
Article  (Accepted Version)


This version is available from Sussex Research Online: http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/100827/

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies and may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher’s version. Please see the URL above for details on accessing the published version.

Copyright and reuse:
Sussex Research Online is a digital repository of the research output of the University.

Copyright and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable, the material made available in SRO has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.
Michelangelo Paganopolous, in this edited anthology of writings from across the world, takes forward the discussion surrounding subjectivity, authorship, and the relationship of anthropology to history-in-the-making. The anthology’s starting point is Kant’s theorization of anthropology as an engagement with human nature and a concern with humanity’s future. Such a conceptualisation places anthropology between fiction and non-fiction and contributes ‘towards the development of mutual understanding between nations and social classes, to achieve peace and equality according to the values of the Enlightenment’ (p. 1). Paganopolous then delineates the discipline’s development to the turn of the twenty-first century, mapping the shift towards subjectivity. Thus In between fiction and non-fiction acts as a conversation between Kant’s conceptualising of anthropology and the discipline’s current emphasis on subjectivity.

The collection consists of thirteen reflective essays organised around Kantian ‘pragmatic anthropology’ in relation to two themes: literature and film. The essays explore the relationship between authorship, readership, and spectatorship while exploring different ways of doing and writing anthropology.

The section on literature has chapters by Michelangelo Paganopolous, Keith Hart, Prarthana Saiki, Carrie B. Clanton, John Hutnyk, Geetika Ranjan and Melania Calestani. These authors examine anthropological writing, reflectivity, the author’s relationship of with the ‘other’/the focus on their study. For example, Hart, in his autobiographical chapter (chap.-2) reflects on both his journey as an anthropologist and on writing practices in academia. To this end, he traces his relationship with f Manchester city, where he was born, the Manchester...
School, and reflects on the body of work he has produced throughout the course of this academic journey. Hart argues for an alternative style of writing that combines personal anecdotes with the theoretical analysis. In so doing, he comments on the discipline’s insistence and reliance on ‘fieldwork', and the social science method, which give little scope for writers’ personal experience (p. 68). Clanton (chap. 4) furthers this in her work and considers the anthropologist’s subjectivity by placing Freud in conversation with Derrida to examine the idea that ethnography is a collage, a ‘chance meeting of self with some other in a strange land’ (p. 93). She uses this to critique the uncanny relationship between the self (the ethnographer) dwelling in a strange land (the fieldsite) and the latter’s representation in anthropological writing, while making a case for self-reflective political engagement within anthropological writing.

The second section includes chapters by Nobert M. Schmitz, Marta Kucza, Monica Heintz, Ishita Tiwary, Ira Sahasrabudhe and Shubhangi Vaidya and focuses on film. For example, Schmitz’s piece (chap. 7) examines the work of the anthropological filmmaker Robert Gardner, analysing his aesthetics in combination with his films’ meta-narratives. Through a close examination of Gardner’s ‘Forest of Bliss' (1986), Schmitz argues that ‘the very depiction of reality and even more so, any experience of reality at all, is a construction long before their artificial enhancement in perception and communication of everyday life has taken place’ (p. 148). He contends that rather than representing the world objectively, Gardner represents it from his own artistic position. In her piece, Tiwary (chap. 11) examines China’s new digital technologies through Jia Zhang-Ke’s films, placing them within the PRC’s larger socio-economic environment. Her analysis of Zhang-ke’s work combines the process of filmmaking with the advent of movable cameras and explores the ordinary, quotidian lives of people in post-Socialist China.
All these authors seek to first, examine the dialectical relationship between the idea of time as intelligible and sensuous. Second, they examine experiences of time across various dimensions, locations (geographical spaces), and media (texts and visual) in order to critically engage with reality as both objective and subjective. Through its analyses of time, *In between fiction and non-fiction* makes an argument for collapsing the boundaries between objectivity and subjectivity and for representing the ‘objective’ world subjectively. Thirdly, its précises open a discussion on an ethnographic writing that could dissolve the boundary between fiction and non-fiction and thus link the current moment of self-reflectivity with the Kantian proposition that anthropology is an engagement with human nature and humanity.

Despite its arguably laudable attempt to collapse the conceptual distance between the detached and personal, the book slips into the use of the two as binary oppositions and fails to go beyond this dualism. The distance between the ethnographer and field continues to persist. Worthy as its endeavour is, the collection is unable to capture how fieldwork experiences and practices are informed by the researcher’s positionality, especially in its analyses of film. Various chapters however do capture the ethnographer’s experience, especially in the section on literature, but fail to depict how ‘the field’ is changing/has changed.

dyuti ailawadi, University of Sussex