

In Search of 'Anthropological Concreteness': Individual Narratives in the Context of Anthropological and Literary Relationships

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Abstract

Today's ethnography, anthropology and, generally, social science is influenced by permanent epistemological hypochondria, questioning the scientific empirical truth. Claim of 'objective anthropology' appeared to be a foggy project; explorers of culture realized that what they create are not universalistic science dogmas, but connected with literary genre interpretations. The next important recognition of post-modern anthropology was that a researcher does not only create texts, but also works on a system of the texts or narrations made by his informer. Since then anthropology is perceived as a form of creation, taking birth from arising next to each other narrations and stories, and an anthropologist does not feel like an authoritarian creator of the described worlds, but instead places himself as a naive philosopher, still wondering on the world, as an incompetent observer, influenced by ones own emotions, experiences, and biography.

Unexpectedly, solution to the search of anthropological truth has appeared just within the textual approach. Alleged weaknesses of the interpretative anthropology have been turned into strengths. Perceiving the anthropological project as a dialogical interpretation has opened the doors for key concepts of today's culture as ethical discourse, and constant intersubjective give-and-take. In agreement with argument, that what we analyze is not a social reality but just a text or dynamic of narration, has appeared the notion of narration as a central feature of either ethnographic technique or whole human-being.

Introduction

Contemporary anthropology, ethnology and ethnography are influenced by permanent, weighty metareflection; the former interest in other cultures today becomes a pretext for a critical inquiry into one's own culture and theory. These disciplines provide us with features that are essential for contemporary cultural reflection by providing the tools necessary for critically analyzing its foundations and represented values. Scepticism about the foundations and represented values of cultural reflection takes roots in the post-modern demystification of scientific claims that were presented as totally objective and reliable. Contemporary scientific efforts focus on 'recapturing anthropology' and bringing it back to the basic questions of what is referred to as the 'anthropological concrete' – or, 'the heart' of culture.

As I would like to show in this article, the main problem of so called 'reflexive' or 'interpretative anthropology', which is consciousness of loss of scientific objectivity, at some moment appeared to be a great value of contemporary social sciences and a kind of main – especially for anthropology and ethnography – post-modern epistemological recognition. This recognition places anthropologic research results next to literature, fragmentary narrations, without aspirations to objectivity and comprehensiveness. What is the most important, individualism and subjectivity becomes a chief social 'concreteness', contemporary anthropological empiricism.

The Beginning: The Anthropologist as Writer

According to Clifford Geertz, anthropological claims are based on the process of writing "interpretations" and "fictions". In other words, anthropological claims are derived from narratives that are constructed through the writing process itself.¹ Geertz's opinion has opened-up a broad domain for debate since it has highlighted that in the process of examining

¹ Geertz Clifford, Thick Description. Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture, in: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Basic Books, New York 1973, p.15, 19.

their results, cultural anthropologists create not so much universal scientific dogmas, but are instead creating personal interpretations that are connected with a literary genre. Studies on the phenomena of culture appear to be the anthropologist's subjective narration, which always takes shape in the literary tale. As other scholars emphasise, what is crucial for the anthropological tale is the moment of 'turning from the other', the moment of writing or "translation of experience into textual form".² In the act of writing the anthropologist activates subjective elements, which determine the final shape of his reflection and transmitted senses. Thus, the anthropologist becomes a creator, and his – allegedly objective – description appears to be dependent on his individuality, personal ideology and chosen method. As such, the results obtained through fieldwork are not so much derived from objective reality, but more so from the act of creating literary convention and from particular narrative techniques (inscription, transcription, description) or modes of figuration (e.g. metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony).³

The World of Narration

The next important insight attributed the post-modern anthropology is that a researcher does not only create texts, but also works on a system of texts or narrations made by his informers. Each informer's tale activates not only his memory, but creative talents as well; through self-narration comes into view the events, culminations, and turns in plot, of which the informer is a character himself. The conscious or unconscious 'bringing out' or 'shading of some facts' by informer – whether done in the name of an ideal or values, or simply because of oblivion – becomes a creative technique which can take various forms, like for instance, the form of story, novel, diary, letter, gossip, and joke.⁴ Thus, contemporary anthropology is a form of creation that arises from fragmentary discourses, narrations and stories. The result is that the literary nature of anthropology reveals interesting similarities for both anthropological and literary fields.

Writing and Reading: The Shift from the Centre to the Periphery

A literary work is seen as a complex cultural text which brings forth the context and phenomena of real and imagined worlds. The contexts that are evoked involve many paths or fields; that make different approaches to writing possible, which creates an open space for interpretation. This frees writing from the control of a single authority or disciplinary structure. Today, each text looks for a reader and each text is open to a plurality of readings. Although interpretative openness of the work might suggest absolute freedom in understanding the text, theoreticians of literature try to post some general principles for the process of text-reading. Even Derrida – the greatest rebel on the field of the theory of literature who propagates a deconstructive treatment that plays with free associations and transgressions – admits finally that nobody is such a free reader to read just as he wants.⁵ Eco emphasises that interpretative criterions should always meet the author's intention, the interpreter's intention, and an intention of the text.

Literary theory raises problems of polyphony, dialogue, and intertextuality, referring literary work to many external voices. It suggests that the changing significance of literary work (e.g. distinguished by Barthes from constant, immanent sense) is presently perceived as

² Clifford James, On Ethnographic Authority, in: *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1988, p.25.

³ See: Clifford James, Notes on the Field (notes), in: R. Sanjek (ed.): *Fieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1993, pp.55-56; van Maanen John, Fieldwork, Culture and Ethnography Revisited, in: *Tales of the Field. On Writing Ethnography*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1991.

⁴ Capps Lisa, Ochs Elinor, Narrating the Self, in: *Annual Review of Anthropology* 1996, vol. 25, pp.19-20.

⁵ See: Nycz Ryszard, Teoria interpretacji: problem pluralizmu, in: *Tekstowy świat. Poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze*, Wydawnictwo IBL, Warszawa 1995, p.95.

a dialogic 'product', elaborated and negotiated in relation to other structures: social, lingual and literary ones. Seemingly autonomic, literary text becomes a form of speech that is included in general cultural discourse. Therefore, the 'Same' of literature that has been used previously, is replaced by the 'Other' of anthropology, and description is replaced by experience, universalism by individuality, centre by periphery, strong and authoritarian consciousness by the many equivalent voices. Peripheries, digressions, episodes of former cultural narratives now move to the centre of the anthropological or literary story. The result is that the world becomes a compression of margins and culture becomes a deeply hybrid phenomenon in which the dominant is not 'sameness', but is instead articulated as 'difference'.

According to deconstruction, literary work has never existed as an objective entity that is mono-interpretable, making reading *en bloc* impossible. Wholeness and completeness are replaced by fragmentary and marginal readings.⁶ In the same way that the reliance on scientific truth is fragmentary and the reading of the text is always incomplete, speaking about the possibility of experiencing completeness is also ridiculous. Contemporary man still exists 'between', in suspension, between centre and different points of reference. Human activity cannot be described unilaterally because modernity needs many different viewpoints such as gender, ethnicity, or age. None of these angles are profound, and none excludes the other points of view. These various approaches complement each other in trying to save (or build) a diverse image of post-modern man.

As mentioned before, anthropology takes its roots in meeting with 'difference' and its challenge is found in its acquaintance with the 'other', an endless confrontation between 'us' and 'them'. Ethnographic study exposes the distances and differences between the observer and the observed. Researchers today still realize that the examination of culture or society is just a way to perceive an abstractive idea created by the self. Reality still changes and conceptions are just scientific tools, which permanently need some verification. Generally, contemporary anthropologists do not feel like the authoritarian rulers of the world he or she is describing. Instead, places himself as a naive philosopher, who thinks about the world from the position of an incompetent observer, the anthropologist, who is influenced by his or her own emotions, experiences, and biography. In placing himself or herself in this way, the anthropologist permanently asks himself and his discipline the question: why? And, more important: how?

Epistemological Hypochondria and Its Re-evaluation

An era of focusing on the process of ethnographic writing has exposed advantages as well as the weakness of anthropology as a science. Anthropological interest has shifted from social structures to meanings. Important questions that were previously relegated into the psychological domain – like subjectivity, belief, experience – have now been taken on board as part of the discipline. Nevertheless, as Wilson points out, more and more voices have asked if anthropology can still claim to be a science.⁷ This highlights an urgent demand for re-establishing anthropological epistemology because present publications on anthropology as literary genre do not make clear the terms through which anthropological knowledges are validated. As Hastrup remarks:

“This leaves anthropology with a problem of credibility. Its empirical foundation seems to explode, and the question is whether we henceforward can speak about

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ See: Wilson Richard A., The Trouble with Truth. Anthropology's Epistemological Hypochondria, in: *Anthropology Today* 2004, vol. 20 (5).

‘the empirical’ only in quotation marks. What was once believed to be solidly grounded in ethnographic observation now seems to be floating in thin air”.⁸

Contemporary anthropologists, epistemological hypochondriacs, as Rorty calls them, nervously ask themselves: Are there any facts or only interpretations?

Unexpectedly, the solution to the search for anthropological truth has appeared within the textual approach presented above. Alleged weaknesses of the interpretative anthropology have been turned into strengths. Perceiving the anthropological project as a dialogical interpretation has opened the doors for key concepts of today’s culture as a discourse and as a constant intersubjective give-and-take.⁹ The argument that what we analyze is not a social reality but just a text or dynamic of narration agrees with the notion that narration is a central feature of ethnographic technique.

Individualism and Universalism: Narration as Intersubjective Concreteness

The narrative, which is born out of experience, gives shapes to experience and is perceived by scholars as the central activity in the process of becoming self-consciousness. Through diverse modes of saying, narration evokes multiple, fragmented selves. Individual stories “are partial representations and evocations of the world as we know it”.¹⁰ In other words, representations are our reflective awareness of being-in-the-world. This notion is exemplified in the case of the Western Apaches described by Basso.¹¹ The Apaches’ point of view is that “wisdom sits in places” because the surrounding world is illustration of human mental conditions, the connection with past events, ancestors, and with the order of nature. The Apaches’ stories show that human knowledge is obtained from observing the landscape. People interact with the surrounding world, engage themselves and give life to the things and to the land. As such, when places are actively sensed, the visible landscape becomes a landscape of the mind, of active imagination. For Young, this individual awareness of the surrounding world is a personal map, “the territory of a man’s life as it exists in his memory”.¹² These individual representations of the perceived surroundings are not simply reflections of the real world; they are rather a metaphor of the self, a powerful tool for telling more about the person who has them.

According to the concepts mentioned above, narrations are always partial versions of reality, constructed and influenced by an individual’s feelings, thoughts, and memory. “In a world in motion, narratives provide for the world-traveller – whether anthropologist or informant – a place cognitively to reside and make sense, a place to continue to be”.¹³ Self-narration is a unique opportunity to find order in the foggy and disconnected life-experiences, to create continuity between the past, present and future events; thus, to create an image of the self.

The concept of the self and its position within the framework of more general structures is worth reconsidering. In his text ‘Death in the Garimpo’ Rodriguez Larreta¹⁴ presents the history of Indio, a gold digger, who had lost sense of reality and has committed suicide as a

⁸ Hastrup Kirsten, *The Empirical Foundation: On the Grounding of Worlds*, in: *A Passage to Anthropology: Between Experience and Theory*, Routledge, New York 1995, p.47.

⁹ See: Clifford James, *On Ethnographic Authority*, op. cit., pp.41-43.

¹⁰ Capps Lisa, Ochs Elinor, op. cit., p.21.

¹¹ Basso Keith, *Wisdom Sits in Places. Notes on a Western Apache Landscape*, in: S. Feld and K. H. Basso (eds.): *Senses of Place*, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe 1996.

¹² Young Michael, *Of Myths and Men*, in: *Magicians of Manumana. Living Myth in Kalauna*, University California Press, Berkeley 1983, p.25.

¹³ Rapport Nigel, *The Narrative as Fieldwork Technique: Processual Ethnography for a World in Motion*, in: V. Amit (ed.): *Constructing the Field. Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World*, Routledge, London 2000, p.74.

¹⁴ Rodriguez Larreta Enrique, *Death in the Garimpo*, in: “*Gold Is Illusion*”. *The Garimpeiros of Tapajos Valley in the Brazilian Amazonia*, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm 2002.

consequence of this loss. Indio's self-destruction is contextualised through the practice of malaria - a physical and mental disease - which is a constant condition of the *garimpeiro* lives. The case examined by Larreta highlights the underlying assumption that a human being's ability to act is pre-determined (or at least seriously limited) by circumstances that are independent of him. The notion of being absorbed by the world brings to mind Michel Foucault's discussion on the disappearance of 'man' in connection with the dramatic decline of self-identity in modern reality. For Foucault:

“The self is the direct consequence of power and can only be apprehended in terms of historically specific systems of discourse. The so-called regimes of power do not simply control a bounded, rational subject, but rather they bring the self into existence by imposing disciplinary practices on the body”.¹⁵

Thus, the modern self is coerced into existence by a dominant discourse creating the self not as an agent, but as a self-regulating subject working within social regimes (schools, hospitals, prisons and other). This radical break with the Enlightenment ideals about the human being as universal, strong, rational and knowledgeable, places Foucault's notion of man near to the Freudian idea of the complicated and vulnerable self which is not an active and complete subject, but – because of different layers of the self (id, ego and superego) – is a trembling, neurotic and passive one, always in some way strange to itself.

According to Foucault's approach, the self is more an object of discourse, not an acting or resisting agent. Given this, how can we interpret Indio's suicide? Perhaps it could be seen as surrender to the conditions, dominating social life, or perhaps as an extreme response to them? This question evokes the notion that individual lives do not merely conserve cultural determinants. This approach – presented inter alia by Hannah Arendt, Michael Jackson¹⁶, and Nigel Rapport¹⁷ – underlines the reflexivity of the self and its creative possibilities that are derived from the interaction between the individual and the world. According to this view, it is not society or history, but individuals who construct the world and human destiny within that world. The 'existential power' of man still brings new forms of life into the world. More importantly, this creative power is not expressed through monumental gestures, but in everyday decisions, actions, and conscious dynamics. We can see this notion exemplified in the text entitled, “Life not Death in Venice”: Its Second Life', written by Barbara Myerhoff.¹⁸ The author presents people facing death, the last representatives of the war-generation who want to bequeath to other people their life-stories and experiences. Myerhoff indicates that the older generation of old Jewish immigrants feels a social inattention and a mental foreignness. Furthermore, they suffer from the impossibility of sharing their existential experiences with American society. As Myerhoff shows, the immigrants try to bid defiance to this situation. They concentrate on presenting themselves to the world and on building their image in their own terms. In order to do this, they undertake the 'definitional ceremonies' (meetings in the Centre, telling stories, recording themselves, photographing, drawing collective mural on the walls of the Centre, and organizing protest marches against the social

¹⁵ Callero Peter L., The Sociology of the Self, in: *Annual Review of Sociology* 2003, vol. 29, p.117.

¹⁶ Jackson Michael, Two Lives, in: *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1989; Jackson Michael, Displacement, Suffering, and the Critique of Cultural Fundamentalism, in: *The Politics of Storytelling. Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity*, Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen 2002.

¹⁷ Rapport Nigel, Propositions, in: *I Am Dynamite. An Alternative Anthropology of Power*, Routledge, London 2003; Rapport Nigel, 'Culture is no Excuse': Critiquing Multicultural Essentialism and Identifying the Anthropological Concrete, in: *Social Anthropology* 2003, vol. 11 (3).

¹⁸ Myerhoff Barbara, “Life not Death in Venice”: Its Second Life, in: V. W. Turner, E. M. Bruner (eds.): *The Anthropology of Experience*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago 1986.

inattention). In this way they construct a collective self-portrait which presents them to both outsiders and to themselves.

Activities undertaken by the old Jewish immigrants show crucial feature of each human being: a vital power, which makes that person “forces the frozen circumstances to dance by signing to them their own melody”.¹⁹ The concept of individuals as powerful beings, who not only live in a culture but also create the culture they live in gains fundamental recognition: the individual is the ‘anthropological concrete’.²⁰ Only individuals act, not societies or cultures. This is where their ontological supremacy over the cultural structures is found. The recognition of individual praxis does not mean believing in extraordinary possibilities of achieving all aims. It only rejects – as in the case of the gold digger’s suicide or the old Venice Jews actions – taking social reality for granted. It means fighting for lives not as they are but as they should be. Thus, it means struggling for social ‘visibility’ and existential significance.

As pointed out, the self is a social force, a fluid, creative power, but it is also power acting on the public stage and in social structures. People are both individuals and members of classes or categories of society. Therefore, each individual experience is rooted in events pertaining to both individual and social life. Each person or personal narrative is dipped in the external and internal context from which it originates. This places personal narratives between an inner and an outer, between one’s own and those elements we share in common. This suggests that people’s existence is located in a permanent balance between structure and agency, givenness and choice, being acted upon as well as acting on. Today, ‘getting down to the things themselves’ means getting into the richness of the materials of everyday life, existential situations, and moving constantly between the universal and the particular.

An important ethnographic approach to the dynamics of individual life within the context of social milieu is found in Michael Herzfeld’s biography of the Greek novelist, Andreas Nenedakis. Herzfeld’s text shows the way a highly active and imaginative individuality negotiates the engagement within his cultural background and discusses what his personal sense of tradition or nation is. The author portrays Nenedakis with all his inconsistencies and plurality of his notions. Herzfeld refuses to explain the Greek novelist within the context of a single culture or ordered set of norms; in his opinion his friend’s worldview transgresses a single voice or a single ideology.²¹ This multidimensional creation crosses structural boundaries and overlaps with the explanations given by the novelist’s writings and his friend. The relationship between agency and structure, individual creativity and collective representations – as examined by Herzfeld – goes hand in hand with the author’s postulates on humanistic methods of ethnographic inquiry. This ethnographic is based on a very close, friendly relationship, such as the one as exemplified by him and Nenedakis. As the author points out, the challenge is to continue on paper the process initiated in face-to-face dialogue: a deep human interaction.

Diversity and Openness

The practice of contemporary anthropology is based not only on theoretical ideas but on relationships with the informer, the anthropologist’s own thoughts, and more or less the significant events in his professional and family life. Michael Jackson notes that “ethnography then becomes a form of *Verstehen*, a project of emphatic and vicarious understanding in which the other is seen in the light of one’s own experiences and the activity of trying to

¹⁹ Jackson Michael, *Two Lives*, op. cit., p.20.

²⁰ See: Rapport Nigel, *The Narrative as Fieldwork Technique*, op. cit., p.90; Rapport Nigel, *Propositions*, op. cit., p.66.

²¹ See: Herzfeld Michael, *Anticipations*, in: *Portrait of a Greek Imagination. An Ethnographic Biography of Andreas Nenedakis*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1997, p.15.

fathom the other in turn illuminates and alters one's sense of Self".²² This concept emphasises the specificity of today's anthropology as a form of meeting with different experiences and different lives reaching out to each other. The key point of this idea is not the establishment of a boundary between subject and object, but the establishment of the "world of betweenness".²³

This way of understanding of anthropological activity holds great significance to develop a comprehension of the self-in-the-world. Conversation appears to be the most valuable activity because story telling provides a common ground for all as well as showing the 'my' experiences within the "others'" narratives. As Steffen argues, the expression of a shared experience has special importance for people with traumatic problems, like Alcoholic Anonymous groups. Each member of this particular group starts his story by saying: "I am an alcoholic". This short phrase creates a common sphere of encounter for people who would otherwise have very different backgrounds (age, sex, social status or life style) and therefore, no apparent reason for convergence. The expression of a personal problem in a group of listeners has great therapeutic significance; it illuminates interpersonal relationships between fellow-sufferers and enables the transition from an individual experience to a collective one.²⁴ This recognition allows for the possibility of sharing one world or one history with other people; it discovers universal sameness, an idea of *anthropos*.

The idea of a common sphere also outlines that individual lives are permanently open for new uses and new interpretations. Hermeneutical openness for continually giving and listening to stories reveals human being's features: temporality and changeability. Self-interpretation is not a personal act but a social one. For example, Indio's death, inhabitants of the Amazonian village build his image by very subjective and very different tales of his life.²⁵ Thus, as Rapport claims, a man's life story never ends, the individual is still an "unfinished project".²⁶ The self, just like the text, is constantly created by new relations, which are constantly reinterpreted, rewritten, and renegotiated by innovative narrations.

The focus on individuality characterises a re-valuation in scientific, social, and humanistic approaches to anthropology: a shift from universal to particular, from global to local, from cultural to individual. This change comes from the contemporary reality which cannot be described in a complex way anymore. Thus, inquiring into the ideas of wholeness and obligation need to be replaced by the notion of discourse. Objective claims should be removed by temporary and subjective experience, accenting discontinuous characterization of the world, human beings and science. Culture should be presently seen "as an idiom or vehicle of intersubjective life, but not its foundation or final cause".²⁷ Studies on different types of individuals' lives enable research to be carried out on post-modern heterogeneous experiences. It also enables the identification of different biographies, stories and backgrounds behind the way people act, because, as Devereux has pointed out, if two people do the same thing, it is not the same. There is always a variety of authentically subjective motives which can find realization in the same type of collective activity.

"Thus, people go to church for many subjective reasons: to seem respectable; because of piety, and all that piety implies in the unconscious; to show off a new Easter bonnet – and so on. All derive some gratification from this act even

²² Jackson Michael, op. cit., p.34.

²³ Hastrup Kirsten, Writing Ethnography State of the Art, in: J. Okeley and H. Callaway (eds.): *Anthropology and Autobiography*, Routledge, London 1992, p.118.

²⁴ See: Steffen Vibeke, Life Stories and Shared Experience, in: *Social Science and Medicine* 1997, vol. 45 (1).

²⁵ See: Rodriguez Larreta Enrique, op. cit., pp.183-87.

²⁶ Rapport Nigel, The Narrative as Fieldwork Technique, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁷ Jackson Michael, Displacement, Suffering, and the Critique of Cultural Fundamentalism. op. cit., p. 125.

thought they are not actuated by a homogeneous set of personal motives, nor by one massive social motive”.²⁸

This gap between acting in the same way and thinking in different ways is also seen in the case of Japanese kamikazes, which are usually seen as people who happily died for the Emperor. As Ohnuki-Tierney²⁹ has pointed out, the well-known images of kamikaze smiling before their final mission cover up the problems faced by ‘patriots’ of saying ‘no’ when everybody is acting in accordance with the state’s rules. The verification of the individual backgrounds of kamikaze reveals that most of them did not volunteer but were forced. Thus, this case outlines the problem of ideological pressure and shows the hiatus between particular and collective motives. Ipso facto, it validates the scientific demand of balance between social and individual, sociological and psychological circumstances.

Of particular salience is the orthodox advocacy of anti-cultural and anti-structural ideas which are presented in Abu-Lughod’s works. For her, the individuals’ ethnographies – people making choices, suffering, struggling, and contesting – exhibits a form of anthropological program. “Writing against culture”, as she calls it, concerns the danger of ethnographic generalizations killing individual experience and creating a professional discourse of objectivity. As she points out, “the effort to produce general ethnographic descriptions of people’s beliefs or actions risks smoothing over contradictions, conflicts of interest, doubts and arguments, not to mention changing motivations and historical circumstances”.³⁰ Reducing the richness and variation of acting to simplify schemes of cultural behaviour, as opposed to deep relations with interlocutors, seems to amount to the suppression of the stories. In this way, deformed and simplified ‘cultural finds’ would amount to a return to a scientific symbolic violence and former discourses of power.

The Ethical Challenge of Contemporary Anthropology

Anthropology based on individuality engages in a great ethical challenge. Past impersonal dichotomies abating the ‘other’, at present declare giving voice to the ‘other’ and releasing the other’s words from anthropological theories and choices.³¹ Today’s approach, following on reflexive anthropology and based on dialogic forms, tries to change the subject-object opposition between anthropologist and informer into – in terms of Buber’s language³² – ‘I-Thou’, ‘Mine-Yours’ relationships, thus, into a mystical and intimate encounter. The issue for anthropology today is not to represent, but to understand. The ‘other’ should not be an object of dissection or inspection anymore, but a share-holder, a partner developing and constructing himself in the endless, constantly present and open, inter-dialogue.

The era of reflexive anthropology has articulated the anthropological aim along the same lines to that of the critic’s task (then not: make me believe in what you say, but: make me believe that you want to communicate something). Both anthropological and literary interpretations permanently look for disciplinary ‘accuracy’, but never reach absolute ‘truthfulness’.³³ Nevertheless, as Michael Jackson has pointed out, there is a substantial difference between novels and ethnographies. This distinguishing point is neither objectivity

²⁸ Devereux George, Two Types of Modal Personality Models, in: *Ethnopschoanalysis: Psychoanalysis and Anthropology as Complementary Frames of Reference*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1978, p.128-29.

²⁹ Ohnuki-Tierney Emiko, Betrayal by Idealism and Aesthetics. Special Attack Force (Kamikaze) Pilots and Their Intellectual Trajectories (Part 1), in: *Anthropology Today* 2004, vol. 20 (2).

³⁰ Abu-Lughod Lila, Introduction, in: *Writing Women’s Worlds. Bedouin Stories*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993, p.9.

³¹ See: Bruner Edward M., Ethnography as Narrative, in: V. W. Turner and E. M. Bruner (eds.): *The Anthropology of Experience*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago 1986, p.149-50.

³² Buber Martin, *I and Thou*, T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh 1983.

³³ See: Barthes Roland, *Criticism and Truth*, transl. and ed. K. P. Keuneman, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1987.

nor learnedness, but authorial intentions. A writer has an unlimited possibility of creative invention – he can say whatever he wants. An anthropologist or ethnographer has a highly ethical responsibility for creating representations of the other.³⁴ In this sense, ethics determine the validity, distinctive quality, and programmatic task of contemporary anthropology.

As Clifford has pointed out, anthropological writing and anthropology as a science is always struggling within and against the possibilities which it gives, i.e. the perception of others and the authority of claims.³⁵ Ethnographic or anthropological description still meets both the textual or ethical challenges and requirements of scientific analysis. There is a noticeable similarity between the position of anthropology and Derrida's idea of deconstruction. Deconstruction posits criticism or demystification of some dominant metaphysical notions with a simultaneous awareness of the impossibility of their absolute transgression. Thus, the question of trust, ethnocentrism, researchers' dominance and the scientific value of disciplinary categories will still be swinging back; swinging back as a creative, endless, and conscious anthropological self-narration.

³⁴ Herzfeld Michael, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

³⁵ Clifford James, *On Ethnographic Authority*, *op. cit.*, p.54.

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