

Michael KOWALEWSKI (ed.), *Temperamental Journeys: Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel* (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1992, viii+359p., ISBN0-8203-1416-1 (cloth), 0-8203-1431-5 (pbk.))

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The task of ethnography in simple terms has been the careful description of "the other". Whether that person or group be located in a place far from the home of the fieldworker or just around the corner, the aim of the ethnographer is a description of everyday living habits of the culture being observed. What has always seemed to be at the centre of standard fieldwork — that an objective scientific recording of cultural scenes is produced without personal presence, bias, or interpretation — has in recent years been increasingly called into question, as fieldworkers in many social sciences question the reductionist fallacies of earlier ethnographies. One only has to turn to recent writings, such as those of James Clifford and George Marcus (1986) or John Van Maanen (1988), to realize that ethnographies are — like any written work — a literary genre, with their own rhetorical devices, styles of presentation, structure of plot, and narrative voice.

With such recognition comes the realization that the field report shares many of the characteristics of other textual products. A number of years ago, Dean MacCannell (1976) suggested links between tourism and ethnography: the search for the foreign, the authentic, the different, as well as the similarities of experiences of both the tourist and the ethnographer in capturing these issues for future readers. Yet MacCannell was reaffirming what a number of students of culture had known for years: the connections — indeed, the importance — of the travelogue, the topographical account, and field reports; in short, the writings of visitors to foreign places curiously recording the lifestyles of cultures that are met. Which brings me to Kowalewski's collection.

Temperamental Journeys deals with twentieth century travel writing, and is one of the few volumes that proposes to examine this body of material as a serious literary genre. While travel writings are obviously not synonymous with ethnography, there are enough parallels and similarities to make many of the issues discussed in the various essays of this volume useful for fieldworkers involved in the construction of the ethnographic text.

The book begins with an examination of the styles used in the writing of modern travel literature, then moves on to critical studies of the genre as a whole. Several chapters follow on travel writers from specific regions: America and Britain. The final section has an extensive bibliographic essay on the genre, followed by a bibliography on travel writings in English from regions around the world.

As Kowalewski points out in his introduction, travel writings have attracted the attention primarily of historians and geographers, the former because travel literature records events sometimes omitted in other sources, the latter because such writings often focus on descriptions of the landscape. Anthropologists and folklorists have only recently turned to the travel genre (and not all would agree to its usefulness), hitherto avoiding them partly because of a nervousness about what these accounts actually describe.

The genuine traveller (as opposed to the mass tourist) is much closer to the fieldworker than anything else. Essays by Elton Glaser and David Espey point out, for example, that the true traveller “journeys alone and willingly, suffers deprivations, discomforts, and dangers in order ‘to make interesting discoveries about oneself and one’s surrounding’” (p. 156). This “literature of fact” often “seeks out areas that are remote and unspoiled, and facts that are important but little known” (p. 164-65). Much travel writing is influenced by the interest in primitivism that has also motivated many fieldworkers.

As is the case for ethnography, what constitutes description — what is objective and what is subjective — is often a major issue in the creation of the travel narrative. In her essay “The Travel Writer and the Text”, Heather Henderson points out that readers of the travel account are not merely concerned with reports of a people and their environs — although this is important. Readers, as well, are interested in the traveller’s real feelings about the local culture and its characteristics — something expected of the ethnographer.

This presence of the traveller in the descriptive narrative is a characteristic that has only recently been considered important in the creation of any valid ethnography. In the past, fieldworkers have tried to push feelings out of their accounts, with the mistaken impression that such commentary diminishes some ideal objectivity of the work. However, with reflexive methodologies now widespread, ethnographers have moved closer to the travel account in this regard. Like the works of the travel writer, field reports are now filled with a narrative voice (p. 8), a first person that guides the outsider through the strange sights and sounds in front of the observer. As in the novel, the travel writer often foregrounds the narrator, who becomes an active player in the final account that is constructed.

Like all descriptive writing based on real-life situations, that of the travel writer attempts to describe accurately those scenes that he or she encounters. The travel writer never had to be ashamed of the presence of the observer; in fact, that observer was the central voice in the narrative. Similarly, folklorists are realizing that the voiceless text paints a false picture of the culture under scrutiny, and the fieldworker can now take a prominent role front and centre in any account.

The essays in Kowalewski’s volume give us examples of a genre of writing that could well enhance our understanding of how we might more skilfully produce the texts of our fieldwork. As Mark Muggli points out, travel

narratives suggest the inadequacies of our easy distinctions between tourist, traveller and resident (p. 176). And we could well add ethnographer to that trilogy.

Temperamental Journeys points to a growing body of critical literature that can help us refine our tasks of describing fully as well as sympathetically those people we work with. By understanding how we construct our field accounts, and how we place ourselves in those dramas, we will begin to recognize how literary as well as ethnographic our pursuits really are. We are all travellers, finally, some with different purposes and destinations than others.

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Bogumil JEWSIEWICKI (avec la coll. d'E. M'bokolo, Ndaywel è Nziem, Sabakinu Kivilu), *Naître et mourir au Zaïre. Un demi-siècle d'histoire au quotidien* (Paris, Karthala, 1993, 255 p.).

Avec *Naître et mourir au Zaïre. Un demi-siècle d'histoire au quotidien*, B. Jewsiewicki présente un échantillon des récits de vie — huit au total — de quelques acteurs sociaux zaïrois. Il allonge ainsi la liste de ces témoignages qu'il a recueillis depuis 1974 et dont quelques-uns ont fait l'objet de publications antérieures. On peut s'y référer en consultant B. Jewsiewicki (édit.), *État indépendant du Congo, Congo belge, République démocratique du Congo, République du Zaïre? Québec, Safi, 1984, p.138-151*, B. Jewsiewicki et F. Montal (édit.), *Récits de vie et mémoires: vers une anthropologie historique du souvenir*, Paris-Québec, L'Harmattan-Safi, 1988, 344 p., B. Jewsiewicki, *Moi, l'autre*,