frightened children, to the startling glimpse in a mirror of my own face, so strange in that place.

One-Night Stand in Morocco

I was bewildered. I had no idea where we were going. I had never before had this kind of sensual interaction in Morocco. Although it was incredibly welcome it seemed too good to

be true. Haunting super-ego images of my anthropologist persona thickened my consciousness as the air became purer and the play freer. . . . I felt wonderfully happy—it was the best single day I was to spend in Morocco. (Rabinow 65–66)

. . . Ali demanded to know the most insistent and central of Moroccan questions: *shal?* In most cases this means “how much,” but in this case it meant “how many times?” . . . I teasingly answered *hezzeff*, many times. They were not at all satisfied with such generalities. The question was repeated to everyone's amusement several more times and received the same answer. . . . The girls put on their djellabas and veils (almost all prostitutes wear veils) and it was clear that we were almost back again. (69)

Paul Rabinow's celebrated philosophical treatise on ethnography contains only a single sex scene, one orchestrated with money rather than love. But it is a significant inclusion for all its problems, for Rabinow bravely chose to use it as an instance of “a process of intersubjective construction of liminal modes of communication” that he takes to be the essence of fieldwork (155). The construction of these liminal modes of communication, remarks Rabinow, “is a public process,” and he chose to go public by writing about it as well (155). Rabinow does not specifically reflect on how his sexual experience relates to his thesis, but he remarks in his book that it is time for anthropologists to reunite the experience of collecting the data with the data itself (4). Robert Bellah, in his Foreword in Rabinow's book, notes that “knowing in the human studies is always emotional and moral as well as intellectual” (xi), and it is this sense of the human dilemmas and desires attached to being with Others in an anthropological context that Rabinow honestly (and courageously) attempts to evoke.

Bellah remarks also that *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* helps to break down “the barrier between scholarship and poetry” (xii), pointing out that Rabinow's book is written in narrative form as a story about a journey toward understanding in the traditional style of a heroic quest. While there may be uncomfortable traces of patriarchy lurking in Rabinow's choices (both of writing style and relationships with his informants), it is encouraging to note that the discipline of anthropology has not yet tarred and feathered Rabinow for sleeping with a prostitute and writing about it as both personal and ethnographic knowledge.

Same-Sex Sex in New Guinea

On that first trip to Otsjenep, I began sorting out my life, as I had often tried to do without success. . . . [I]t was as if the time had finally come to acknowledge myself as a human being, with my own power and place in the world. (Schneebaum, *Where the Spirits Dwell: An Odyssey in the New Guinea Jungle* 12–13)

Every group has its patterns of behavior that are considered proper and patterns that are considered abnormal. I was lucky to have found Akatpitsjin, for he made me go as far as I could in what my early life had insisted was unnatural. With him I fitted into a pattern of life that was completely acceptable. It is not that I had ever felt myself to be abnormal, only that I appeared so in the minds of others. However, at the same time that I realized I could go no further in my search, I discovered I was satisfied with myself, with who I was. I felt a part of a family that was part of all families. (205)

Anthropologists Tobias Schneebaum and Kenneth Good share some of the dangers and frustrations of working among two of this planet's last remaining deeply isolated and technologically uninitiated cultures. Communication can be extremely difficult and lack of social graces in these settings can be deadly. Schneebaum

describes his canoe trips with missionaries up Melanesian backwaters, where he gathers decorated human skulls and information about masks, tools, weapons, and sex. Much of the latter information he also verifies firsthand through his intimate relationship with his extraordinary informant, Akatpitsjin. Similar to Good's trials and tribulations in the Amazon, Schneebaum's experiences are so exotic that they are often difficult for the Western reader to assimilate. For me, one of his most remarkable achievements of synthesis in describing Melanesian cosmology occurred when he related a dream he had while in the field. I repeat it here because I feel it is a valuable example of a blurring of literary and ethnographic genres that succeeds in evoking an embodied and politically charged knowledge of a truly mysterious Other. Although his dream occurs while he is asleep in a New Guinea jungle, Schneebaum dreams that he is lunching at the renowned writer's colony of Yaddo:

Akatpitsjin appears at the doorway, naked, paddle in hand. He props it against a wall, enters the small dining room and sits at the head of the table. "Poached crocodile eggs," he tells Beverly, the waitress. Other guests appear. I sit at Akatpitsjin's right, and, although he is thirty-five years my junior, he is my father. I am suddenly in his lap and he cuddles me. The other guests, male and female, are part of our family, my siblings. I shrink and disappear into Akatpitsjin, as if moving into a male womb. Guests are discussing Janet Frame, whose work they have not read. Their language is gobbledegook and I understand nothing. I am at my place again at the table. Janet is now at Akatpitsjin's left, her fuzzy hair a halo around her head. She looks at Akatpitsjin, then looks at me. "You are having an affair," she whispers in her tiny voice. "I want to join you."

Akatpitsjin takes his napkin in hand, pats his lips and says exactly what he had said earlier that day, exactly what is down in my journal. "Of course there is sex between three people." He speaks with a clipped British accent. He wears a necklace of job's tear seeds and cassowary quills, its centerpiece a human atlas bone, the first vertebra of the neck. The guests listen to him. . . . "Everything is in change now," he continues. "We are forgetting the ways of our ancestors." He gets up, lifts his bows and arrows and shoots all the guests but Janet, my friend, and myself. The bodies separate into pieces and, after they are cooked, we eat them. I hold up a piece of flesh and say, "Here is Georgina, a painter of renown. I am eating her and I will have her talent." Later, after I have chewed and swallowed Georgina's cheek, I pick up another piece of meat and say, "This is the hand of Paul. He was a fine writer. Now I too will be a good writer." (202-203)

Schneebaum's dream internalizes an exotic ontology and effectively overlays it onto our academic world and its own highly peculiar practices. By mapping cannibalism into our own sacred spaces, we come face to face with its chilling cultural efficacies. Schneebaum captures these sorts of deep structures of human society precisely because he is willing to intimately explore and experience other modes of rationality and behavior, and to use what he learns to question what he has hitherto taken for granted about his own life, culture, and sexual practices.

Conclusion

I hold a deep respect for the knowledge embedded in music and thus have been reluctant to "ghettoize" it to the realm of pure affect, for music is also highly informational and deeply embedded with culture (see Nelson and Polansky, "The Music of the Voyager Record"). So too is lovemaking, and yet we have similarly relegated it to the aesthetic and personal arenas of our discourses and our lives.

I have attempted to demonstrate in this essay that our sexual lives and our love lives can be spoken about in a professional and public context, and that much cultural knowledge can be gained from doing so. It is this way already in some of the cultures we study, but it remains a politically charged stance within the Western Academy. Anthropology's gaze has always been erotic, although it has a long tradition of repression. This much we learned about even our most venerated of predecessors when Malinowski's diaries were exhumed and his lifelong silences about his sexual yearnings were wrested into public knowledge (see Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*).

These are tenuous and dangerous territories I am treading. On the one side there is voyeurism and exploitation, and on the other are responsible, responsive relationships. These boundaries are not always well negotiated by fallible human beings, even within the cozy hegemonies of our own culture's sexual mores. I have argued that our romantic relationships comprise highly politically charged limens—sites of power struggles over sexual politics that are at once personal, cultural, and institutional. My suggestion is that we need to explore and map these intersections of eros and ethnography into our professional discourse and praxis.

I have reviewed the work of a number of ethnographers who have written about experiences where erotic encounters with another culture have led to deepened understanding and acceptance of themselves. But is the goal of ethnographic inquiry (as Rabinow puts it, quoting Ricoeur) "the comprehension of the self by the detour of the comprehension of the other"? (5). If the Other serves as our underpaid spirit guide and psychiatrist, or the casual object of our sexual gratification, is this not just another, more insidious form of colonization? I have argued instead that the aim of the ethnographic encounter must be not only knowing but also valuing—in the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, "lovingly interested attention" that "comes to meet" the Other (*Towards a Philosophy of the Act* 62). Bakhtin believed that only love is "capable of generating a sufficiently intent power to encompass [a life]" (ibid 64). This position is what I term "dialogic," for it entails accountability for our own emotional, embodied responses, necessitating a reflexive answering—one that embraces eros.

How, exactly, do ethnographers do ethnography in the field? It is only when we can acknowledge and take responsibility for these doings and relationships that we can truly speak as knowers. Trying to acknowledge an Other in an embodied, erotic way is a risky and sometimes difficult engagement, but can lead to love, respect, and knowledge for both the self and the Other, and can present new possibilities for communication and connection. Perhaps, as James Hillman suggests, our own culture has become impoverished to the point where we can no longer believe in attractions based on affection and imagination; perhaps we have "learned to see with the eye of the genitals" (121). Yet eros insists and persists, and through acknowledgment of the often embodied and impassioned nature of field relationships, new ways of knowing and new motivations for change may yet arise. After all, sexual relationships—often the source of our deepest joys—are also the wellspring of the creation of humanity. As Richard Rorty has remarked, "The discovery of a self, one's own or another's, is the endless task of love" ("Pragmatism and Philosophy" 50).

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Notes

¹Some notable exceptions include the work of anthropologist and cultural historian Michel Leiris, until his recent death curator of the Museum of Man in Paris. Leiris, in a lengthy investigation into his own sexuality, aptly describes the infusion of his vocation with his sexuality: "Nothing seems more like a warehouse than a museum. In it you find the same equivocal aspect, the same frozen quality. In one, beautiful, frozen images of Venus, Judith, Susanna, Juno, Lacerre, Salome, and other heroines; in the other, living women in their traditional garb, with their stereotyped gestures and phrases. In both, you are under the sign of archeology; and if I have always loved warehouses it is because they, too, participate in antiquity by their slave-market aspect, a ritual prostitution" (75). Another notably early documenter of the sexual practices of other cultures was Sir Richard Burton, translator of the *Arabian Nights*. Burton's final work, "The Perfumed Garden," is an annotation of a famous Arabian treatise on sexual intercourse. It was burned by his widow upon his death (Leigh).

²Poewe is not without precedent; perhaps the most celebrated text to arise out of this tradition is Laura Bohannan's *Return to Laughter*, written under the pseudonym Elenore Smith Bowen.

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