

## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND: THE ANTHROPOLOGIST AS ACTOR.<sup>1</sup>

*Bambi Ceuppens*

O! there be players that I have seen play,  
and heard other praise, and that highly,  
not to speak it profanely,  
that neither having the accent of Christians  
nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man,  
have so strutted and bellowed  
that I have thought some of nature's journeymen  
had made men and not made them well,  
they imitated humanity so abominably.  
(Hamlet, III, 2, 33-49)

### 1. *Introduction*

It seems proof of the fact that concepts can be formed independently of language (cf. Bloch 1991), i.e. that one can discuss a phenomenon without attributing a proper name to it, that Herder could accuse the philosophers and historians of the Enlightenment of 'cultural imperialism', 'ethnocentrism', or 'eurocentrism' long before either term had been introduced as such. Herder disputed the idea, put forward by Enlightenment thinkers that 'culture' or 'civilisation' referred to the way in which Europeans had 'cultured' or 'civilised' themselves, or to the self-development of humankind as a whole along unilinear lines in a historical process that reached its peak in 18th century Europe — as if Europeans set the standards by which to judge the state of 'culture' or 'civilisation' of non-Europeans, and they, and they alone, held the key for 'correct' self-development (Berlin 1976; Williams 1983). If, as Williams (1983) suggests, culture is "one of the two or three most complicated words in the

English language” (and, I would hasten to add, in most European languages), it appears that we have Herder (or the Romantics<sup>2</sup> in general) to blame — or to praise. For nowadays, ‘culture’ no longer refers exclusively to a general process of intellectual, spiritual and/or aesthetic development on an individual level, or to a state of ‘civilisation’ that should be a universal idea (Williams’s usage [i]; cf. Jahoda 1993: 277), as used to be the case before the Romantics enlarged its meaning to include the particular way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual, of any given society, in any given place at any given moment in time (Williams’s usage [ii]). These two meanings must still be distinguished from a third one which, in its original use, was an applied form of the first, namely the works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity (Williams’s usage [iii]), and which is equally pertinent to the analysis of the culture-concept in anthropology.

I am not suggesting that this ‘debate’ between ‘Enlightened’ and ‘Romantics’ on the concept of culture should be considered to be the ‘mother’ of all debates between universalists and particularists, or that, by introducing the idea of the plurality of culture, Herder directly inspired the birth of anthropology as an academic discipline. The dichotomies I set up in this paper (between ‘Enlightened’ and ‘Romantic’ thought, positivist and interpretive anthropology, British social and American cultural anthropology, cognitivism and behaviourism, causality and participation etc.) are clearly heuristic rather than epistemological.

The historian Darnton remarks, with all the bewilderment of an outsider that “[a]nthropologists have no common method, no all-embracing theory. If merely asked for a definition of culture, they are liable to explode in clan warfare.” (1984: 253) While some anthropologists might agree with the first point, my guess is that most would be highly amused by the second. Trying to find a suitable definition of the culture-concept is no longer a burning issue in the discipline. In fact, many anthropologists claim that one might as well do away with it altogether, and have chosen to focus on the study of cultures instead, by trying to capture culture in its experiential sense by trying to find out what it feels like to belong to a culture (Cohen 1982: 4), or by focusing on what it is that culture does rather than on what it is, and how. It is the latter issue I will address here. In view of the recent preoccupation in the discipline with *experiencing* rather than with *writing* culture, with the anthropologist as fieldworker rather than the anthropologist as ethnographer, I suggest that

anthropologists would do well to turn *their* praxis (the study of cultures) to *culture's* praxis (enculturation), more specifically their own enculturation in the cultures they study.

I will investigate the issue of fieldwork enculturation by comparing the anthropologist's task to an actor's. The suggestion that the fieldworker can be likened to an actor is hardly original (Turnbull 1990). In more way than one, theatrical acting is as inadequate a metaphor for doing fieldwork as it is for 'real-life' acting, if only because the former can involve forms of rehearsal and repetitiveness, and a sense of predictability which the latter often lacks. Nor am I using the metaphor of the theatre, of roles, acting etc. here in the sense that individuals can be likened to actors who enact their roles (social structure) based upon an internalised script (culture) (e.g. Goffman 1973). The title of the article is an allusion to 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind', the closest kind of encounter between humans and extra-terrestrials, and to Steven Spielberg's film which describes such a fictitious encounter. I will compare western anthropologists' encounters with members of other cultures to those of western actors making sense of the characters they have to play on the assumption that they draw on similar ideas on selfhood and subjectivity.

In comparing the relationship between anthropologists and their informants to those between actors and their roles, I am asking the reader to make a huge leap of faith. There is no reason to suggest that the popularity of the metaphor of theatre for human existence in western cultures is one that easily travels to other cultural settings; we cannot take for granted that acting methods in different cultures can add to our understanding of social interaction in those cultures; the power of the metaphor of the theatre is based upon an evaluation of play-acting which may be different elsewhere (Schechner 1982); and a distinction must be made between acting in theatrical and in ritual contexts (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1990; Myerhoff 1990; Peacock 1990), and between the representation of individuals or characters (Bharucha 1993; Schechner 1982).

If one goes by the literature on the topic, one is led to believe that the anthropological fieldworker has the choice between an objective and a subjective approach. Non-western acting methods, I suggest, can provide us with an alternative which, if adapted by the anthropologist, might enable a successful close encounter with the Other of a third kind.

## 2. *The Rise and Fall of the Culture-Concept*

At the time that anthropology became an academic discipline in its own right in the 19th century, its usage of the concept of culture was very much in the Enlightenment mould, and the discipline gained full maturity only when its renewed view on culture took it into a more Romantically inspired direction. The first main shift in the conceptualisation of the term took place in the first decennia of the 20th century when the transatlantic match between Tylor in the UK and Boas in the USA was settled largely in favour of the latter. The 'Enlightened' Tylor equated culture with the process of 'civilisation' and proposed a hierarchy of cultures; his 'Romantic' opponent, Boas, viewed culture as a plural rather than singular concept and propounded a juxtaposition of different cultures all of which could only be judged in terms of their own values and standards. The point has been made, however, that western anthropologists continued to distinguish between their cultures and their informants': 'Culture' in the sense of 'civilisation', viewed as project directed to the future became an attribute of Self; with the introduction of 'cultures' in the plural sense, came the idea that they were legacies from the past, and attributes of the Other:

A 'cultured person' is supposed to be one well-versed in science, literature and the arts, one in whom reason and knowledge have been cultivated to a high degree. 'To live in a culture', on the other hand, is to be condemned to a life of traditional monotony, to be imprisoned in one's thoughts by belief and superstition, and in one's actions by customary routine. The man (*sic*) in a culture thus appears as the very opposite of the cultured man, for the latter, in reaching for enlightenment, claims to have liberated himself from the shackles of tradition that hold the former in suspended animation. ... we are cultured and they are not because they live in a culture and we do not. (*ibid.*: 212; cf. Wallerstein 1990; 1991)

20th century British anthropologists, while rejecting a hierarchisation of cultures, were slow to adapt the Boasian concept of culture as an ideational system and to establish it as a key concept in anthropology. Instead, they continued to see culture as "the pattern of life within a community — the regularly recurring activities and material and social

arrangements" (Goodenough cited in Holy 1989: 277), and concerned themselves with social structure rather than knowledge systems.

In the second half of the century, anthropologists on both sides of the Atlantic developed an interest in culture in terms of meaning rather than function and in doing so, increasingly turned away from manifest patterns of behaviour to underlying structures, from social structure to symbolic meaning.<sup>3</sup> This shift relied heavily upon the acceptance of language as a model for culture; main source of inspiration was Lévi-Strauss's structuralism, itself strongly indebted to (structural) linguistics.<sup>4</sup> The adaptation of language as a suitable model for culture led to a shared understanding among British and American anthropologists, perhaps not of what culture is, but at least of what it does: "Culture communicates; the complex interconnectedness of cultural events itself conveys information to those who participate in those events." (Leach 1976: 2) When language was the main model for culture, the anthropologist's task was one of translation (Asad 1986; Clammer 1986: 78-79; Geuijen, Raven & De Wolf 1995; Ingold 1993; Pálsson 1993); as language was replaced by text (Geertz 1973) and discourse (Parkin 1982) as the main model, the anthropologist's task became one of interpretation (Geertz 1973; 1983; Geuijen *et al.* 1995).

But a key difference in emphasis remained in place between American and British, i.e. cultural and social anthropology: British anthropologists were reluctant to share the view promoted by American interpretive anthropologists that culture can be defined in opposition to behaviour (Ingold 1994: 329), and analyzed as an object of study in its own right, "without it being conceptually linked to people's practical action in the world." (Holy 1989: 265; cf. Gellner 1992; Parkin 1982). They redressed the balance by considering "the generative source of culture in human practices, situated in the relational context of people's mutual involvement in a social world, rather than in the structures of signification wherein that world is represented." (Ingold 1994: 329). They argue that neither language nor discourse are appropriate models for culture since culture is not an integrated systematic whole, and not solely cognitively motivated since it also enables or facilitates practical interaction (Holy 1989); and they challenge the idea that all culture is symbolic, i.e. representational of something else by putting the individual back in culture (Cohen 1994).

American anthropologists, in the meantime, not content with having

cut down the concept of culture, have gone one step further by denying the legitimacy of its usage altogether, arguing that anthropologists have never so much represented cultures as invented them, and that culture is an essentialist notion which reifies individual experience (Abu-Lughod 1991; 1994; Tyler 1986; Wagner 1991). Cynical (feminist) observers suggest that “[w]hen Western white males — who traditionally have controlled the production of knowledge — can no longer define the truth ... their response is to conclude that there is not a truth to be discovered.” (Mascia-Lees, Sharpe & Cohen 1989: 15) Some might propose in a similar vein that, faced with the difficulties of defining culture in a multi-cultural world, (white, male) American anthropologists have resolved the problem by deciding that there is no such thing as culture in the first place. But such a conclusion neglects the relevance of the fact that the culture-concept in its current three major meanings developed in a context of the rise of Modern western colonialism, itself the product of class society — incidentally, carried by western white males. The belief that there is a rigid correlation between geographical, cultural, ethnic and linguistic boundaries; the conviction that “humanity as a whole can be parcelled up into a multitude of discrete cultural capsules” (Ingold 1994: 330) which are mutually exclusive; the idea that cultures are self-contained, integrated systems of thought and custom which assumes a homogeneity among its members and denies any possibility of dynamic change; the suggestion that there is either one universal ‘civilisation’ or that each culture should be judged in its own terms ... All these must be situated in the particular and peculiar colonial situations in which colonisers advocated and implemented a strict and rigorous policy of cultural segregation top-down which mirrored, to some extent, the social divisions in their own societies. Such views simultaneously resulted from and justified the colonial situations in which they emerged, and have been put to rest by anthropologists in the post-colonial era (cf. Ingold 1994). It is within the framework of the colonial enterprise that ‘our Culture’ was juxtaposed and contrasted to ‘their cultures’; this distinction then formed the basis for the anthropological project:

Like works of art, their ways of life become objects of contemplation for us, but not vice versa, since we are the spectators in the gallery of human variety, whereas they are the figures in the pictures. In effect, the concept of culture operates as a distancing device, setting

up a radical disjunction between ourselves, rational observers of the human condition, and those other people, enmeshed in their traditional patterns of belief and practice, whom we profess to observe and study. (Ingold 1993: 212)

But if there are no isolated cultures; if cultures do not integrate but aggregate people and processes (Cohen 1994: 119); if the result is a pluriformity of voices within any given culture; if individuals partake in different cultures simultaneously; if cultures in the sense of systematic functioning wholes are an anthropological invention ... what, then, is there left for anthropologists to study? A great deal, apparently. Anthropologists may be unable or unwilling to define culture, or refuse to acknowledge its existence, but this does not stop them from studying 'cultures'; and this situation is not as paradoxical as it might appear. There is, as Pinxten (1994: 31) points out, a long and fruitless obsession with definitions in philosophy and the social sciences which appears more as a continuation of theological arguments than in keeping with the good scientific practice of concentrating on the 'how' rather than the 'what'. When anthropologists obsessively try to define what culture is they risk losing out of sight what culture does. Taken from this viewpoint, Fabian's observation about time is pertinent for any consideration on the concept of culture:

When they approach the problem of time, certain philosophers feel the need to fortify themselves with a ritual incantation. They quote Augustine: "What is time? If no one asks me about it, I know; if I want to explain it to the one who asks, I don't know" (Confessions, book XI) ... It is difficult to speak about Time and we may leave it to philosophers to ponder the reasons. It is not difficult to show that we speak, fluently and profusely, through Time. Time, like language or money, is a carrier of significance, a form through which we define the content of relations between the Self and the Other. (1983: ix)

Talking about culture, Ingold proposes in a similar vein that "[i]t might be more realistic ... to say that people live culturally than that they live in cultures." (1994: 330). And also of anthropologists it can be said that culture is what they see with, and not (or seldom) what they see (Quinn

and Holland, cited in Hastrup 1995: 128). If this analysis is correct, it follows that even those anthropologists who reject the culture-concept out of hand but continue studying cultures, must at least have an implicit definition of culture. I think that this is, indeed, the case. And I will prove my point by giving the example of Abu-Lughod herself who, in the preface to her book *Writing Women's Worlds* (1994) describes her feelings of anticipation upon returning to the community in which she conducted fieldwork previously, accompanied by her father and her new husband. She talks about her pride in driving up in a Mercedes which will confirm to the Awlad °Ali that she comes from a good family; she anticipates their joy when they will hear she has finally got married; she prides herself in having brought along the right gifts for a bride's first post-marital visit home, even though she realises that she is a bit old for it all; and she concludes that "[t]he symbolism would be clear. We would be affirming both a sort of belonging to this community and, more importantly, this particular family's status as 'close kin' of mine." (xiii). Abu-Lughod gives us a description, however minimal, of Awlad °Ali culture, i.e. a certain *knowledge* she has of what constitutes a particular kind of proper behaviour from an Awlad °Ali point of view. In the subsequent introduction, she rejects the culture-concept on the ground that it essentialises individual experience; but anyone who never reads her book beyond this preface might be forgiven for thinking that they are in for a classical anthropological description of Awlad °Ali culture, and wonder at this stage, whether she is a functional anthropologist emphasising social cohesion or an interpretive anthropologist stressing meaning. What follows is not an anthropological monograph in the traditional mould because Abu-Lughod's refusal to accept the culture-concept makes this impossible; but it does not become at all clear from the book that the ways in which the data were gathered was in any way out of the ordinary: the form of the monograph may be somewhat unusual, but we have no reason to presume that this also applies to the fieldwork methodology. Abu-Lughod may propagate to write against culture, and be critical of classical ethnography, but she remains devoted to the study of culture as a fieldworker; indeed, she suggests that the role of the anthropologist be reduced to that of an ethnographer of the particular, for in denying the concept of culture, she also denies any possibility of cross-cultural comparison (1991; 1994). But this clearly involves a paradox: for is it not one of the central tenets of anthropology in recent years that

anthropologists' own cultural background colour their studies of other cultures; and is it not argued that the creation of the concept of 'culture' and the subsequent creation of the Other are themselves the creation of a specific western culture? There consequently is a triple risk of essentialisation in Abu-Lughod's approach: essentialisation of the culture which essentialises the Other, essentialisation of previous traditions in anthropological writing, and essentialisation of anthropology itself, i.e. the tendency to identify the discipline with the fieldwork method.

Long-term fieldwork is the discipline's most important characteristic, the one which separates it from all other social science disciplines. Sociologists, psychologists and others may conduct fieldwork as well; but only for anthropologists is its execution the "primary badge of membership in the guild" (Clammer 1986: 64-65; cf. Holy 1986: 17; Rabinow 1977). It is, however, not an end in itself: fieldwork provides the anthropologist with the lived experience, the raw material to write ethnographies. The dual task of the anthropologist as a fieldworker and an ethnographer is not, and has never been in question.<sup>5</sup> And it is this dual task which informs the attractiveness of the metaphor of drama to describe the anthropological experience: just like drama is both a performance and a text, the anthropologist is both an actor (fieldworker) and a playwright (ethnographer). While I would argue that one task informs the other, the format of this paper does not allow me to elaborate on this dual role. My focus will therefore be exclusively on the anthropologist as an actor.<sup>6</sup> And my considerations on this subject lead me to one of our major academic ancestors: Aristotle.

### 3. *Making or Faking: The Concept of Mimesis*

Anyone coming to the study of African identity through the texts of African intellectuals cannot but be struck by the fact that their discussions echo western discourses on the same subject: is it true that *l'émotion est nègre comme la raison est hellène*; are Africans communalistic and Westerners individualistic, etc.? Initially, these debates aroused little in me other than a weary sense of *déjà-vu*. As an avid reader of 19th century Russian literature, I could not help but notice the similarities between 20th century African 'traditionalist' and 'modern' thinkers and 19th century Slavophiles and 'Europeanised' Russian intellectuals; later still,

when I turned my attention to feminist writing, I came across the same kind of polarised discussions. Imitation or mimicry is a key concept in anti- and post-colonial writing from Sartre to Bhabha (though less so in feminism); and the point has been made, more than once, that counter-discourses like *négritude* cannot ‘come off age’ as long as they continue to inscribe themselves in the very intellectual traditions they oppose (Sartre 1969). There is no need here to recapitulate the debates within African philosophy, post-colonial writing or feminism I am alluding to. And soon I realised that the problem might lie less with African scholars (and feminists) imitating Western (and male) discourses but with me and the problem I had with imitation.

The point was brought home to me forcefully when I started reading Taussig’s *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993) in which the author constantly points to the mimetic prowess of ‘primitives’. It does not concern me here whether Taussig buys into this idea. By the time I started to read the book I had found so many references to the mimetic capacities of the Other that I had come to realise that Otherness reveals itself, among other things, in mimetic prowess: ‘primitives’ do it, women do it, children do it, the mentally disturbed or mentally unstable do it. Travelling through Africa, Jung observed that the ‘locals’ “could imitate with astounding accuracy the manner of expression, the gestures, the gaits of people, thus, to all intents and purposes, slipping into their skins” (1965: 239); Darwin described the people of *Tierra del Fuego* as *excellent mimics* (cited in Taussig 1993: 74), and suggests that “[i]t is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore, of a past and lower state of civilization” (cited in Dijkstra 1988: 172); Campbell, 19th century author of *Differences in the Nervous Organization of Man and Woman*, writes that “in imitativeness and lack of originality [woman] stands conspicuously first; indeed, it is essentially in this particular that the masculine intellect shows its superiority over the feminine.” (cited in *ibid.*: 207)

Lack of originality and initiative, and servile, sterile imitation of the ‘Western way’ or of men has always been one of the most common reproaches laid at the feet of women and the colonised in colloquial colonial and misogynist discourses: they have never produced an artistic genius on a par with Rembrandt or Shakespeare or Mozart. The ‘black’

who imitates the dress and behaviour of his/her white master and look down on his/her more 'backward' compeers, but is finally deeply humiliated, is a favourite figure in colonial novels and racist jokes (Pieterse 1990: 132ff.). Fun is poked at the Japanese passion for karaoke which is seen as indicative of their lack of originality; they are often accused of being good at producing mechanical and electrical goods in the Western mould but incapable of inventing something really 'new'. Few things inspire more merriment than children imitating adults: their talent at mimicry but their inability to ever get it completely 'right', confirms their status of Other: "[t]he pleasure to be got from it, such as it is, lies in seeing the combination of likeness with unlikeness (as with a metaphor)." (House 1956: 124)

But imitation does not only get a bad press. The high acclaim in which impersonators of popular and public figures are held would suggest that it is a rare quality which only a few possess but which many would like to have; and the idea that imitation is of vital importance in the learning process, would indicate that it is shared by all humans who need it in order to qualify as 'truly human'. The two views are not as mutually exclusive as one might be led to conclude. Premack and Premack (1994) distinguish between conditioning or associative learning as the simplest form of social transmission of information, observational learning as an intermediate form, and imitative learning, and argue that it is primarily associated with humans since, "despite widespread belief to the contrary ... evidence for imitation in monkeys or even apes is scarce." (353) They differentiate three grades of socially transmitted information, depending on the degree of intention in the exchange: in the lowest grade of transmission, information is exchanged without intention by either party; in the intermediate grade, the novice behaves intentionally and the model remains unintentional; only in the highest grade, both model and novice act intentionally. This, they suggest, "the most efficient form of social transmission of information, is *pedagogy*. A biological novelty, it is found only in humans." (*ibid.*: 352) But pedagogy, in their view, is more than imitation:

In imitation, the novice observes the model, copying his or her behaviour — the model does not return the observation. Pedagogy is immediately distinguishable from imitation because in pedagogy the model does observe the novice. In addition, the model judges the

novice, and intervenes actively to modify the novice's performance. (*ibid.*: 354-355)

That humans should differ from animals in that they are 'born' mimics and learn through imitation is, of course, nothing new. Aristotle started his influential *Poetics* by observing that "epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic poetry, and most forms of flute and lyre playing all happen to be, in general, imitations." (1447a 13-16, English translation in Golden 1992: 18) He goes on to say that mimesis comes natural to humans, that they achieve their first learning experiences through it, and receive pleasure through it (1448b 4-17).

*Mimesis* appeared very rarely in connection with arts and philosophy before the fourth century BC; in its earliest Pythagorean sense, it meant 'performance' or 'form of expression' and is associated with dance and music only. It is to Plato and Aristotle that we owe the new status of the term as well as its redefined meaning of 'imitation' in the arts, and its association with poetry, painting and philosophy (Spariosu 1984: iii). Spariosu (1976) directs the distinction between mimesis in terms of the human learning process and artistic mimesis to a distinction between being-in-the-world as Action and being-in-the-world as Play, and rather than using the term mimesis, refers to the former as imitation and the latter as simulation: action (imitation) is characterised by directionality and finality and, especially when directed towards other persons, may incur existential consequences or reactions and can therefore be said to have moral significance (*ibid.*: 4); play (simulation) is characterised by directionality without finality and does not incur reactions, being free from existential consequences and therefore without moral significance (*ibid.*: 5). He gives the example of the mime to bring out the difference:

If a mime imitated an action he would actually have to perform that action — stabbing someone if he imitates a killer, for example. All he does is pretend (not intend) performing an action. In other words, he does not act, he plays. ... The mime is not tried in court for simulating a killer, though mimes and actors have been known to come to grief because the nature of their art was misunderstood (cf. also the fate of jesters). (*ibid.*: 12; cf. House 1956: 121ff.)

The view that the actor (in the theatrical sense) can be distinguished from

the role s/he plays is, as I will argue further down, an ethnocentric one which was probably not shared by Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> It is a useful distinction however, precisely because it is so ethnocentric, as we shall see.

Golden (1994), on the other hand, stresses the link between the learning process and artistic mimesis by pointing out that for Aristotle, the mimetic process had an essentially intellectual goal and is clearly cognitively oriented. Elsewhere, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1371b 4-10, English translation in Golden 1992: 64), we read that: "... it is not in the object that we take pleasure but in the process of making inferences from "this to that" so that it turns out that we learn something." If humans derive pleasure from artistic *mimesis*, it is not because of the subject matter works of art represent, but because the latter offer them the intellectual pleasure of learning and inference, which Aristotle regarded as the highest human pleasure (Golden 1992: 64-65). All forms of mimesis therefore have their origin in humankind's 'desire to know' (*ibid.*: 64).

Both Spariosu and Golden distinguish between *mimesis* as 'imitation' in the sense of following a model, and 'representation', in the sense of reproducing a model, although they do not agree in what sense Aristotle used the term.<sup>8</sup> While this distinction boils down to a dichotomy between passive imitation and active reproduction which I find highly problematic, it is nevertheless illuminating in that it highlights the very negative connotations of 'imitation' this section of the paper sets out to investigate. I would argue that the view that there can be such a thing as passive imitation in the first place is a fairly recent invention in western literary and art theory. That for Aristotle, artistic *mimesis* presupposed active artistic creation rather than passive copying is borne out by his suggestion that poetry

is more philosophical and more significant than history, for poetry deals more with the universal and history more with the particular. The universal tells us for what sort of person it turns out to say or do what sort of thing in accordance with probability or necessity — which poetry aims at expressing even though it assigns individual names to characters. The particular, on the other hand, tells us what Alcibiades did or experienced. (1451b 5-11, English translation in Golden 1992: 25 and 65).

In other words, the goal of artistic mimesis is the expression of universal

truth (Golden 1992: 75); consequently, for Aristotle, the “ultimate success of tragic and comic mimesis, and, indeed, of all mimesis in general, must be judged on its effectiveness in creating this learning experience.” (*ibid.*: 65) Nowhere did he insinuate that poetry in general, and tragedy or comedy in particular, should present us with a ‘slice of life’ of the kind we have come to associate with the 19th century naturalistic school. Rather, drama must represent a complete and unified action consisting of a beginning, middle and an end, all linked by a necessary and probable causation (*ibid.*: 73); and the many other formal rules concerning plot, staging etc. which, in his view, should govern drama (there are other ancient theatrical conventions which he did not mention but which are highly significant, such as the wearing of masks, for instance), further forbid any such interpretation. We therefore cannot legitimately argue that from an Aristotelian perspective, all art should imitate life. Nevertheless, this is the reproach which is often laid at his feet, and it is one which, contradictory though it may seem, follows from a critique that his view on art was too formalistic!

Until the 18th century, the prime model for western theories on art and aesthetics was based upon a set of rules emphasising harmony, symmetry, and form associated with Antiquity. This was taken to extreme in the neo-classicist movement whose ideas on drama were partly based on misinterpretations of ancient sources. Thus, while Aristotle’s suggestion for a unity in time in drama was inspired by the practical problems of staging, and his views on probability and necessity in the plot referred to logical coherence, from the Renaissance onwards, the latter was elevated to the status of law, and the former interpreted in a moral (Christian) sense (Aristotle 1992: 11). Romantics considered drama the most important literary genre and judged the health of nation and state by the state of dramatic literature (e.g. Shelley 1954: 285-286). The Romantic revolution in drama was essentially directed against all the rules and regulations laid down by the neo-classicist canon, such as the division between comedy and tragedy, the unities of time, place and action (all of which go back to an extent to Aristotle), and a plea for more naturalness in plot and staging: life and life alone should be the model for the stage. More in general, the Romantics rejected the neo-classicists’ preoccupation with form, symmetry, harmony and abstract rules, and emphasised feeling and inner experience instead; they valued works of art as symptoms of the artists’ state of mind, as expressions of the latter’s personality, and ap-

preciated them on the basis of their own individual empathic understanding: rather than referring to rules out there, Romantics referred to feelings within themselves (Gombrich 1985: 24ff.). Their preoccupation with imagination and originality owed a great deal to Enlightenment thought, however, and we have to look briefly into the historical developments which bring these to the fore if we are to make sense of the Romantics' depreciation of artistic mimesis as faking instead of making (cf. Turner 1982: 88).

The centrality of the theatre as a metaphor for human life in philosophy, art, and the social sciences throughout western cultural history is striking. The word 'person', we are told, derives from the Latin *persona*, referring to the mask through which (*per*) resonated (*sonare*) the voice of the actor (Mauss 1978; cf. Williams 1988). In (Aristotle's) ancient Greece (as in many contemporary cultures), the theatrical mask had no inside: actor and role coincided, they became one in that the actor became the part he (there are no female actors in ancient Greece, though) played (Napier 1986). In contemporary western societies, however, there is a clear awareness of the distinction between the actor and the role s/he plays, the mask s/he wears on stage. When used with reference to 'real' life, the terms 'mask' and 'role' as indicative of the strategies human beings employ to conceal themselves, their 'real' selves, have become something like four-letter words. The metaphors of mask or role are both based upon the assumption that humans are dual beings, natural, real and individual, as well as artificial, theatrical and social, that they exist, *are* off-stage, but make themselves known to their fellow-humans, their fellow-actors with whom they share the stage that is the social world, by wearing masks, by playing roles, by acting in the spotlights only whereas they should be able to 'be themselves' in all social exchanges and communications.

It is often suggested that the 'real' self is a product of Modernity,<sup>9</sup> a late development in human history and a concept not known in Antiquity, in the Middle Ages, or in contemporary 'traditional' cultures (Lyons 1978; Trilling 1972); this distinction serves as the basis for differentiating 'western individualism' from 'primitive communalism'. Most anthropologists (though not philosophers, sociologists and psychologists in the same measure) have laid this view to rest: some have encountered non-western societies whose members are as individualistic or even more so than Modern westerners; others concede that one should differentiate

between imposed role behaviour and self-perception, between individualism and individuality, and not assume that culture can impose meaning upon (passive) human beings (Cohen 1992; 1994).

Broch-Due, Rudie & Bleie argue that the 'true' self was an *invention* rather than a *product* of Modernity and suggest that it emerged when the small pre-Modern worlds were opened up and mobility increased:

[p]eople were more often confronted with entirely new roles in the course of a lifetime, and the consciousness of playing roles must have been increased. The role-kit of a person's upbringing is then turned into a true self when confronted with contrastive role requirement in an enlarged environment, and a moral obligation to be true to one's background arises. (1993: 13; cf. Douglas 1982; Lyons 1978; Trilling 1972)

I am not suggesting that the distinction between inner self and outer roles, or the idea that the inner self is the individual and more 'true' than the roles s/he plays, is exclusive to western societies, or even that it is indeed an exclusively Modern invention.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that from the 16th century onwards, westerners have developed something like an obsession with 'true' selfhood which reveals itself, amongst other things, in Modern drama. It is tempting to agree with Trilling that, "[i]t is surely no accident that the idea of the own self and the difficulty of knowing it, should have arisen to vex men's minds in the epoch that saw the sudden efflorescence of the [Elizabethan] theatre." (1972: 10) Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is, of course, the seminal text: a play about a man who realises that all human behaviour appears as sheer acting in a world of social theatricality and illustrates his view by staging a play, it treats the difference between being and appearing, between being and pretending, between true selfhood and falsehood, between life on and life off stage, between social expression ('social structure') and meaning ('culture') (Gorfain 1986; Trilling 1972). But there is also Molière some of whose best plays deal with the issues of pretence and hypocrisy: *Le Misanthrope*, for instance, tells the story of a man who cannot accept his fellow-humans insincerity and their inclination to say and do not what they feel but what is socially expected; the name Tartuffe, the main protagonist in another of his best-known plays, has become synonymous for 'hypocrite'. In novels like *Mansfield Park*, Austen used theatricals as a vehicle

to explore the implications of 'acting' and 'role-playing' for the individual and society; Tolstoy, too, associated theatre in *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, with a loss of moral sense (Steiner 1992: 123ff.). The schizophrenic situation brought about by the tension between 'real' selfhood and multiple role-playing in Modern Europe is borne out by the popularity of the literary theme of the double in Romantic and post-Romantic literature (Ziolkowski 1977). The duplicity of the person became a central motif in literature in the hierarchical class society that was Victorian Britain. Charlotte Brontë's heroines are torn between their private and public selves (Hawthorn 1983): educated, but isolated, plain and poor, they had no choice but to wear the mask of convention and conventionality, all the while being critical of the insincerity of others.

We can now begin to understand how 'faking' became synonymous with 'imitating': hypocrites *simulate*; they appear to be something which they are not in that their outer actions only pretend to reflect their inner feelings. We are also bound to conclude that the concept of 'imitating' as 'faking' is a Romantic invention: it is the correlate of 'sincerity', and both obtain from an equation of an inner sphere within the individual with truthfulness and an outer sphere with untruthfulness. Such a depreciation of appearances for essences expresses can, of course, also be traced to the Platonic theory of *mimesis* whose influence upon Christianity accounted partly for the early Church Fathers' aversion to the theatre<sup>11</sup>, or to the development of a conjectural paradigm in the Modern era (Ginzburg 1990). As with Plato (Golden 1992), the Modern view on masks and roles was, and is, more complex and contradictory than all outright condemnations insinuate. The increasing popularity of image consultants, face-lifts, books about how to win friends and influence people etc., belie the generally proclaimed view that only the 'inner' self matters. Rather, it appears that we must distinguish between the 'official' discourse which applies to the ideal, unlikely situation in which 'self' meets 'self' as equals, and the discourse which concerns day-to-day interactions between humans as wolves to one another (cf. Jacobson-Widding 1990). There are other circumstances in which appearance is more important than essence: it is better to shed the 'tears of a clown', in the words of the famous song, than crocodile's tears; and the inherently sensitive 'rebel-without-a-cause'-type of individual acting tough or aloof will not easily be accused of hypocrisy. But even though acting is not always viewed negatively in actual practice, in theory it remains a

form of deceit, a far cry from individuals' inner feelings and emotions (Geertz 1983; Goffman 1973; Mauss 1978). There is no reason to believe, however, that acting has universal negative connotations. In India, according to Schechner (1982: 62), acting is viewed as a playful illusion.

Elsewhere (Ceuppens 1995), I elaborate on the popularity of (certain versions of) the myth of Prometheus in Modern Europe. The new Promethean self was not merely a secularised version of the erstwhile (Christian) soul. Unlike the soul which belongs to God and returns to Him after death, the private self is truly the individual's as much as it is the individual: in Prometheus, the once divine capacity of creation became attributable to the (male adult western) individual who could recreate and reinvent himself as much as he could create and invent others, a distinction which allowed for the establishment of a dichotomy between Self creating Self ('Culture'), and the Other being created by culture ('cultures'). The emergence of such an ideology was closely linked to the Romantics' hostility towards the very industrial revolution which brought them forth (Ong 1971), and had its roots in Locke's principles on private property, premised upon freedom, the ownership of oneself and of one's own labour (Gaines 1992: 18ff.). Their attempts to counter the commodification of the work of art led the Romantics to elevate the artist, and to emphasise creator rather than creation (*ibid.*: 59). They differentiated mechanical production (imitation), the product of *techne* and labour from the original and unique creation resulting from organic growth, and taking its material from itself. Kant's theory of the transcendental subject which finds its highest representative in the artist-genius, culminated in R/romantic visions of the artist as an outsider, an individualist living at the margins of society to whose conventions he refuses to bow, and whose art, as the Dutch poet, Willem Kloos put it, is the most individual expression of the most individual emotion. The development of the meanings of the term 'genius' in English, from outer to inner inspiration, i.e. from guardian angel to personal talent bear the mark of this belief (*ibid.*: 143-144). In the 18th century, the word 'creative' was coined in a conscious association with art (*ibid.*: 83). The link between 'originality' and 'origin' got lost, because, as Williams observes, "the point is that it [originality] has no origin but itself." (1988: 231) Genius came to equate creativity and originality both of which were seen as essentially male qualities.

At this stage, we can start making sense of one of the ambiguities of

the idea of imitation. Influential thinkers, from Aristotle to Locke, stressed that children learn by mimicking their elders. Locke advised parents to teach their children not by rules and precepts, but by repeated practice, and urged parents who find their children behaving badly to use gentle persuasion rather than interposing their authority and command, on the grounds that children can understand reason as early as they do language (1989). Children, for him, can learn through imitation because they have reason; in a similar line of reasoning, Aristotle linked humans' 'natural' tendency to imitate, the pleasure they derive from *mimesis* and learning as the highest human pleasure. Rousseau is attributed with having invented the child as radically different from the adult in that he denied the child rationality. Reason, for him, is the product of education, not the instrument: if children were rational, there would be no need to educate them in the first place (1957: 76ff.). It is this view of the child, as well as the woman and the 'primitive' as a creature lacking in rationality which partly inspired the view of these categories as Other, imitating male western adults without knowing what they are doing; and this idea had clear ramifications on pedagogy and educational practice.

'Behaviourism', i.e. corporeal participation in practices with an emphasis upon empiricism, was at the core of feudal apprenticeship. The birth of modern science is traditionally described as the result of a happy alliance between French (Cartesian) rationality and the English empiricism of which Locke is one of the leading exponents (Berman 1986). With the growth of formal education in school settings came the expansion of a cognitivist learning paradigm which, in as far as it continued to rely on empirical observation, raised sight as source for knowledge to a privileged position at the cost of all the other senses (Stoller 1989). 'Cognitivism' construes of learning in terms of a mediator (teacher) 'putting' disembodied information and decontextualised skills into the minds of individuals (students) who must 'acquire' them and 'apply' them in the outer world by means of inherent, internal competence (intelligence) (Pinxten & Farrer 1990; Sälj  1992; Sinha 1992; Wertsch 1991). It puts a great emphasis on 'transfer' since it assumes that teachers can transmit knowledge, that students have the competence to assimilate it first and apply it next, and that the knowledge gained in one setting (school) can be transferred to 'real life settings' (Sälj  1992). Cognitivism thus establishes sharp dichotomies between inside and outside, active transmission and passive reception, acquisition and application etc. and

dramatic acting, musical performance, and dancing (Pieterse 1988; Simmel 1984). 'Theatricality', in the worst meaning of the word, became a typical attribute of women and Others: born actors, they must parrot and imitate men and speak with the words male authors put in their mouths (Ceuppens 1995; Dijkstra 1988; Segal 1988). Speaking from 'northern' Europe, Simmel suggested that, "... it is no accident that the Latin peoples, to whom an instinct — obviously quite difficult to substantiate (*sic!*) — has always ascribed a character that it is in some sense female, are the truly theatrical peoples." (1984: 87) Nowadays, both from the perspective of the artist (e.g. Woody Allen's *Zelig*) and the neurologist (Sacks 1985), lack of selfhood expresses itself in the individual's compulsive mimicking of others. The pathology lies therein that the central core is lacking to which to trace such individuals differing patterns of behaviour; there is no inner vision, no puppeteer to keep together and control the movements and actions of the puppets on stage. They must live their lives through others, establish their identities through their interactions with others: for a woman, these others are her husband and children, for children their prime care-takers, for 'primitives' their societies — their 'tradition', their 'cultures.'

It is this differentiation which, in my view, informed Lévy-Bruhl's distinction between the rational thought of the 'civilised races', characterised by logic and separation, and the mystical mentality of the 'primitives', typified by non-rationality, identification, and participation (1926), two coexistent modes of thought which roughly correspond to cognitivism vs. behaviourism respectively, and rest on two different types of selfhood: the former assumes the distinction between self and mask, self and other; the latter involves complete fusion, either because the 'primitive' is 'authentic', i.e. has no within and without, or because s/he has a permeable self which easily fuses with another self.

Tambiah (1990), one of few contemporary anthropologists who admits to taking Lévy-Bruhl's thesis seriously, replaces *mentalité* by 'multiple orientations to reality' to emphasise that these orientations are socially constructed rather than innate. He associates causality with the positive sciences which involve a participation to the world in terms of distancing, objectivity, affective neutrality and abstraction (1990: 105), and participation with situations in which "persons, groups, animals, places, and natural phenomena are in a relation of contiguity, and translate that relation into one of existential immediacy and contact and shared

affinities" (*ibid.*: 108). While he dismisses Lévy-Bruhl's proposal that 'We' have causality and 'They' have participation, the examples he gives seem to suggest that 'We' have both and 'They' only have the latter, and that 'Our' activities are ones which have traditionally been associated with men. The differences thus remain situated *between* human groups rather than *within* them. Tambiah is sympathetic to feminists (Gilligan) and non-westerners (Kakar) whose models I initially dubbed 'imitative:' their structure is similar to Lévy-Bruhl's, but the evaluation attached to female and non-western qualities is reversed, and the supposed differences between men and women on the one hand and westerners and non-westerners on the other are related to infant socialisation (Ceuppens 1995).

In view of my remark that the Romantics, in as far as they idealise the Other, celebrate participation, it would be incorrect to identify Lévy-Bruhl's mentality of participation with a Romantic, and his mentality of separation with an Enlightenment orientation towards the world pure and simple. Instead, I want to argue that the Modern sense of self accounts for *both* the subjectivism of Romanticism, and the objectivism that brought forth Enlightenment thought, in that it allows for a creation of separation *within* the individual (between inner self and the individual gazing into the self) as much as *between* the individual and other individuals, and the object world. In other words, I argue that, what Grimshaw (1995) calls the 'mind's eye', the introspective and reflexive eye looking inwards into the self as the basis for understanding the world, is the *equivalent* the 'spying eye', detached from the self, looking outward, and objectifying the world rather than its *antipode*, and that both serve as the starting point from which to make truth claims and establish rules of universal value: sincerity in artistic creation and social interaction (inward eye) and objective knowledge in science (outward eye). It is only within any given context that either eye will be valued higher than the other; this allows for a hierarchy of perspectives within the undertakings of male westerners alone, of male and female westerners, and of westerners and non-westerners. It is thus that participation can, once again, become an attribute of the Other: women, children and non-westerners, apart from lacking the capacity to create truly original works of art from themselves, are also less apt at participating in universal science and values.

Ultimately, the western ideology of individualism *depends* upon the

discrimination between self and mask (Hollis 1984: 227). The distinction made between self and mask corresponds with a desire to obliterate it; but the separation must be maintained since it is the distance created between self and mask which allows for individuals' creations of works of art and contributions to science, and for their creation of themselves as independent, autonomous, separated individuals, and as their own artistic creations.

#### 4. *Performing Fleas*

##### 4.1. *The Anthropologist as Playwright*

If it is indeed the case that "every philosophical baby that is born alive, is either a little positivist or a little Hegelian" (Gellner 1992: 3), the question whether anthropology is a science or an art, and anthropologists 'Enlightened' or Romantics has never been settled (Gellner 1992; Shweder 1984; Stocking 1985). Gellner (1992) argues that Malinowski occupies a unique position in the discipline in that, by harmonising a Romantic view on culture with an empiricist epistemology and a positivist rationale, he managed to escape this Great Divide (3ff.). This Great Divide is, of course, a myth which no philosopher or social scientist has as yet managed to preserve. Malinowski's main contribution to the discipline was his proposal to use participant observation as a means for generating specific anthropological knowledge; and his ultimate aim in giving anthropology an empirical grounding by means of this methodology was to bring the discipline in line with hard science: "[t]he demand for direct observation by the researcher, instead of relying on informants' reports, derives from the notion of analytical objectivity in anthropology as a science" (Holy 1988: 25). This proceeding lead to an exclusive concern with social structure on the basis of social interactions which can be observed, and an intentional neglect of culture which cannot (*id.*). Malinowski ultimately put the emphasis on observing rather than participating; in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, he wrote that : "I ... had constantly the daily life of the natives before my eyes, while dramatic occurrences, deaths, quarrels, village brawls, public and ceremonial events, could not escape my notice" (1987: xvi-xvii, emphasis added), and that he only took part in village life "in a way." (*ibid.*: 7) For the

positivist kind of anthropology he had in mind, observation was more crucial than participating since the latter risks to violate the separation of observer and observed phenomena, one of the most basic tenets of classical hard science (Holy 1988: 25). Like other observers of the 'primitives' of his generation, Malinowski believed that they were shaped by their cultures but incapable to vocalise what these consisted of, and that it befell to the scholarly western outsider to articulate their content. Modelling himself as a participant-observer, living alone in a community of 'primitives', collecting data all by himself allowed him to create for himself the role of the anthropologist as hero (Stocking 1985), and as artistic genius, inventing as much as mapping the social worlds he studied. He described his feeling for the Trobrianders as one of ownership, proclaiming, "It is I who will describe them ... [I who will] create them" (cited in Geertz 1988: 133) He liked to present himself as the 'spokesman' for the Trobriand Islanders and let "others speak through his mouth" (cited in Kramer 1993: 244), claiming he spoke with their voice (Geertz 1988: 22).

To stay in a theatrical idiom, the role he set himself was not that of the actor, but of the playwright stage director, or director-producer, a Romantic 'invention' (Roose-Evans 1984: 15), observing and supervising all the actions on stage 'from a God's eye view,' with an aim to "grasp the native's point of view, his (*sic*) relation to life, to realise his vision of his world." (Malinowski 1987: 25) He used the metaphor of the novelist to describe his ultimate ambition: "Rivers is the Rider Haggard of anthropology; I shall be the Conrad" (cited in Stocking 1985: 104). That a positivist anthropologist should liken himself to a writer of fiction, should only come as a surprise to people who, in contrasting science to art, articulate the problem of objectivity in terms of fiction and non-fiction. In doing so, they reduce all literature to a specific literary tradition and show a glaring unawareness of the existence of a vast body of literary texts the authors of which aim at producing a literature 'true to life'. This was also Malinowski's aim. But when Evans-Pritchard asked him how to do fieldwork, he was told "not to be a bloody fool" (1990: 240) since it was part of the Romantic ideology of the discipline that fieldwork is a 'subjective' experience about which one cannot be informed but that one has to endure, and which relies more on personality than systematic methodology (Pitt-Rivers 1992).

Since the days of Malinowski, anthropologists have come to accept

fieldwork as their major activity, but they have, for a very long time, not regarded it as a serious object of study (Rabinow 1977; Myerhoff & Ruby 1982). It has long been assumed that the researcher's experience can serve as a unifying source of authority in the field, and that being a good fieldworker is something which cannot be learned: one either 'has' it or not; some are born fieldworkers, others will never get it right (Clifford 1988: 21ff.). The aim is for individual fieldworkers to subjectively share the subjective experience of their informants. This is, ultimately, what Malinowski means by 'grasping the native's point of view':

To study the institutions, customs, and codes or to study the behaviour and mentality without the subjective desire of feeling by what these people live, of realising the substance of their happiness-is, in my opinion, to miss the greatest reward which we can hope to obtain from the study of man (*sic*). (Malinowski 1987: 25)

The fieldworker must therefore first internalise the Other — the intuitive function — and then externalise them and submit them to analysis on the comparative plain — the critical function (Pitt-Rivers 1992: 137-8). Unlike Urry (1986: 61), I suggest that there is no paradox involved in basing a positivist study of other cultures on such an individual subjective experience since the step from 'subjective' fieldwork experience to 'objective' fieldwork account presents itself as a triumph of 'objectivity' over 'subjectivity', of science over art: in the ethnography the personal, individual fieldwork experience is symbolically transformed in a universal, objectified account.

#### 4.2. *The Anthropologist as Method Actor*

The shift from a positivist to an interpretive anthropology was informed by anthropologists' awareness that their individuality shaped and influenced their fieldwork experience and research data (Cohen 1994; Okely & Callaway 1992; Ruby 1982). Initially, theoretical analyses of the relevance of the subjective experience tended to focused on the anthropologist as ethnographer rather than fieldworker; but there was a tacit understanding that the fieldworker becomes an observing participant rather than a participant observer (Holy 1988): participation, "in the sense of living with and as the people one studies is part of the romantic notion of field-

work culture ... a part of the mystery of fieldwork as an initiation ritual in which the student of anthropology dies and a professional anthropologist is born." (*ibid.*: 23)

It was at this stage that the anthropologist turned actor. The Romantic revolution on the stage had initially occupied itself with the plot and the staging of drama, and the focus shifted to acting at the end of the 19th century only with the development of what is now commonly referred to as Method acting. The basic problem the inventor of the Method, Stanislavsky addressed was recognised as early as Shakespeare's time, and would occupy actors and writers in subsequent centuries (Diderot 1968; Strasberg 1989: 30): should actors actually experience the emotions they portray, or should they express them without experiencing them? The Romantic revolution in acting was inspired by a demand for greater 'naturalness'. But Stanislavsky, like Diderot before him, was well aware of the major problem the repetitive nature of the actor's art created: an actor who experiences real emotion during the first performance, will be worn out by the third. His acting method was therefore aimed at training actors to recreate, in every performance, "the illusion of the first time" (Strasberg 1989: 35) by means of a *technique*, which must enable them to live through a part in every performance, instead of living through it once and representing, i.e. imitating it afterwards time and again, or *becoming* the characters they play: actors should never confuse the reality and behaviour of the characters with their own — hence the emphasis upon physicality and the famous exercises in which actors must try to impersonate animals, waves, and the like. The Method views acting as a total experience, an embodied experience involving all the senses. But ultimately, actors' main tool is their own subjectivity; they must learn to create the necessary behaviour by stimulating their own reality: they must try to make the imaginary look 'real' by creating a 'truthful' emotion, i.e. by tapping into their 'real' internal feelings and experiences (*ibid.*: 190). All these propositions combined explain the famous and popular examples of actors 'building up' their characters by 'living in role' for a limited period of time, hanging out with individuals like those they have to portray be they pimps, hookers or cops, and building up their characters from 'within'.

Once the onus in anthropological fieldwork came to lie on participation rather than observation, like Stanislavsky, anthropologists started to point to an inherent paradox: the fieldworker must strike a balance bet-

ween empathic involvement and disciplined detachment (Dumont 1978: 9; Goward 1988: 107; Laderman 1994: 192; Sarsby 1988); s/he must combine the task of the actor or playwright who gets under the skin of the different characters s/he is enacting (cf. Srinivas cited in Sarsby 1988: 129ff.) with those of the stage director or spectator staying aloof and supervising the whole enterprise. No matter how much emphasis is put on the subjective nature of the anthropological endeavour, complete participation, at the cost of observation, is considered at odds with the anthropologist's task which is ultimately qualified, not by living with the 'natives' as 'one of them' as a means in an end, but by reporting on this experience to colleagues in academia.

The fieldworker's subjective experience remained the ultimate source of authority. Starting point is the concept of *Verstehen*, which is primarily associated with Weber and Dilthey, and which should not be confused with 'intuition' or 'empathy' too readily. Weber pointed to the limitations of a purely empathic understanding of the world (1947). And while for Dilthey "reality only exists for us in the facts of consciousness given by inner experience" (cited in Bruner 1986: 4), he suggested that, in order to overcome the limitations of individual experience to get to another individual's, one should "transcend the narrow sphere of experience by interpreting expressions", i.e. representations, performances, objectifications etc. (Clifford 1988: 5) Dilthey links experience to interpretation; and being among the first modern theorists to compare the understanding of cultural forms to the reading of 'texts' (*id.*), his appeal to interpretive anthropologists is strong (Bruner 1986; Clifford 1988; Turner 1986).

Malinowski recognised that the fieldworker should try to penetrate the mental attitudes expressed in what he called "the imponderabilia of actual life" (1987: 18) by taking occasional "plunges into the lives of the natives" (21), but wondered whether this would be "equally easy for everyone" (*id.*) and ventured to suggest that, being Slavonic, i.e. "more plastic and naturally savage" (*id.*) he might find it easier than Western Europeans (*id.*). But as soon as fieldworkers become observing participants, they must sink or swim, whatever their cultural background. Turnbull (1990), while not denying the importance of the importance of "the business of observation and the objective gathering of data" (66) which he associates with formal training (*id.*), maintains it adds nothing "to the equally important gathering of a whole other body of data directly and only accessible through total immersion in subjective experience,

something comparable to a sacrifice of self, or at least of external self" (*id.*). Distinguishing between "subjective experience which is individual and creative understanding which is an approximation to empathy but never complete," Okely (1994: 49, emphasis added) pleads for a field-work methodology based upon sensory knowledge gained through active participation in the most mundane activities (cf. Hastrup 1992; Hastrup & Hervik 1994; Okely 1992; Stoller 1989). Some anthropologists point to subjective empathy as the main value of participant observation (Bloch 1986: ix; Pina-Cabral 1992: 10), while others suggest that there exist cultural phenomena the meaning of which can only be accessed by empathy, by relating them to one's own similar past experiences. Rosaldo (1984) poignantly describes how he was only able to make sense of the intensity of the rage bereaved Ilongot men felt which they used to vent by head-hunting, when he experienced a similar sense of rage after the tragic death of his wife (1984; cf. Kohn 1994). The similarities with Method acting are striking: both Method actors and anthropologists relate to individual humans rather than stock characters; both warn against the danger of becoming the Other; both build up roles through embodiment but assume subjective experience to be the main tool available in order to understand and become *like* the Other.

#### 4.3. *The Anthropologist goes Native*

But the need felt to balance participation with observation appears to contain its own paradox:

Anthropology's field ethnologist exercises his (*sic*) utmost effort to *become a native* ... if he succeeds he fails and disappears. ... if he *becomes a native*, if he submits to that absolute laceration that alone gives him access to the 'other world', he can no longer *be an anthropologist*, he can no longer *do* anthropology, for the tiny yet pivotal reason that then 'anthropology' does not exist. It ceases to be and ceases to be conceivable. (McGrane 1989: 125-126)

Anthropologists, in McGrane's view, seek to acquire full knowledge of membership in the alien culture without full commitment to membership, and search for *simulated* membership (1989: 125, emphasis added). Turnbull too, scorns any suggestion of 'make-believe', or 'simulation',

writing that what is needed is “a great deal more than amateur role-playing; what is needed is a technique of participation that demands total involvement of our whole being.” (1990: 51) But would these authors really suggest that, in order to come to a closer understanding of what constitutes meaning ‘from the natives’ point of view,’ anthropologists should all go through traumatic experiences similar to Rosaldo’s, or participate in activities like head-hunting to know ‘what it feels like’?

Cynics might riposte that it does not matter anyway by referring to the studies of neurologist Ekman who studied the relationship between the automatic nervous system (ANS) and acting, and conducted experiments which showed that six ‘target emotions’ rouse “emotion-specific activity in the ANS.” (Schechner 1986: 345) The data were elicited by using two groups of professional American actors, one of which was told precisely which muscles to contract to contract facial prototypes of emotion muscle by muscle without being told what emotions they were simulating, the other being asked to experience each of the six emotions by reliving a past emotional experience in a way very similar to the exercise of ‘emotional recall’, developed by Stanislavsky and perfected by Strasberg. Ekman found that ‘mechanical’ acting worked better than ‘emotional’ acting in getting actors to really ‘feel’ the actions they had to play.

It may be tempting, therefore, to suggest that anthropologists might as well simply ‘go through the motions’. But this is hardly the point. As fieldworkers, anthropologists are not concerned with matching their informants’ experience of culture as closely as possible, or producing emotions which can be measured and tested by neurologists; their aim to come to an understanding of what constitutes meaning for their hosts requires them not only to grasp what their hosts’ culture *is*, but also how they *acquire* it. In terms of acting this means that fieldworkers should not only perform with their hosts but also learn from them how to perform. In other words, fieldworkers must aim not only at learning their hosts’ interpretations but also learn how they come to learn them; they must, in other words, learn their hosts’ cultures by being encultured into them. Some anthropologists accept this view explicitly (Dumont 1978; Guénod 1994; Holy 1988; Laderman 1994; Laughlin 1994; Stoller 1989; Stoller & Olkes 1989; Young & Goulet 1994b), or implicitly (Hastrup & Hervik 1994; Okely 1994); and it is all the more curious, then, that a recent volume on ethnographic research summarises approaches to ethnographic research in terms of different techniques only (Ellen 1988: 63ff.). This

is a remarkably positivist view on participant-observation indeed.

Anthropologists' preoccupation with their own subjectivity in the fieldwork experience fuelled the idea that behind the actors enacting their social roles imposed upon them within other cultures, were individuals who, like they themselves, actively created culture rather than receiving it passively; staying in the idiom of theatre and mimesis and all the negative connotations these have in western societies, they stopped seeing their hosts as "passive enactor[s] of culture, reflecting the 'fax model of internalizing culture' which casts the person as a machine copying public messages into private psyches" (Strauss & Quinn, cited in Hastrup & Hervik 1994: 6). In anthropology, like in the Romantic theatre, the emphasis on the subjective experience focused on textual forms, ethnography and play respectively before turning to human interaction in the field or on stage (Fabian 1994; Okely 1994; Pool 1995). The current preoccupation with the anthropologist as fieldworker and the connection between individual experiences in the field and the production of anthropological knowledge (Hastrup & Harvik 1994), instigated by the rejection of the culture concept, was paralleled by an interest in the body, and the repudiation of the sex/gender distinction: the dissolution of the difference between 'Us' actively creating Culture and 'Them' passively undergoing 'cultures', was matched by the dissolution of the difference between active minds and passive bodies, and the rejection of the earlier view of gender being a social construct played out on a natural body. Among the major sources of influence were Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* or learning through practical enactment (1977; 1990), Vygotsky's theory of mediated action (Wertsch 1991), and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Moore 1994) all of which de-centre the human subject and see cognition as culturally embedded, arguing that the tools humans rely on for rendering the world intelligible and for manipulating it for their purposes do not have their origin in the individual's *mind* but in the individual's *culture* (Csordas 1994; Lave & Wenger 1991; Wertsch 1991). It is argued that the idea of intelligence as an innate, individual competence which one either has or lacks cannot be maintained:

On the one hand, the acquisition of cognitive schemata must involve an engagement with others, yet a precondition for meaningful engagement must be that these schemata are already 'in place'. How can culture, as a system of meanings, be acquired by experience if ex-

perience only acquires meaning by way of culture? (Ingold 1993: 220)

A behavioural model which assumes that learning or enculturation takes place through participatory, embodied action rather than through the passive acquisition of disembodied knowledge, and which views learning as both an individual and a collective phenomenon that occurs through participation in on-going activities and social co-participation, straightens out this paradox (Ingold 1993; Lave & Wenger 1991; Sälj  1992; Sinha 1992; Wertsch 1991). Without specifically referring to this discussion, Fabian (1990) was one of the first to consider the implications of this fundamental critique to considerations on fieldwork methodology (cf. Gu don 1994; Laughlin 1994; Okely 1992; 1994; Stoller 1989; with Olkes 1989; Young & Goulet 1994b). I single out his work because unlike ‘participant comprehension’ (Young & Goulet 1994b) or ‘transpersonal participant observation’ (Laughlin 1994), his term, ‘performative ethnography’, is more in tune with my use of the metaphor of the theatre. Fabian starts from the assumption that much cultural knowledge cannot be verbalised but is mediated through embodied action, a point already made by Malinowski (1987: 18):

about large areas and important aspects of culture no one, not even the native, has information that can simply be called up and expressed in discursive statements ... this sort of knowledge can be represented — made present — only through action, enactment or performance. (1990: 6)

Fabian concludes from this that the eye in observation and the mouth in communication cannot be singled out as the privileged sources of knowledge acquisition. In his attempt to find a new methodology which takes into account that fieldwork is done on the premise of sharing time with interlocutors on equal terms, he comes to differentiate between informative and performative ethnography. The former involves collecting data about cultures, and

corresponds to a political situation of more or less direct control, one in which the ethnographer as the emissary of the dominant power ... has the upper hand; where he or she can ask the questions, deter-

mines what counts as information, control the situations in which it is to be gathered, and so forth. (1990: 19)

Performative ethnography fits situations where our societies no longer exercise direct control, and where the ethnographer, consequently, “does not call the tune but plays along” (*id.*): s/he participates in performances and reports on what is given form to in performances. Performances cannot be cast as answers to questions: fieldworkers are no longer questioners but catalysts in the weakest, and producers in the strongest sense. Since the material fieldworkers work with are not things but events, and fieldwork is a repetition of performances rather than a collection of artifacts, it is impossible for a culture to appear or to be witnessed as anything but the tip of an iceberg which is not only a token of the submerged body (Fabian 1990: 12): “A performance does not “express” something in need of being brought to the surface, or to the outside; nor does it simply enact a preexisting text. Performance is the text in the moment of its actualization.” (*ibid.*: 9) Performative anthropologists therefore no longer try to seek the ‘reality’ behind the ‘appearances’ and to describe their hosts’ cultures once and for all; they accept that cultures are such that they do not allow for such a snapshot approach.

#### 4.3.1 *The Anthropologist as Learner: ‘under their Skin’ or ‘in their Mask’?*

The post-colonial condition which prompted debate on the usefulness of the culture-concept and an interest in performative fieldwork, has also put to the fore the issue of ‘native’ anthropologists (a curious concept indeed). Hastrup rejects any suggestion that ‘native’ anthropologists can do a better job studying their own cultures because they have access to privileged knowledge, on the ground that “a genuinely anthropological understanding (*sic*) is different from mere knowing” (1992: 175; cf. de Pina Cabral 1992). This appears an obvious truth. Yet it seems that Hastrup, in order to argue her case, must put forward a distinction, not only between ‘mere knowing’ and ‘anthropological understanding’, but also between anthropological understanding and the means by which it is gained: ‘natives’ may not have a privileged access to an anthropological knowledge of their own culture; but can anthropologists, for all their privileged knowledge as to what anthropological knowledge *is*, hope to

gain it if they do not know how meaning is culturally *transmitted*, are denied access to the means of cultural transmission, or consider it irrelevant? I would argue not. If, as Abu-Lughod implicitly suggests, culture is a set of knowledge(s), it follows that performative fieldworkers, in order to gain an anthropological understanding of their hosts' culture, must focus on its *content* as well as its *transmission*. Balagangadhara's definition of culture seems very apt: he argues that each culture is characterised by its way of learning and meta-learning, i.e. learning to learn, and that cultural differences can be characterised in terms of what brings about these configurations of learning (1990: 419ff.; cf. Pinxten 1994: 31). According to Guénod, however, culture involves aspects other than learning and meta-learning which render definitions of culture as a kind of knowledge questionable:

... what is shared is not only the content of knowledge, but also the attitude toward knowledge, its value, and the process of its transmission and acquisition. This view challenges the notion that culture is shared. By itself, knowledge does not constitute culture. The transmission and application of knowledge do. ... Knowledge is not institutionalized. Rather it is always contextualized: socially, through its explicit link to the people transmitting it; geographically, through its many associations to a specific territory; and practically, by being embedded in concrete experiences and/or stories. (1994: 61)

She concludes, as Sapir before her, that culture should be defined neither as manner nor knowledge, but as *life (id.)*. This means that if fieldworkers set themselves the task of living with 'the natives' as 'natives', it follows that no analogy with any kind of acting method can be put forward a priori. A fieldwork methodology which puts the emphasis upon subjective experience, is therefore limiting in as far as it remains framed within a particular western Romantic tradition which differentiates subjectivity and objectivity based on a dual self-concept, and which aims to reach for true meaning behind outer appearances, and come to an understanding of the Other by drawing on the own self. Okely points out that "[s]ince sensory knowledge cannot be the direct reflection of reality, even members of the same culture cannot claim a complete correspondence in experience, instead they may creatively construct correspondences between them." (1994: 47) But to conclude that "[t]he anthropologist cannot replicate

others' experience, but she can use her own or what Nagel has referred to as 'the subjective character of experience' ... for a vicarious understanding to surmise others' experience" (*id.*), is problematic in that she takes it for granted that all individuals, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, will draw on the *subjective* character of their experiences to construct correspondences with others, assumes that individual subjective experience can be universalised and is not subject to cultural influence. Clearly, a danger arises when, as Bharucha puts it, "the Other is not another but the projection of one's ego. Then all one has is a glorification of the self and a cooption of other cultures in the name of representation." (1993: 28) If anthropologists want to become fully encultured in their hosts' cultures, they will have to adapt local acting strategies which, I suggest, may involve neither objectivism nor subjectivism

A brief look at certain non-western acting methods makes this clear. Interest in these owe a great deal to Turner's innovative studies on ritual drama and social drama. Turner once proposed that teaching and learning anthropology could be made 'more fun' by actually performing ethnographies (1982: 83) to convey to students "what it means to be a member of the society" (*ibid.*: 84); but when offered the chance to let participants enact material from his Ndembu monographs, he drew attention to the importance of using an acting style "different from that which relies on superb professional techniques to almost any Western role with verisimilitude." (1982: 88) The ideal acting method, for him, should be aimed at

*poesis*, rather than *mimesis*; making, not faking. The role grows along with the actor, it is truly 'created' through the rehearsal process which may sometimes involve painful moments of self-revelation. Such a method is particularly appropriate for anthropological teaching because the 'mimetic' method will only work on familiar material (Western models of behavior) whereas the 'poietic', since it recreates behavior from within, can handle unfamiliar material. (*ibid.*: 88)

For Turner then, the actor's subjective experience remained the main source for an understanding of the Other; any other approach was imitative. Fabian, too, still assumes that a difference can be made between 'making' and 'faking' (1990). Kramer (1994) who suggests that the

masquerades in which Africans impersonate Europeans can be likened to anthropologists' attempts to make sense of their hosts' actions, criticises Turner for "working completely under the spell of a specifically modern type of confrontation with the other in which, as Hegel wrote, the European spirit wishes to recognize itself" (1994: 245), but offers as the only alternative methodology the postulate of empathy, 'being moved' by foreign cultures which he traces back to Herder (*ibid.*: 243), and which starts from a similar subjective relation to social reality.

According to Zarrilli (1990), however, Asian actors in general 'become' the character through perfect mastering of the body; they learn the latter by literally mimicking their masters, rather than by building the role 'from within' (1990). In the Japanese *noh* theatre, child actors learn through imitation and repetition rather than verbal instruction: they internalise song and dance long before they understand them intellectually (Bethe & Brazell 1990). In the Indian *Ramnagar Ramila*, boy 'actors' are entered by the gods they perform (Schechner 1982: 67). In the Indian *kathakali* dance-drama, boys have to master certain steps, gestures of the feet, torso, hands and face in a manner which is not 'natural', but exaggerated, consisting of "wholly composed 'deconstructions-reconstructions' of human behavior" (Schechner 1986: 346). When they start training at the age of 8 or thereabouts, the boys have little idea about the performance as a whole: "their bodies are literally massaged and danced into new shapes suited to Kathakali" (*ibid.*: 351) But "somewhere along the way the training 'goes into the body'... [and] ... an illumination of sorts occurs" (*id.*) Like Method actors, kathakali actors recognise that "a good actor is the one who understands the character very well, thus becoming the character itself. ... [w]hile acting, half of the actor is the role he does and half will be himself." (cited in Schechner 1990: 36).<sup>13</sup> But in line with Ekman's experiments, and in sharp contrast to the Method, *Natya-sastra*, the ancient Sanskrit text on theatre, recognises that the causal link between so-called 'mechanical acting' and interior states of 'true' feeling can go in both directions (Schechner 1986: 348ff.). The term 'mechanical acting' with all its negative connotations of 'faking' is therefore highly inappropriate; and to argue consequently that, in order to see culture from 'the native's' point of view', it is better to get 'under their skin' than 'in their mask', is to take for granted that only one's own inner feelings and emotions can serve as the basis for making sense of others'.

The notion of performance, as discussed by Fabian, was first intro-

duced in the social sciences by scholars of oral traditions in an attempt to emphasise the performative aspects of recitation: intonation, gesture, body posture or the accompaniment of dance, music, song etc. (Bauman 1978). It became a key concept in Turner's studies on social drama and ritual (e.g. 1988; 1990) and, in recent years, has become a pivot in gender studies (Butler 1990) and cultural studies (Parker & Sedgwick 1995). In gender studies, the argument is made that gender acquisition does not result from the acquisition of disembodied information, but constitutes a set of positions made available in social relations, who see 'man' and 'woman' as performative rather than representational terms, and gender categories as neither descriptive nor prescriptive. In Crete, according to Herzfeld, there is less stress on 'being a good man' than on 'being *good at being* a man.' (cited in Gilmore 1990: 30) It does not follow from this that gender performance is the enactment of a pre-existing script, as Gilmore, with his essentialist view on manhood suggests. Rather, it can be said that every culture makes available to men and women a number of different gender ideologies among which one or two may be privileged, and that gender is a fluid and situational mode of being. This means that there are at best a minimum sets of directions which are subject to change, and which actors can and do make up as they 'go along'. The right metaphor here is not the traditional western theatre but the classical jazz jam session in the course of which music is created through improvisation. In acting terms, an analogy can be established with acting methods like *noh* and *kathakali*: the fieldworker must try to grasp cultural meanings through acting rather than acting on an internalised script the meaning of which s/he already fully understands.

#### 4.3.2 *The Anthropologist as Child: Tabula Rasa?*

The comparison between the anthropologist who has just entered a culture in which s/he has to be encultured from scratch and the newly born child who is one which easily comes to mind and which is indeed very popular. But even anthropologists with an interest in behavioural learning dismiss the analogy on the ground that, "[f]or children, enculturation means a filling-up of an empty space; for anthropologists, it implies contrasting it with and revising previous understandings." (Hastrup 1994: 231; cf. Ingold 1993: 222; Okely 1992: 16) I am not sufficiently grounded in

psychology and neurology to assess the difference between children and adults' capacities for acquiring new knowledge of whatever sorts, and I am happy to accept a difference between children and anthropologists' (as adults) learning to that extent. It is nevertheless striking that anthropologists who insist that adults actively create culture, still assume that children are passive recipients or products of their cultural surroundings, despite evidence of the opposite (Bloch 1991; James 1993; Toren 1993).

Yet, there is a level at which I want to maintain the difference between the child's and the anthropologist's enculturation; it revolves around the fieldwork situation as the specific site where knowledge is generated in a specific way, and around the anthropologist's aim to gain an anthropological understanding rather than 'mere' indigenous knowledge (Hastrup 1992; Cabral 1992). Fieldworkers and hosts bring their own cultures to the fieldwork encounter which Pinxten defines as a type of 'inter-cultural communication' (1991). But it will not do to describe this communication as a cultural clash, because both parties actively establish a particular cultural situation which cannot be found outside of the fieldwork context, and which is characterised, not in the least, by the fact that anthropologists enter the field as *students* who must produce knowledge which is very different from that which they have of their own society (Hastrup 1992; de Pina-Cabral 1992). It is here, I think, that a major difference lies between the anthropologist as child if the child is conceptualised as someone who *learns*, and the anthropologist as student, who studies: both may or may not involve the same kind of learning activity; but the aim to which they are put may be very different (cf. Hastrup 1992), and the fieldworker is in the peculiar position of having to do both.

As students, fieldworkers must adapt to the learning situation which is at best co-ordinated with, at worst directed by their hosts. When Okely, in the course of her fieldwork in Normandy, asked a woman who had hand milked cow for forty years how to do it, the latter left the stable and came back with a flash camera to take photographs (1992: 17). I am sure that in similar circumstances, my brother-in-law who is a farmer would also take a picture of me; but I doubt whether he would feel inclined to do the same if I were to learn how to milk cows out of necessity, i.e. in case I would have to stand in for him or my sister. The specificity of the fieldwork situation which catches the anthropologist as the student is therefore an inter-cultural contact of a particular kind; and

the data obtained must always be read in the light of this particular encounter since learning is a relational process: anthropologists do not simply learn how to behave and thereafter behave in the manner they have learned (cf. Pitt-Rivers 1992).

#### 4.3.3 *The Anthropologist as Apprentice?*

The idea inherent in this notion of performance, that actors on and off stage do not need a script in order to perform successfully renders void the suggestion that, 'losing control' makes it impossible for anthropologists to play their role accurately. There are certain areas where anthropologists have traditionally not dared to tread for fear of losing control or getting too involved and being unable to observe properly as impartial outsiders. These range from actively participating in drinking bouts and going in trance to becoming an apprentice witch. While studying witchcraft among the Azande, Evans-Pritchard refused to become a witchdoctor himself, citing among a number of reasons, that it would interfere with "the ordinary methods of critical investigation." (1990: 67) Griaule was initiated in the more esoteric knowledge of the Dogon, but labelled as *comédie* any suggestion that he should undergo the usual Dogon initiation processes (cited in Clifford 1985: 144.). He stressed the importance for the ethnographer to 'play his stranger's role' rather than trying to blend into the society under study: "A friendly but determined outsider, pressing constantly against customary interdictions, the ethnographer comes to be seen as someone who, precisely because of his or her exteriority with respect to native institutions, is unlike to falsify them." (*id.*). Later anthropologists who came to see the advantages of apprenticeship as a fieldwork method did so because they assumed that it was imperative for anthropologists to find an established role for themselves in communalistic non-western societies which supposedly only recognise persons, i.e. individuals in their social roles (Coy 1989). The idea of all human learners as apprentices has never had the same appeal in anthropology as it has, for a while, had in psychological sciences (Lave & Wenger 1991). In recent years, however, anthropologists have not only been willing to become apprentice-witches or sorcerers (Stoller & Olkes 1989); there is now an implicit understanding that there is a congruence between fieldwork as initiation (enculturation) into anthropology, and fieldwork as initiation (enculturation) into the culture the fieldworker

studies.

Anthropologists' readiness to be fully 'initiated' in their hosts' culture has resulted in the emergence of the anthropology of extraordinary experience (Young & Goulet 1994a): fieldworkers recount how they have experienced dreams, trances and visions which run counter to western ideas of 'reality,' and which took a form and content consistent with their hosts' culture (*ibid.*: 7). Laderman reports that when working among the Malays, where she was part of a shaman's entourage, she spend much time observing shamanic rituals and interviewing healers and their patients, and often asked her informants what it feels like to be in trance. They told her that she could only find out by experiencing it but, initially, she felt uncomfortable with the lack of control trance implied. When she did go in trance, however, she had experiences which, she found out, corresponded very much to the Malays' common experience of trance. Far from losing control, she managed to actively experience Malay assumptions of reality. Embodiment is taking a step further here than it is in Method acting since it is recognised that bodies cannot always be consciously controlled (Bourdieu 1990): when Okely points to a photograph in which she has unknowingly imitated the defensive posture of one of her Gypsy informants (1992), she is referring to a type of knowledge she has learnt without any conscious awareness and which is subsequently beyond the realm of objective or subjective reflections. Such 'ordinary' experiences are therefore as illustrative of the anthropologist's successful enculturation as the more 'extraordinary' ones.

Anthropologists' refusal to participate in activities like drinking bouts or shamanic trances, for fear it will not allow them to investigate critically, is perhaps also indicative of their lack of awareness that drunken comportment and trance conduct are both learned types of behaviours, not physiological reactions to the intake of drug substances (Gefou-Madianou 1992; McDonald 1994). The jazz session is not a proper metaphor for such cultural performances and other forms of embodied knowledge in which individuals act in accordance with the cultural model unconsciously. In Balinese *saghyang* dancing, "each individual dancer has so incarnated the collective score that solo dancers cohere into a group performance. Upon recovering from trance, dancers are often not aware that others were dancing; sometimes they don't remember their own dancing." (Schechner 1982: 41) Whether they, or Laderman, for that matter, really enter a trance; whether Goulet (1994) really watched

himself sitting in front of himself; whether Turner (1994) really saw a spirit emerging from the body of a sick person in a healing ritual; whether the actor really merges with the mask, i.e. role in those cultures in which no distinction between the two is supposed to exist... all this is immaterial to my argument. It may be irrelevant to the fieldworker's hosts, too, who may also merely 'pretend'. Rappaport (cited in Myerhoff 1990: 247) argues that the authentic experience is irrelevant in ritual: since ritual is a performative genre in which one performs a statement of belief through a gesture, personal feelings become inconsequential. We should leave it to neurologists to decide whether dreams, hypnotic states, trance states etc. are indeed 'altered states of consciousness; all we can judge is the extent to which, consciously or unconsciously, anthropologists' experiences, like their hosts' are couched in forms which have some reality for the latter.

If anthropologists have only recently turned their attention to performative fieldwork (or, indeed, fieldwork methodology in general) in their texts, this does not mean that it constitutes a new practice; for anthropologists to be encultured in the cultures they study is not a recent phenomenon. Rouch's fieldwork experience among the Songhay spans a period of more than 40 years, and his deep penetration into the world of Songhay religion and witchcraft has made him a legendary figure for the Songhay as much as for his colleagues (Rouch 1989; Stoller 1989). Other anthropologists have had enculturation forced upon them by their host communities. In order for Huntington to conduct fieldwork in an American Hutterite community, she and her family had to live completely in role for as long as they stayed (1970). Female anthropologists working in societies in which they are required to take up the submissive role of the indigenous women, have commented on their difficulties in shedding off that role (Ardenner 1988). Being able to 'pass' for an indigenous person may not be the anthropologist's main concern, but it may be the host community's, as Huntington's example goes to show. The host community can force restrictions upon the fieldworker's physical movements and active participation in community life, independent of the fieldworker's own goals; it can organise or direct their fieldwork in such a way that they simply have to go with the flow with all the consequences ensuing from it; and however inappropriate the comparison between children and fieldworkers may strike anthropologists, their hosts may still see and treat them as children. When Pinxten started working among the

Navaho, he was initially told Coyote stories; he later found out that these are children's stories, i.e. a format of knowledge 'transmittal' confined to those who know little to nothing: "Telling Coyote stories to ethnographers is the Navajo way to start from scratch, one might say." (1991: 137; cf. Middleton 1970: 12) Both Farrer (Farrer & Pinxten 1990) who worked among the Apache, and Guédon (1994) who conducted fieldwork among the Dene write that their hosts made it clear to them that they would not go very far by asking questions and that they could require the desired knowledge or acquire new skills and technologies by keeping quiet and paying attention only. Whatever merits may be attributed to asking direct questions, recording conversations, taking observational notes, photographing and videotaping people etc. in texts on fieldwork methodology, many an anthropologist has had to find out to their shame that their informants not only think poorly of these but warn them they will not find out anything that way since these are simply not appropriate ways of learning (Page 1988; Stoller 1989; Stoller & Olkes 1989).

### 5. *The Final Curtain? Fieldwork and the Culture-Concept*

Geertz (1986) asserts that

[w]e cannot live other people's lives, and it is a piece of bad faith to try. We can but listen to what, in words, in images, in actions they say about their lives. ... Whatever sense we have of how things stand with someone's inner life, we gain it through their expressions, not through some magical intrusion into their consciousness. (373)

Apart from his misguided emphasis on verbal communication, the point is so self-evident as to be trivial. Since we obviously cannot live other people's life as individuals, it would be a bit much to ask anthropologists to do so as professionals. We have no magical device by means of which to gain access to the consciousness of either our nearest and dearest or the peoples we study. There is no guarantee that 'my' god is the same as 'yours' or that 'my' experience of sitting through school is the same as 'yours', whether 'you' are my mother, my colleague, my next-door neighbour or my Azande informant; but we can obviously *live with* our mothers, colleagues, next-door neighbours and informants without merely

listening to their discursions on their own lives (cf. Okely 1994). This may well mean that there might be activities such as head-hunting for the meaning of which anthropologists will remain dependent upon their informants' expressions since they involve ways of life few of them would be willing to be encultured in. Subjectivist stances do not provide a good alternative, however, in that they assume that one can gain an understanding of such practices without being encultured in them. For to argue that the ways in which human beings learn can be established independent from the actual learning process is to argue, by the same token, that fieldwork is irrelevant (since it means there are other methods available to come to an understanding of cultures), that one can select one specific fieldwork methodology by means of which all cultural meaning can be required (which takes us straight back to positivist anthropology), or that there is a universal mind untouched by cultural effects whose learning abilities transcend particular types of knowledge and knowledge acquisition (which amounts to the same thing).

The major shifts in considerations on fieldwork methodologies and the culture-concept can be summarised in the following (heuristic) model:

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Positivist</b> Objective truth: <b>description</b>	<b>Interpretive</b> Subjective truth <b>deciphering</b>	<b>Performative</b> Practice: <b>engagement</b>
<b>Onus</b>	Social structure	cultural meaning	performance
<b>Culture</b>	system; manner <b>translation</b>	system; knowledge <b>interpretation</b>	process; life <b>experience</b>
<b>Field-work</b>	collection of facts <b>observation</b> <b>informative</b>	collection of meanings <b>participation</b> <b>informative</b>	repetition of performances <b>enculturation</b> <b>performative</b>
<b>Field-worker</b>	director/playwright spectator	spectator/Method actor	indigenous actor/apprentice
<b>Informants</b>	stock characters	stock characters	individual characters

The model bears out the shift from a cognitivist to a behavioural paradigm in the study of cultures. But this should not be viewed as a shift towards a more 'Other' approach. For one, such a conclusion means that one must take seriously the difference set up between Self and Other in the first place, and overlook that this distinction incorporates a set of characteristics *ascribed* to Self and Other (causality vs. participation, etc.) rather than being a *description* of two distinctive categories: the western Self has created it-Self and an-Other by projecting unto both particular ways of being in an act of doubling, by inventing an Other who carries the Self's inadmissible impulses, and serves as its negative image (Ceuppens 1995; Segal 1988). Furthermore, to argue that there is a universal model which should integrate these two types, as Turnbull suggests in his plea for a combination of objective and subjective methods in the field-work process (1990), assumes the existence of these two constitutive parts in the first place, and fails to see their constructedness and interrelatedness: they are two sides of the same coin rather than antithetical to one another. Contrary to what Turnbull proposes, the non-western acting methods discussed have shown that participatory learning does not need to take the individual's own inner states as its starting point, or rely upon a sacrifice of self or social roles.

It may appear that I have tried to dissolve the difference between individualism and communalism on one level, i.e. with reference to the culture-concept, but have then tried to reintroduce it on another by comparing the western Method acting which takes as its starting point the most individual, inner, subjective experience, with non-western acting methods in which actors essentially 'mimic'. This is not true. For one thing, I have argued against Balagangadhara (1990) that western societies recognise both behaviourism and cognitivism as learning methods, but establish a hierarchy between them.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, I have not purported to set up a dichotomy between 'Us' and 'Them' on the basis that 'We' gain access to social reality by 'getting under the Other's skin' while 'They' do it (i) by 'getting under the Other's mask', (ii) by 'becoming' the Other by entering 'an altered state of consciousness', or (iii) by 'pretending' to become the Other in order to become truly so. All these so-called Other tactics are ones 'We' ourselves use as well: we all, at some stage, play a role which we cannot relate to our inner emotions, feel an emotional or physical closeness to other individuals which suspends our sense of individuated self, 'loose control' over ourselves, 'give

over' to whatever activity we are participating in, and induce a feeling by pretending we feel it already. The latter is, in fact, the basis of the whole 'think positive' canon and, in its most extreme forms, has given birth to the idea that the whole world is a projection of our own feelings and that we can cure ourselves of any physical or mental discomfort or illness by wishing so (Spaink 1992). No single self-concept can be identified with 'the West' or 'the Rest'; and to identify western acting with 'emotional acting' is as inaccurate as to identify non-western acting with 'mechanical acting'. Westerners are not alone in relating to reality on the basis of their individual feelings or an abstract set of rules; for if we accept that whereas the idea of individualism may be particular, a sense of individuality is not (Cohen 1994; Mauss 1978), we must assume that all humans can, and probably will at some stage, reflect upon their activities, watch themselves while being engaged, and will, in particular circumstances, feel it necessarily to act without 'losing themselves' in their activities. Within the theatrical realm, the *kathakali* idea of the actor as half the role and half himself, already bears this out.

In as far as performance fieldwork methodology takes as its starting point the fieldwork situation, i.e. the relation with one's hosts rather than academic discourses and texts, i.e. the relations with one's colleagues in academia, it can keep the onus firmly on inter-cultural communication, and minimise the danger of confusing academic methodology with indigenous learning theories and practices. Studying anthropology in the United States without a good comment of English was a sobering experience for Afghan anthropologist Shahrani: "In contrast to most fieldwork encounters in other cultures, hand signals and other kinds of facial and body gestures do not reveal much meaning in the American academic culture." (1994: 33) Indeed, Apache and Navaho children fail miserably in western educational systems, not in the least because their methods of learning through silent observation do not match the cognitive model which underlies learning in formal American class settings (Pinxten & Farrer 1990). Ultimately, then, what I label a close encounter of the third kind should not be contrasted to either an objectivist or subjectivist fieldwork approach; performative fieldwork does not exclude objectivism or subjectivism but draws attention to the fact that learning methods cannot be chosen a priori but are context-bound.

Performative fieldwork methods dissolve the distinctions between subject and object, observation and participation, culture and society,

individual and society, and at the most fundamental level, between essences and appearances. The demise of the culture-concept and the idea of a performative fieldwork anthropology are arguably the products of the post-colonial condition in the context of which distinctions between 'Us' and 'Them', between 'Self' and 'Other', between anthropologist and anthropologised (Cohen 1994) and ultimately between different cultures, become increasingly blurred. It is no longer the case that anthropology is something that 'We' do to 'Them'; anthropology has come home, and the Other has come to 'Our' home; 'We' study 'Our' cultures now as much as 'We' study 'Theirs' and as much as 'They' study our 'Own' or 'Theirs'; 'We' participate in different cultures simultaneously and so do 'They' be it as anthropologists, anthropologised, or individuals untouched by the anthropological enterprise.

With this concept of performance I have come full circle in my argument which took as its starting point the concept of *mimesis* the meaning of which underwent a change in the period spanning Antiquity to Modernity from performance to reproduction or copy. I have argued that a reverse development has taken place in anthropological theory: from objects of study who copy their culture, to subjects who creatively perform and performatively create it; from anthropologists who must try to reproduce knowledge about their objects of study accurately, to anthropologists who must try to perform with other human subjects. Ever since Malinowski raised fieldwork practice to its current privileged status in the discipline, anthropologists have aimed at "grasp[ing] the native's point of view, his (*sic*) relation to life, to realise his vision of his world." (Malinowski 1987: 25) With the establishment of a performative fieldwork methodology, the discipline has abandoned the elevation of the eye in observation and the mouth in communication as the main sources of anthropological knowledge, and in doing so, may finally be starting to "recognis[e] culture for what it is to those whose culture it is." (Holy 1989: 277)

University of Edinburgh

## NOTES

1. Earlier versions of this article were given as seminar papers in the Depart-

ment of Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics and at the African Studies Centre at the University of Edinburgh in 1994. I also addressed some themes in my course Anthropology and the Other at the University of Edinburgh in 1994. I am grateful to my audience and students for their often stimulating comments and criticism which I have borne in mind while writing this version. Special thanks are also due to Ladislav Holy, Henning Kniesche and John Sharry for their pertinent suggestions on earlier drafts.

2. 'Romantic' should be contrasted to 'romantic'. The latter to the popular appreciation of films, novels, music, presents, occasions, etc. I use the former term in its widest sense, not only in reference to the artistic and intellectual movement as it developed in 18th and 19th century Europe, but also to allude to elements contained in artistic and intellectual traditions which are similar to those found in Romanticism but which existed prior to its development. My use of the term in its historical sense is by no means exhaustive since I only deal with some of its aspects.
3. This involves a curious paradox: the shift from the 'what' and 'why' to the 'how' which moves the study of human culture closer to that of the hard sciences, was pushed by viewpoint which acknowledged the limitations of a positivist approach to the study of culture.
4. Unlike the 'founding father' of their 'school', Malinowski, British anthropologists have never been greatly interested in the study of language as an integral part of ethnographic enquiry, and have traditionally preferred to 'use' it rather than analyse it (Urry 1986: 51). By contrast, American anthropologists, with their keen interest in enculturation, have always singled out language and communication as key forces for the acquisition of culture.
5. It is significant that the term 'ethnography' is commonly used to refer to both fieldwork research and writing accounts thereof. Since the former is the original meaning of the word, I will use it in that sense only and distinguish it from the fieldwork practice.
6. I hope to elaborate on the relationship between the anthropologist as playwright and actor, ethnographer and fieldworker in another publication.
7. Spariosu appears to be 'reconstructing' Aristotle here in much the same way that he accuses Frye of doing so (1976: 9).
8. Golden distinguishes between Platonic mimesis as imitation and Aristotelian mimesis as representation although his own treatment of both authors belies this oversimplification. Spariosu claims that Aristotle means neither imitation nor representation by mimesis and illustrates this with reference to Aristotle's observation that Homer and Empedocles's have nothing in common except their metre. He concludes that Aristotle differentiates

between poetic discourse as an 'imitation' of language and scientific language as language proper. This is debatable, however, since in the paragraph following on the one Spariosu mentions, Aristotle specifies that mimesis entails mimetic humans 'representing' acting humans. It is on the level of humans 'imitating' humans therefore, and not on that of poetic language 'imitating' scientific language, that Aristotle sees a major distinction between the writing of poets (like Homer) and philosophers (like Empedocles).

9. 'Modern' and 'Modernity' are used here to refer to the historical epoch which took off at the end of the 15th century in their widest possible sense; they must be distinguished from 'modern' and 'modernity' in the sense of 'contemporary' or 'current'.
10. Elements are clearly present in Christianity. Mauss suggests that we owe our notion of the *personne morale* to Christianity, as exemplified in the saying *persona - substantia rationalis individua* (the person is a rational substance, indivisible and individual) (1978: 358).
11. Napier (1986) establishes a link between monotheism and condemnation of the theatre. Christ Himself repeatedly accused the Pharisees of 'hypocrisy'; the two words have indeed become synonyms.
12. I leave aside here the kind of cultural knowledge one 'acquires' informally, often without knowing how/that one 'acquired' it in the first place, e.g. the knowledge that one cannot have sex with one's siblings which neither falls in the realm of purely 'theoretical' nor purely 'practical' knowledge. At any rate, the distinction between these two is itself heuristic rather than epistemological, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to come to some epistemological classification of all kinds of cultural knowledge.
13. The Method invokes strong criticism especially in the circles of the avant-garde theatre. I do not feel called upon to defend the Method. Still, it seems to me that a lot of the criticism is unjustified and based either upon a misinterpretation or simple lack of information of Stanislavsky and Strasberg's ideas. When Schechner comments that the kathakali's acting method with its emphasis on the 'half actor' who is the role and the 'half actor' who is not would have met with Brecht's approval, he seems to imply that there is a sharp difference between Brecht's non-naturalistic and the Method's naturalistic acting methods. Strasberg denies this and hints that Brecht himself was very pleased with the Method (1989). We only have Strasberg's word for this, of course. Nevertheless, the previous summary of the Method's methodology makes clear that, unlike Schechner seems to imply, it takes for granted that the actor remains conscious of the fact that s/he is simulating, i.e. that s/he should not forget that s/he is acting.
14. Balagangadhara argues that several kinds of learning process are present

across all cultures but that one kind of learning activity will be dominant and subordinate other kinds of learning activities to itself. I have shown that one culture, i.e. western culture can recognise different learning methods as suitable to the acquisition of different knowledges, even though it can attribute different status to these according to the context in which they are viewed.

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