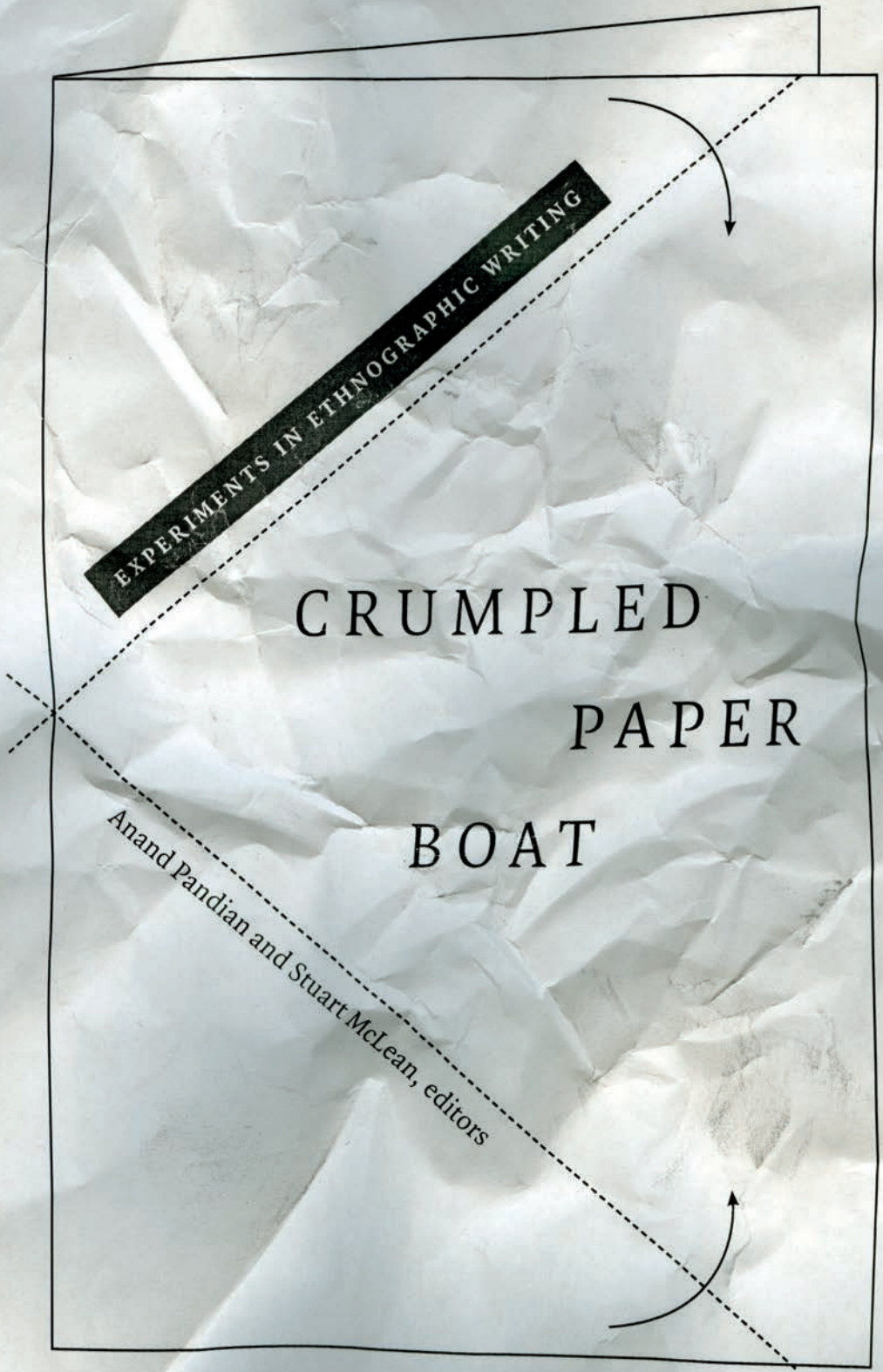
EXPERIMENTS IN ETHNOGRAPHIC WRITING
CRUMPLED
PAPER
BOAT
Anand Pandian and Stuart McLean, editors

CRUMPLED PAPER BOAT

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A SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ADVANCED SEMINAR

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Prologue

ANAND PANDIAN AND STUART McLEAN

An ethnography carries beings of one world into another one. This is a promise that our writing shares with fiction, poetry, cinema, and most other expressive arts. It is also a capacity we share with more literal modes of transport: the flatbeds, planes, ships, and mobile devices that take us in and out of the field, put our interlocutors in motion, and allow our stories to travel from place to place on their own. When it comes to such movements, we get caught up too often in ideas of origin and destination—where someone is coming from, where a text must go. The "how" of transportation is easily lost: the means of conveyance, the transformative potential of movement, the techniques our works rely on in taking their readers elsewhere. Writing is a transitive process of communication, a material practice no less participatory and dynamic than ethnographic fieldwork itself. This is a volume of experimental ventures in anthropological writing, attempts to explore and extend both the medium and its basic modes of displacement.

Our title is borrowed from a phrase in Paul Schmidt's translation of "The Drunken Boat," a poem composed by Arthur Rimbaud in 1871. Here's how the poem ends:

> If I long for a shore in Europe,
> It's a small pond, dark, cold, remote,
> The odor of evening, and a child full of sorrow
> Who stoops to launch a crumpled paper boat.
>
> Washed in your languors, Sea, I cannot trace
> The wake of tankers foaming through the cold,

Nor assault the pride of pennants and flags,
Nor endure the slave ship's stinking hold.

The "I" of the poem, "a little lost boat," is set loose on a river by "howling Indians," winding up adrift amid the waters, flotsam, and mythical beasts of "the Poem of the Sea."[1] Its travails embody the famous formula for poetic displacement, "I is another," that Rimbaud declared in a letter written earlier that year, the phrase that Claude Lévi-Strauss would cite a century later as the very essence of the anthropological endeavor.[2] We find, in this image of a frail vessel adrift, a sense of the peril that can come with such exit from oneself. There is a sense here of the frustrations that lead writers to crumple and scrap the slips of paper on which they work. But there is also the sense of writing as a material adventure, a casting off, the idea of a text cut loose as a thing in the world, something delicate that might yet float to unforeseen and unforeseeable destinations—like the paper boat we are launching here, this volume.

Like so many European adventurers of his era, Rimbaud set sail to seek his fortune in the Orient, serving in the Dutch colonial army in Java and dealing in arms in the Yemeni port of Aden, only to succumb to illness within a decade.[3] Lévi-Strauss, later confronting the rubble of that colonial world, would lament in *Tristes Tropiques* that "journeys, those magic caskets full of dreamlike promises, will never again yield up their treasures untarnished."[4] Certainly, the early twenty-first century seems even less a time to celebrate adventures on ramshackle vessels. Journeys are at once more commonplace and more desperate, as attested by the plight of refugees, itinerant people, and undocumented migrants. Nonetheless, even if anthropologists and their interlocutors travel today along less exotic pathways, our writing remains a charged form of voyaging. The idea of a transformative passage remains essential to the critical promise of ethnography, a promise embodied most fully in the form and force of ethnographic writing—a medium imbued with both potentiality and risk.[5]

As we know very well now, there has always been something peculiar about this genre, ethnography, claimed by anthropology as its own, yet forever edging close to travelogue, literature, and memoir.[6] Think of Bronislaw Malinowski's experiments with narrative point of view—"Imagine yourself suddenly set down . . ."—in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* or Raymond Firth's effort to conjure the "unreal perspective" of a shoreline encounter at

the outset of *We, the Tikopia*. Think of what happens to the integrity of the author's voice in Vincent Crapanzano's *Tuhami* or to the clarity of that being in Jeanne Favret-Saada's *Deadly Words*. To be sure, certain ideas of science and suspicions of rhetoric have weighed down such literary flights. Ruth Benedict and David Sapir kept their poetry to themselves, and the ethnographic novels of Laura Bohannon, Hilda Kuper, and many others since have often held a tenuous place in the official canons of the discipline.[7] And yet the literary impulse has persisted in anthropology as an "uncanny" presence, "both desired and dreaded," as E. Valentine Daniel and Jeffrey Peck have put it, promising to reveal a more intractable and encompassing form of truth—that of the fieldwork encounter with an alien reality.[8]

This was one of the central challenges that motivated the "experimental moment" of the 1980s, George Marcus and Michael Fischer argued in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, a time of heightened reflexive attention to the difficulty of ethnographic understanding and the textual devices available for such pursuits. Marcus has since suggested that ethnographic texts may have exhausted this experimental potential.[9] But it seems to us that certain more radical possibilities for experimentation with ethnographic writing remain unexplored, even in the wake of anthropology's "reflexive" turn. Imagine, for example, a spirit of textual adventure that took writing as a practice immanent to the world, rather than as a detached reflection upon the world and itself. Imagine the novel possibilities for thought and action that might come with a deferral of critical distance, in pursuit of a less guarded, even reckless contamination by circumstance. Imagine ways of writing that might put ourselves more deeply at risk than what we have tried till now. What could such experiments look like, and what, if anything, might they achieve?[10]

"In the act of writing, as in spirit possession, sexual ecstasy, or spiritual bliss, we are momentarily out of our minds," Michael Jackson reflects. "We shape-shift. . . . We stretch the limits of what is humanly possible."[11] Jackson's words speak to what can happen in both the writing and the reading of an ethnographic work, through the encounter, that is, with a literary force that is metamorphic by nature, acting in and upon the world and its beings. This is not the familiar image of a knower examining the things of the world at a safe remove, or the idea of a text as a representation that stands apart from the world that it depicts. Instead, what is conveyed here is the chance for something more profound and unsettling to happen through the

play of image, voice, character, and scene, a transgression of the limits of individual identity and the fixity of the reality at hand. "Writing is inseparable from becoming," Gilles Deleuze writes, "always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed."[12] We ask, with this book, what might become of anthropology if we cultivated such literary powers more assiduously.

This book grows out of a weeklong seminar in the spring of 2013, hosted by the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe. That seminar, "Literary Anthropology," brought together a group of anthropologists—mostly younger, and one younger at heart than all of us—who shared a commitment to the practice of writing and a frustration with the limits of conventional scholarly prose. We shared a sense that explanations came too quickly and easily in the social sciences, stripped of the dense and deeply mortal flesh of life. We all described a desire to convey more elusive truths in experience, as well as a feeling of having been taken there by language at times in a manner that we could scarcely make sense of ourselves. We wrote on topics as disparate as roadkill in suburban America and madness in a Moroccan city, mustering resources from literary genres as diverse as epistolary memoir and apocalyptic fiction, philosophical poetry and cinematic scriptwriting. Still, what we held in common was the conviction that such elements could sustain a more lucid and convincing mode of anthropological thought and expression, rather than serving merely as literary props or aesthetic embellishments.

In the French anthropological tradition, Vincent Debaene has shown, scholarly books have always been shadowed by literary works like *Tristes Tropiques*, "experiences made with writing and through writing [as] a true continuation of fieldwork."[13] The chapters that follow similarly take up experimental modes of writing as ways of lingering with the vicissitudes and implications of empirical encounters. In Todd Ramón Ochoa's essay, for example, rhythms of praise for the dead in Cuba compose a narrative topography of undulating pleats, folds, waves, and rolls. For Daniella Gandolfo, a conversation with a hunter on the car radio lights up the carcasses littering a parkway, pulsing all of a sudden with sentiments of both fascination and revulsion. Michael Jackson is caught up in a frustration to recall the details of another radio episode, until that feeling itself opens into an appreciation for the resistance to closure that ethnography demands. Writing thus becomes a means of marking and maintaining an openness to events, surprises, and contingencies, to a reality that is as much a source of questions and provocations as of answers.

"Anthropology has always been vexed about the question of vulnerability," Ruth Behar observes.[14] In what follows, we take this vexation as an incitement to write more faithfully to life, to its ambiguity, uncertainty, and existential risk, however difficult that task may be. Take Angela Garcia's effort to care for an archive of personal letters from the midst of New Mexico's heroin epidemic, a condition of deep and often painful implication that leads her to pursue "writing as a site of intimacy and struggle, mourning and survival." Then there is what happens in Anand Pandian's recounting of the tempestuous desires that propel a scene of filmmaking in India, a torrent of feeling that passes through his essay as a single delirious sentence. One might take such pursuits as a sacrifice of anthropological knowledge to inchoate feelings. But, as Stefania Pandolfo shows in her sensitive reflection regarding a painting born of madness in Morocco, there is a crucial philosophical horizon to such endeavors—writing with the force of passage is what equips us to think otherwise, to bend our concepts to the concepts of others.

All of these essays also share an interest in the craft of writing, an emerging focus of attention in contemporary anthropology, as seen in books such as Kirin Narayan's *Alive in the Writing* (2012) and the collection *Anthropology Off the Shelf* (2011) and in the recent series of writers' workshops curated by the anthropology blog *Savage Minds*.[15] Here, we consider how problems of understanding force a deflection in written form: into narrative prose fiction, the principal reference point for discussions of ethnographic writing, and also into other literary modes. For Tobias Hecht, the appeal of ethnographic fiction—as with his wrenching stories here from the early years of the AIDS epidemic in South Africa—lies in its ability to reveal possible worlds lodged within the apparent banality of the actual. Adrie Kusserow, meanwhile, turns to the "nomadic vagrancy" of poetry as a way of conveying concretely the liminal and unsettled state of Sudanese refugees. Lisa Stevenson's essay, seeking to alight upon the delicate presence of the dead in the life of contemporary Canadian Inuit, assembles a montage of spectral images and nearly inaudible voices. In each of the works to come, the craft of writing is engaged as a material practice, a way of making and unmaking worlds, as attested by Stuart McLean's experimental poem of islands of the North Atlantic, its juxtaposed fragments evoking debris descending from the familiar surface of narrative discourse to the obscurity of the ocean floor.

Any craft demands attentive labor as well as deference: a willingness to allow what is made to find its form, to seek the body that its materials can sustain, to exceed the intentions of its makers. This kind of attunement to the emergent potential of a process was something we often spoke of in Santa Fe, a spirit reflected not only in the substance of what each of us wrote but even in the unfolding of the workshop itself. The momentum of the conversations quickly overtook what the two of us as conveners initially had in mind, and all of us found ourselves swept up by a current of activity that pulled us along without divulging its ultimate direction. This unexpected collective energy provoked various experiments that have since found a place in this book. For example, the chapter that comes immediately after this one is a collaborative work written by all ten of us who participated in the workshop. We had decided, on the spur of the moment, to try out some writing exercises on a collaborative online platform, which we continued to revisit in the months that followed. "Archipelagos" is a text stitched together from those exercises, its sentences formed of fragmentary thoughts and queries hazarded and completed in so wild a manner that none of its ideas can be assigned to any one of us alone.

As a collaborative introduction, "Archipelagos" aims to be faithful to the mood of this book, a place to linger at greater length on the interwoven problems of writerly heritage, craft, consequence, and responsibility that propelled our conversations. Then there are the interludes that follow each of the essays, growing once again out of a vision for the volume as a collective endeavor, as something more than an aggregate of individual contributions. These brief reflections, authored variously, pick up specific themes in the essays as openings into problems of method and technique in ethnographic writing: the challenge of working with care and fidelity, of writing through intercessors and other worlds, of wrestling with excess and the otherwise. Our hope is that these interludes will amplify and extend what is at stake, both conceptually and practically, in the writerly interventions made by the book's essays. They may also communicate the polyphony we hoped to orchestrate by throwing these disparate pieces together. As Kathleen Stewart observes in her luminous epilogue, "There is room in this writing for voices to come and go. . . . Necessarily recursive, it fashions itself like a tuning fork that learns its note through small, incremental experiments made in fits and starts."

This book is composed with the conviction that these notes we hone do indeed matter. Questions are constantly raised these days regarding the relevance of anthropology. This has something to do with our habits of writing; as Orin Starn notes in a recent commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Writing Culture*, "We tend not to be very good storytellers."[16] But there is also the difficulty of what anthropology aims to do with experience, the difficulty of thinking creatively and effectively with such tales and other forms. Indeed, in an era of Big Data the insistent particularism of ethnographic research and writing can provoke and disconcert. Witness, for example, the accusations of adventurism and worse that greeted Alice Goffmann's recent effort to record the precarious lives of young African American men in a neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The controversy surrounding Goffmann's book concerned not only the ethics and positionality of the white, Ivy League–educated ethnographer's foray into the worlds of urban black youth, but also its alleged blurring of documentary and fictional modes.[17]

The relationship between reality and fiction has become ever more fraught in the United States in the wake of the 2016 presidential election, widely seen to herald an alarming new era of deliberate falsehoods peddled as "alternative facts." The Oxford English Dictionary actually declared *post-truth* the word of the year in 2016, "denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."[18] Critics have rightly challenged such claims in the political sphere, insisting on the objective reality of things like climate change, or the absence of any evidence tying refugees from certain countries to terrorism in the United States. But we ought also to ask whether it suffices to fall back on such truths in the face of persuasive stories of foreign menace and threat, which have become such powerful forces in contemporary American politics and elsewhere. For it is undeniable that such tales have the capacity to remake reality itself, to reshape the very substance of the here-and-now and the ways in which human actors engage the world at hand. All too often such attempts insist dogmatically upon their own authoritative status, seeking to displace or exclude other possible accounts of what is or might be. Anthropology can help in making sense of how such narratives, mythical and otherwise, act upon the world and its inhabitants. And, in the midst of these perilous and uncertain circumstances, ethnographic writing has a crucial role to play in setting loose other kinds of compelling tales.

In what follows, some of us take experimental writing as a way of lending greater nuance and sensitivity to the project of ethnographic understanding, and thus of entering more profoundly into the lives and worlds of others. Other contributors to this book seek, in writing, new means of breaking with conventional notions of representation and subjectivity, putting the anthropological category of the "human" itself into question. We float this volume with the faith that inventive, appealing, and intellectually adventurous writing can serve both of these ends, while also reaching out to wider and more diverse audiences. We hope to show that such experimentation is essential to anthropology's role in the contemporary world, and that it is one of our most powerful means of engaging it.

At the outset of an important collective effort from the 1980s to think between poetry and anthropology, Stanley Diamond mused that "the writing of poetry has turned into a particular, personal, and exhausting effort, which must fight every moment against the gravity of civilized language." Diamond had in mind the impoverishment of everyday language in the modern world, denuded of expressive richness, depth, and rhythm. "If anthropologists were Zulus, or Eskimo, or Seneca, or Pawnee," he wrote, "the language of everyday life . . . would make it possible for everyone to speak poetry, as many anthropologists have the imagination and experience to understand."[19] Diamond's sober judgment notwithstanding, this book rests on the idea that ethnography can infuse language with the presence of other lives and the density of their worlds, that we can indeed learn (or learn again) to speak such poetry—not as Zulus or Inuit, or even as anthropologists per se, but as living beings in the process of becoming others whose identities remain fundamentally unresolved.[20] Such is the promise of an approach to writing that acknowledges the deep intertwining of language and life, image and experience, thought and the world in which it finds a body.[21]

These ventures, as experiments, may not work for everyone. But we hope they may carry a generative spark, provoking further explorations of the creative and transformative potentials of anthropological writing, further experiments, further castings off—more or less crumpled as they may be, still drifting all the same, uncertain of whom or what they will encounter.

Notes

1. Rimbaud, *Complete Works*, 120–23. The image that we borrow for the title from Schmidt's translation was expressed otherwise by Rimbaud—"Un bateau frêle comme un papillon de mai." But, as Schmidt explains with regard to his method, "What remained for me . . . was to wrestle with Rimbaud's poetry the way an actor wrestles with a part, to perform what his words revealed. To arrange it? To impose order on his derangements? No. Simply to speak it in my own language, to say what he wrote, to tell what appears to have happened within the periods that Rimbaud himself has set, the seasons that obsessed him" (xv).

2. Lévi-Strauss, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau."

3. Taminian, "Rimbaud's House in Aden, Yemen."

4. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 37.

5. "The travel writer's transient and literary approach, sharply rejected in the disciplining of fieldwork, has continued to tempt and contaminate the scientific practices of cultural description. Anthropologists are, typically, people who leave and write," James Clifford observes. Clifford, *Routes*, 65.

6. Essential reflections on the writing of ethnography include Marcus and Cushman, "Ethnographies as Texts"; Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*; Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*; Geertz, *Works and Lives*; Tedlock, "From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation"; Rapport, *Prose and the Passion*; and Daniel and Peck, *Culture/Contexture*.

7. Schmidt, "Ethnographic Fiction."

8. Daniel and Peck, "Culture/Contexture: An Introduction," 1.

9. Reviewing the legacies of the hugely influential *Writing Culture*, which he coedited with James Clifford, Marcus has argued that "the classical ethnographic textual form—even as amended since the 1980s, and given its learned pleasures—is a very partial and increasingly inadequate means of composing the movements and contests of fieldwork—both naturalistic and contrived, collaborative and individualistic—that motivate it, and on which it is intended to report." For Marcus, the locus of experimentation has shifted to other media and sites of collaboration such as studio, lab, and design spaces. Marcus, "Legacies of *Writing Culture*," 432.

10. Recent and inspiring examples of such efforts, for which a space has always existed in the discipline of anthropology, include Michael Taussig's *Law in a Lawless Land* (2003), Kirin Narayan's *My Family and Other Saints* (2007), Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (2007), Hugh Raffles's *Insectopedia* (2010), Robert Desjarlais's *Counterplay* (2011), Ruth Behar's *Traveling Heavy* (2013), Renato Rosaldo's *The Day of Shelley's Death* (2013), Lucas Bessire's *Behold the Black Caiman* (2014), and Paul Stoller's *Yaya's Story* (2014), not to mention the work of the contributors to this volume.

11. Jackson, *Other Shore*, 3.

12. Deleuze, "Literature and Life," 225.

13. Debaene, *Far Afield*, x.

14. Behar, *Vulnerable Observer*, 5.

15. A second edition of John Van Maanen's *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* was also published by the University of Chicago Press in 2011. Published most recently, in 2016, was *The Anthropologist as Writer*, edited by Helena Wulff.

16. Starn, "Introduction," 9.

17. Goffmann, *On the Run*; Gideon Lewis-Kraus, "The Trials of Alice Goffmann," *New York Times*, January 12, 2016.

18. "Word of the Year: Post-truth," English: Oxford Living Dictionaries, accessed February 7, 2017, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/word-of-the-year/word-of-the-year-2016.

19. S. Diamond, "Preface," 131.

20. What Steven A. Tyler wrote of postmodern ethnography remains deeply compelling to us: "It is, in a word, poetry—not in its textual form, but in its return to the original context and function of poetry, which, by means of its performative break with everyday speech, evoked memories of the *ethos* of the community and thereby provoked hearers to act ethically," breaking from reality and returning to a commonsensical world "transformed, renewed, and sacralized." Tyler, "Postmodern Ethnography," 125–26.

21. See Lavie, Narayan, and Rosaldo, *Creativity/Anthropology*.

Introduction

ARCHIPELAGOS, A VOYAGE IN WRITING

PAPER BOAT COLLECTIVE

For a long time I've thought about writing as a kind of sorcery.

Stories give us hints as to how they need to be written.

It seemed to me that a certain kind
of overt interest in writing caused
people not to take you seriously.

Why should an account of human life, which is,
after all, the most interesting thing on earth, be
rendered in such uninteresting ways?

I can sometimes just be so thrilled by a turn of phrase.

Something happens to break down the integrity of the reader
and the text—what the text is, and what it isn't, somehow
become undecidable.

For me it's important in the writing to convey a lifeworld
but also a world of thought and the possibility of new
thought, new concepts, new worlds that can open up.

What are the ethics of writing, of working
with the words of another, whether those
words are spoken or written?

In some weird way, the dead are an audience, always.

I hope at the end of this I'll still want to write poetry.

Writing

We came here to talk about writing. Here—an adobe bungalow on Garcia Street in the high reaches of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The mud-walled compound once belonged to two wealthy sisters from New York, Martha and Elizabeth White, who named it El Delirio, "the madness," after a bar they chanced upon during a vacation in Seville, Spain. The sisters were known both as enthusiastic patrons of archaeology and native arts and as the hosts of lavish costume parties, where guests would dance the night away dressed as ancient Mayans.[1] A cemetery for their beloved breed dogs lies undisturbed in a quiet corner of the property. Now, as the School for Advanced Research, the compound plays host to the more muted, professionally sanctioned revelries of visiting anthropologists.

Beyond the compound lie the high desert and the southernmost subrange of the Rockies, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, formed around twenty-seven million years ago. The Spanish colonists who arrived here in the early seventeenth century saw blood in the reddish alpenglow of these peaks at sunrise and named them accordingly. They struggle still for control of the region's resources: descendants of these settlers, the Native Americans they displaced, and the Mexican and American settlers who came after them. Just thirty-odd miles north of Santa Fe's shops and galleries lies the Los Alamos National Laboratory, where the world's first atomic weapons were developed and manufactured. The setting is one where beauty and violence have long commingled and as such is replete both with reminders of the short-lived and transitory character of the human presence in the region and with intimations of the disquieting prospect of a posthuman future—a suggestive place, in other words, to think about the contemporary stakes of anthropological writing.

It is well known that anthropologists write, and write a lot: notes and transcriptions, proposals and reports, books and articles, sometimes even drama, fiction, and poetry. For the most part still, these exercises are evaluated with a narrow standard of accuracy in mind: how closely they "represent" some other world out there, how faithfully they mediate between that world and those who make and consume anthropological texts. Beyond the fulfillment of this expectation, writing in anthropology tends to be seen as an aesthetic adornment, a hobby pursued by those with the time and inclination to do so, a diversion from the more serious business of conveying content and information.

Someone recalls—What bothered me when I came to anthropology was that so many people said, "You'll have to leave the poetry behind now." There was a sense that social science required a distance from direct testimony or direct engagement in people's lives, in order to have some kind of authority. I detested the whole idea of this authority—it seemed to me that a text didn't have authority, it had authenticity.

How to tell a story and tell it well? Why do we as anthropologists feel so constrained in the face of this question, in contrast to the freedom that writers of fiction or literary essays seem to enjoy? This difficulty has much to do with the specific demands that our subject matter places on our writing: honoring our subjects, honoring the lifeworlds we write about. The literary in its popular sense is all about inventing, making things up, but as ethnographers we have the sense also of wanting to do the right thing by the people we're writing about. A consciousness of this responsibility often stays our hand when it comes to experimental writing. But should it always? Might our encounters with others demand on occasion that we experiment?

We struggle here with the limits of a writing that isn't subtle enough or rich enough to do justice to the realities that we encounter, realities that are turned so often into generic ABCs in what we read about them. Experimental writing, sometimes errant, at times even literary, can also *know* something of the world—something that has no less of a claim on the truth of the world than the sciences or the social sciences, perhaps even a great deal more to claim than some institutionalized forms of knowledge. Literature forces us to ask what it means to "convey" something in the first place. Language is more than an empty vehicle to carry over information, for the medium has an ineradicable presence in the act of saying something: the density of certain words that cannot be substituted by other words, turns of phrase that cannot be altered or expressed otherwise. Such elements work to produce worlds of life, worlds of thought, through a convergence of the literary and the lived, the philosophical and the aesthetic.

"Yes, happily language is a thing," Maurice Blanchot wrote—"it is a written thing, a bit of bark, a sliver of rock, a fragment of clay in which the reality of the earth continues to exist."[2] In this book, we think of writing as a generative practice, a tangible presence, part of the stuff of the worlds it seeks to engage, working with powers and potentialities always present in language, always at work in the world. Writing, as a mode of expression, shares its

creative energy with the milieus from which it emerges. This emphasis on the materiality of expression also leads us to a particular understanding of ethnography, as a way of participating in the activity of the world, a making and remaking of instances of life entangled with moments of thought, its writing as a form of sorcery, a conjuration of powers both generative and destructive.

For such sorcery is a vexed thing: it can harm and it can heal. Betrayal is inescapable, in this practice of working with words that are not our own. A world comes back into being through the debris of language, in the form of residues and detritus: buried stories, forgotten images, diary entries, fragments of verse. How effectively do these elements engage the lives of the people we work with? What is it to know by means of the narrative shards and broken dreams that compose the archive of anthropology? Ethnographies always alter and transfigure the worlds that motivate them, illuminating and occluding the lives and stories with which they are suffused.

Michel de Certeau suggests that writing begins in loss.[3] We work here with voices that seek a place but never settle, voices unmoored and apart from the integrity of body and identity, voices that pass through ethnography without the security of anchor and harbor. We pursue ethnographic experiments with altered states of feeling: dream, reverie, revelation, visceral forces of self-estrangement and becoming-otherwise.

> *(Even these words, here, to whom do they belong? We can't say—they weave between and among us.)*

Such writing puts both exteriority and interiority into play. At stake in this book is the depth of anthropology's commitment to the world beyond itself, as well as its willingness to court a dissolution of itself in pursuit of the unknown.

Writing is hazardous, a practice of submission and surrender, engaging always with something larger and more unsettling than the being of the writer or ethnographer. "In truth it is the world that has the edge and calls the final shot," writes Michael Jackson.[4] With this acknowledgment comes a way of tapping into the radical potential of worldly energies, potentials domesticated all too often, potentials that the writing here seeks instead to restore and intensify. Critical scholarship still trades too much in defensive irony and detachment. With this volume and its experiments, we pursue writing that is captivated, vulnerable, and implicated, writing

nurtured in pain and fear, writing that courts joy and seeks knowledge in the uncertainty and excess of attachment, writing that puts its authors, its readers, even itself, at risk.

Craft

Echoes of costume parties and the blood-red mountains in the distance—or the pet cemetery somewhere on these grounds—are not the only presences from the past to reckon with in this adobe bungalow. The ghosts of seminars past gaze down from framed photographs on every wall: some ancestors venerated still, others long since forgotten. We joke uneasily about how to make our peace with these presences. Genuflect? Ignore? Position ourselves in relation to them, as readers of an introduction such as this one might expect? Or simply watch and wait until the passage of time causes them to mutate and become protean, even monstrous, beyond their own and our wildest imaginings? Children too have their place as witnesses among the gods—creators, lawbreakers, and monstrous offspring themselves. Aren't we ethnographers always like children at the door, playing with its size, weight, and sound, the rush of wind as it slams? Invariably, fingers get caught. The child screams, is reprimanded, but soon enough, stealthily and crafty still, drifts back to the door.

Thirty years ago, in the same bungalow, another group of ten gathered to discuss the making of ethnographic texts, producing a volume—*Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*—that remains one of the most influential works of anthropological scholarship to this day. Contributors to that seminal work had much to say about the rhetorical construction of anthropological texts and their embeddedness within "larger contexts of systematic power inequality, world-systems constraints, and institutional formations that could only partly be accounted for by a focus on textual production."[5] But with hindsight, the moment in the 1980s that gave rise to *Writing Culture*—a culmination of the "linguistic turn" pervasive in the humanities and social sciences—seems marked most especially by a heightened suspicion of writing. That volume had surprisingly little to say about writerly powers and affects that could upturn the political and epistemic status quo.

As a critique of the "politics of representation," *Writing Culture* positioned itself in the gap between dominant representations and what they purported to represent: a distance that underpins not only the scholarly claim to

describe and interpret the world in an accurate and authoritative manner, but also the critical method that consists in showing how particular representations are unwittingly enmeshed in various relations of power. When the force of texts is taken primarily as a vehicle of domination and mystification, however, it becomes more difficult to see what else they might do, what other effects they might produce. All too often what remains is a narrative mood of irony, pursued in a spirit of professional civility and urbanity, and anchored in a distance immune to surprise, shock, and the horror of derailment.

The feminist, antiracist, and postcolonial critiques of anthropological knowledge that provoked *Writing Culture*, nevertheless, have also incited other radical responses in the history of anthropology. Long before the manifestly experimental ventures of recent decades, there existed a heterogeneous corpus of writings marginal to the established canons of the discipline: memoirs, life histories and ethnographic novels, sometimes pseudonymously published, often the work of women or people of color, like Franz Boas's onetime students Ella Deloria and Zora Neale Hurston, neither of whom succeeded in finding positions in the academy.[6] These writings make up less a "little tradition" than a "minor literature," subsisting alongside anthropology's defining voices and textual monuments and occasionally succeeding in pulling the latter temporarily into their own orbit, as with Maya Deren's evocative and influential *Divine Horsemen*.[7]

"You take up the pen when you are told," Hurston says about writing *Their Eyes Were Watching God*—"the force from somewhere in Space which commands you to write in the first place, gives you no choice."[8] Such reflections convey a power of writing born of its own excessive and transgressive exteriority: a writing that generates worldly effects that inevitably overflow the conscious intentions of the one who writes, a writing that plunges its own writer into the midst of hazards and potencies that can never be definitively mastered. Writing can indeed be conscripted as a tool for the legitimation of power, but only because it can also exceed such appropriations. How best to nurture these unruly capacities to challenge existing orders of meaning and feeling?

This possibility, we suggest, is ultimately a matter of craft. The word *craft* may call up certain associations, such as a sense of craftiness—of cunning, skill at deception, even witchcraft. After all, idioms of wizardry and enchantment have often pervaded the archive of responses to "vivid" ethnographic writing, as though the vitality of such writing were seen to depend upon a

sleight of hand: seeming to bring something inanimate to life, or to draw upon the forces of animate objects to do something unexpected to living beings. As Vincent Crapanzano writes of George Catlin, for example, "his aim is to impress his experience of what he has *seen* so strongly, so vividly, on his readers that they cannot doubt its veracity."[9] Play with such powers often elicits a response of suspicion, most especially when they appear to play a constitutive role in the making, unmaking, and remaking of worlds. The English term *craft* derives from the Old High German *Kraft*, meaning strength or power.

But to speak of the craft of writing is also to suggest an artisanal endeavor. We might think of writing as akin to woodworking, calling attention to the rhythms of a practice, to the way that a body can come, over time, into proximity with something else being honed. Consider the kind of power that a chisel or rasp may exercise with respect to a plane of wood, trying, failing, working, trying, coming back around again. Such engagements, Tim Ingold argues, demand acknowledgment that "materials are active" rather than "dead or inert matter."[10] These are not antagonistic relations, or a straightforward matter of domination, but have everything to do with the way that the potential forces of the tool handler find ways of speaking with the potentials of that material. There is a braiding together of activity and passivity, agency and patiency, the development of a capacity to be acted upon, even as one acts, a capacity akin to what Georges Bataille, in a very different context, called "the mastery of non-mastery."[11]

> *How is the text receptive? someone asks. What array of receptors have been written into it, so that it might find future partners? Hooks are meant to change natures, to change the nature of the reader, to change the nature of the writing, to give us different eyes. That's a Nietzschean idea: nature isn't fixed, it's more likely to shift and transform into something new if it grips and connects to something else.*

Writerly craft—the practice, for example, of thinking in images, writing in images, releasing some vector of vital force through the honing of an artful turn of phrase. There are times when stating something directly, affirming something explicitly, may not be as effective as presenting a more equivocal scene or story. Montage can bring things into tension and let them spark. So can the attachments and vagaries of a narrative presence caught up in the momentum of such scenes—such implication can be

productive, bringing things that exist into new alignments, new arrangements, giving a new concreteness to objects and feelings below the threshold of perception.

All writers engage a particular face of an object, the side of it that engages, enthralls, or repels. At stake here is an "expressive" relationship between work and world, something more proximate and intimate than we are accustomed to acknowledging.[12] Our language works with the substance of the world, as the Roman poet and atomist philosopher Lucretius recognized long ago in his only surviving work, *De Rerum Natura*, identifying the letters of his own verse with the aggregating and disaggregating atoms forming the physical universe.[13] The craft of writing engages with transformative potentials already present in the environment at hand—"fragments of cloth," as James Agee put it, "bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odors, plates of food and excrement."[14]

Reality

Michael Taussig is in Medellín, Colombia—maybe in Medellín, maybe just passing through. As his taxi speeds into the pitch black of a freeway tunnel, he spots a man and woman beside the canyon walls of the tunnel entrance. She is sewing that man into a white nylon bag, the anthropologist thinks, the kind of bag in which Colombian peasants heap their potatoes and corn. He has three seconds to take in this arcane pair. He cranes his neck, writes in his notebook. Later, he adds a sentence—"I swear I saw this"—followed by a watercolor sketch.[15]

Taussig's story reminds us of a conceit essential to ethnographic writing: that of reporting faithfully and rationally on the circumstance of our encounters, of making the "incorrigible assertion," as Clifford Geertz put it, that we have truly "been there."[16] There is that familiar commitment to writing as a kind of mimesis, a practice of "stating the facts" without addition or embellishment. But there is already more to Taussig's account than just this. "It is a seeing that doubts itself," he observes—the sketch redoubles those words, but the event remains elusive.[17] What these field recordings want is less belief than a willingness to live with uncertainty: less a conquering of doubt than an acknowledgment of its necessity. An account becomes a tale.

Questions arise here concerning the fundamental task of writing in anthropology, but also the nature of the reality that we take this writing to ad-

dress. "Somewhere, somehow, real reality breaks through the scrim," Taussig writes—but what is this thing, this condition or effect that can burst beyond the fabric of the text?[18] Take "reality" as a name for the here and now, what is given to immediate and tangible experience, and our task may indeed be to report on it, to reproduce it, to document its present actualities, to try to copy down and transmit further the most essential aspects of its givenness.

But suppose instead, as the doubt that suffuses Taussig's seeing suggests, that reality is always suffused with something more, some other face, some other dimension, something intangible, evanescent, resistant to analytical decomposition. Gilles Deleuze called it the virtual, borrowing a formula from Proust: "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract."[19] Or think of the in-between spaces of the *barzakh* that Vincent Crapanzano describes in *Imaginative Horizons*, shoal after shoal of spectral horizons, in-between and looking beyond, presences one is not quite there with.[20] What would it mean to be faithful to this other face of reality: to do justice to it, to complement it, to reveal aspects of the real at the very limits of the perceptible?

This has long been the promise, largely implicit, of anthropology itself: to affirm that actual, existing circumstances are always imbued with the possibility of being otherwise—that actuality is never coincident with itself, that the real is always more than what is actually present somewhere. Ethnography is wagered on the possibility that a given reality's difference from itself—and the kind of empirical commitment this expectation demands—can be revealed most powerfully through writing. Bronislaw Malinowski penned an inkling of this promise into his Trobriand diaries:

> The sea is blue, absorbing everything, fused with the sky. At moments, the pink silhouettes of the mountains appear through the mist, like phantoms of reality in the flood of blue, like the unfinished ideas of some youthful creative force. You can just make out the shapes of the islands scattered here and there—as though headed for some unknown destination, mysterious in their isolation, beautiful with the beauty of perfection—self-sufficient.
>
> Here and there flat coral islands, like enormous rafts gliding over the smooth water. Occasionally these forms take on life, passing for a moment into the realm of [crude] reality. A pale silhouette suddenly turns into a rocky island. Gigantic trees rise right out of the sea, set on an alluvial platform.[21]

Such visions, however, would win only a tenuous and irregular place in the avowedly scientific works that followed.

The question of writing's fidelity to the real cannot be adjudicated on the basis of conventional distinctions between "documentary" and "fictional" registers. Instead, we need to approach an ethnographic mode that somehow presses—in Michel Serres's terms—closer to the turbulence preceding the emergence of an intelligible, discursively knowable world.[22] Literary writing, Serres argues, in its capacity to body forth this aspect of the world at its limits, may be no less truthful than science. In fact, insofar as such writing evokes more effectively the becoming of the world—its processual transformation, its perennial noncoincidence with itself—we might take it to be *more* faithful to the real, committed to a different kind of knowing more profound than either science or philosophy.

> *Ethnography should also work as a story, someone insists. Not like these books you can't open, you can't read, unbearable in some way, badly told or that just don't work. The problem that anthropologists face is not a lack of reality, but what to do with it. Through artifice, you can get closer to the real.*

"Man must be a liar by nature, he must be above all an artist," Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in *The Will to Power*.[23] With art, Nietzsche had in mind ways of grappling creatively with dissonant forms of worldly potential. We pull closer here to the original sense in Latin of "fiction"—*fingere*, to form, mold, shape—and, indeed, fiction too can be taken as an artifice that preserves and sustains the life of thought by perturbing its settlement into taken-for-granted truths. Think of what Bataille said of poetry: that which moves away from us, what is left of language as subjectivity passes into wordless anguish or delight—a boundary stone, a pale, beyond which remain laughter, tears, and silence.[24] By skirting this boundary, writerly knowing attests to the creative power of what is real.

The making of literary fictions has been typically conceived as an exclusively human affair. "Only a few have ventured into the depths of inanimate nature," Walter Benjamin has observed, sketching a portrait of the storyteller as someone who draws authority instead from a natural history in which death and life are inseparably conjoined as moments of a single process.[25] The reality of which the story speaks, for Benjamin, is not the reality of everyday life as humans experience it. Rather, the storyteller conveys a

reality as seen from the point of view of a life beyond: the real of rocks and inanimate things; the real of mountains and forests, of the stars in the wake of their explosive birth; the real of an ancestral humanity lost to verifiable science; the real of more contemporary others, suppressed, dispossessed, and exterminated everywhere, as were the people who lived in these mountains of what is now known as New Mexico.

Much of this reality is beyond our capacity to witness, to respond, and to acknowledge, at least through conventional forms of selfhood and sociality. There is, therefore, a visionary horizon to experimental forms of ethnographic expression: the capability to dwell for some time beyond present human consciousness, to subsist within neglected and other-than-conscious forms, to receive the world—as does a film like *Leviathan* by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel—as seen and experienced by gulls and fish, or as revealed by their dying in the nets of a fishing trawler.[26] Such work can lead us beyond a time of human thoughts and deeds alone, into the untimeliness that all of us confront with the darkening horizon beyond the reign of anthropos, this Anthropocene.[27]

Take the reality of this book too as something tangible, tactile, materially present, something like the sea, perhaps even a marine jelly, stirred by tremors and undulations, always in motion, perpetually liable to mutual transformation with its readers. Take this text as a surface of openings, channels, wormholes, ways into a reality that remains elusive and unmade. Ethnographic writing is a field of physical and embodied sensations, inextricable from the inchoate nature of experience itself. Experimental moments are those times in which reality is felt to seep beyond itself.

Responsibility

Horses were turned loose in the child's sorrow. Black and roan, cantering
through snow.
The way light fills the hand with light, November with graves, infancy with white.
White. Given lilacs, lilacs disappear. Then low voices rising in walls.
The way they withdrew from the child's body and spoke as if it were not there.
—CAROLYN FORCHÉ, "Sequestered Writing," in *Blue Hour*

Most everything here trespasses the perimeters of scholarly prose: those familiar lines between reality and fiction, representation and invention, responsibility and irreverence. Is such writing a means to an end, or an end in itself? What of the goal, the end, the purpose of ethnography? The stakes are always high, too high, in the kind of work that we do in anthropology. Ethnography is often a site of expression for politics, economics, justice, and the ethical, and rightly so. Are we retreating from heroin, colonialism, psychosis, AIDS, and dispossession into a realm of indulgence? Or might we be drawing closer to these realities in a way that only a sustained attentiveness to writing as a material practice could allow?

If writing involves risk, does it not also entail responsibility? If the possible and the impossible, the factual and the counterfactual, the present and the absent, the living and the dead all belong equally to life's reality, where does this leave our responsibility to be faithful? In what ways are we responsible, for example, to those whose lives we seek to write about? Should our writing emerge, in the first instance, out of our solidarity with our informants, as a response to the demands they place upon us? Should those demands set limits on the writerly impulses we are willing to arrogate to ourselves? Or should they be taken as an impetus to push boundaries, to explore to the fullest extent the possibilities of writing differently? Does responsibility reside in the acknowledgment that these questions can never be definitively answered, that they demand rather to be continuously reengaged, through the practice, say, of writing itself?

> *Someone interjects—I've written about people who live thirty miles away from here. If I were to write about them in a book that they would want to open and close immediately, I couldn't show up at the barbecue.*

We ought to distinguish among the various implications of diverse styles of expression. It is not exactly the same to say "I witnessed this" (as classic ethnographies often do) and "I could have witnessed something like this" (as a fiction writer might claim). Not being sure if you saw something and knowing that you didn't are also different from each other. Passing fiction off as fact in a court of law is perjury; passing it off as truth to your lover's demand is betrayal. Then again the lover and the court of law expect very different things when it comes to reality. And explanations that come too quickly, as they often do in the social sciences, court another kind of betrayal: injustice to the complexity of the world, an explaining away of things

and details that don't quite fit. Fidelity to the real may consist in acknowledging that it will always exceed the accounts we are able to give of it.

The multifaceted character of life leads us to deploy different forms and techniques to engage with different aspects of being. This is a pragmatist argument for turning to poetry or discursive prose, depending on the situation we are trying to cope with or do justice to. Simply writing ethnography poetically, without taking the situation at hand into account, is pointless. At stake also, however, is an ontological commitment to enacting and exploring our immanent participation in a world that inevitably surpasses us. Being faithful to reality is a matter of taking part *in* it, of allowing it to take part *in* us, rather than making a pronouncement *on* it. The salient distinction is whether a form of writing is alive or dead to the activity of the world, whether it emerges *from* or seeks to preside *over* a world that doesn't sit still. Lest we forget, fiction can be as much a dead letter as academic prose.

"Human beings can only bear so much reality," T. S. Eliot once said.[28] Literary devices, then, can be taken as "simplifying betrayals," means of coping with the great expanse of the world. Such coping can mean many things—it's not as though the "hard facts" of death and suffering should somehow stop the possibility of a creative response in its tracks. There are moments in which we demand other kinds of "truth." Think, for example, of the Chilean poet Raúl Zurita, whose poetry is an extraordinarily powerful response to the fact of missing bodies during the Pinochet dictatorship. Zurita writes, "Each one of us is more than an I, each one is a torrent of the deceased that ends in our life just as we end in our descendants. This is what's meant by a tradition and culture; that all those who have preceded us return to speak when we speak, they return to see when we see, feel when we feel. Each one of us is the resurrection of the dead and that miracle is achieved in each second of our lives."[29]

Zurita's declaration of faith in poetry's capacity to speak for the dead, or, more precisely, to speak the dead, deserves to be taken absolutely literally. Poetry speaks not only the named and individuated dead, not only the dead en masse, but also through and along with them the immense, indifferent, inhuman materiality of the universe that is the precursor and successor of all life, human or otherwise. Poetry, one might say, makes the dead matter.

This encounter with the dead often occurs in reading and writing, always wrapped up in the voices of others, in appropriations and deletions. There is both responsibility and delicacy in this task of taking up the speech

and silence of others, and then giving those elements the reach of another world. We often work with those who lack the most basic freedoms that we enjoy, those that enable our travel and our questions, lacks that demand some kind of acknowledgment or response. Our words stand as restitution for what we owe, but they also transfigure what we have seen. How do we grapple with the pain that such endeavors can also produce?

When we think of the politics of writing, we often think of the demands made by a particular moment, and the actors at work in a set of circumstances: the imperative to say something about what is happening, and to do so in response to, in dialogue with, the human protagonists of that event. The writer's relationship with the world she writes about is, no doubt, always an intersubjective matter, directly comparable to the calling or summons we feel as parents, spouses, or as members of a polis. But the writer is obliged to meet the demands of her child as well as to assist the child's passage from home into the world, where the child will have a life of its own, independent of the one who gave it life. The letting go that this necessarily involves is itself another kind of responsibility and another kind of risk.

Linger on the debts that writing carries, and you might be left with an image of aporia: the pathless path, the ship's wake that marks the sea, only to be erased so quickly by the waters that survive beyond its cut. Our writing may not always return us to the world that occasioned it, and we may not always have the last word on what everything means, how it should be seen, how it should be responded to. But such moments of indistinction, when our powers of articulation fail us, may also allow other powers to emerge. The narratives and counternarratives that we throw out into the world take part in its ceaseless remaking. As James Joyce reminds us in *Finnegans Wake*, a text that unfolds in a time of dreams neither present nor past but both and more besides, "the world, mind, is, was and will be writing its own wrunes for ever."[30]

Islands in the Desert

All of this is beginning to happen around a pitted wooden table in that mud-walled bungalow in New Mexico: ten anthropologists, five men and five women, variously connected by birth or ancestry to Britain, India, Canada,

Italy, New Zealand, Mexico, Peru, and the United States. There are moments of consensus. There are disagreements. Sometimes there are tears, in this dreaming of islands, the high desert caving into the floor of the sea.

> *If I could, someone says to herself, I would take a deep breath and dive down, swim north in search of cooler water. Then the one next to her bolts for a pad of paper. This text is an archipelago, he says, sketching—there are spaces or worlds of exploration, a journey from island to island. These conversations are seas in which we drift together.*

Archipelagos are chains of minor islands, dotting every map with hardly any mass to speak of, except for the things they accrete: shells, piles of washed-up debris, broken bits of fossilized animals, plastic detritus, and bits of seaweed. The archipelago as we learned it looks to a major island where the runway would be, where the colonial administration would make its home. But then it scatters into islands too tiny to be called islands, masses disappointing to the projects of a land-bound consciousness, surfacing sometimes above the tideline, falling sometimes below.

Is it any accident that anthropologists have been drawn so often to such places? Islands are spaces of both utopian imagining and banishment: think of the Trobriands, to which the Polish-born Malinowski was consigned as a suspicious alien by the British colonial authorities at the outbreak of the First World War; or the Andaman Islands as described by Radcliffe "An-archy" Brown, home to a penal colony built to house political prisoners, where inmates died in their thousands; or even Robinson Crusoe, castaway and empire builder in miniature, whom James Joyce (an Irish islander in continental exile) would identify as the prototypical figure of the British colonist.[31] Islands have long incited dreams of conquest and settlement.

Islands are imagined as bounded, walled, and self-enclosed, yet open all the same into a fluid medium of connection and displacement (*island = I-land? Eye-land? I'll and?*). "And deeper than did ever plummet sound / I'll drown my book," says Shakespeare's Prospero, both exile and colonist, consigning the words that have underwritten his power as a magician to watery oblivion, as he prepares to resume his former life far from the sea as Duke of Milan.[32] Other voyagers, meanwhile, have found ultimate refuge in the offshore depths to which islands can serve as stepping stones. In Inuit storytelling traditions, Sedna, the daughter who refuses to marry, cast overboard by her

father, takes up residence at the bottom of the sea, the island of all islands perhaps, as the spirit mistress of the marine mammals on which Inuit hunters depend for their survival.[33]

The ethnographic archipelago—a place where writing is tried, sentenced, cast away. We tend to think that things may be stranded on such islands, stuck within the boundaries of the knowable and sayable. But we tend to forget that things left here can also go wild, rising, expanding, transmogrifying, growing over and becoming unrecognizable to themselves, like the singular flora and fauna of the Galápagos. Accretions of words, soaked through and waterlogged by rain and sea, by the dead and all those who came before, clinging to the slivers of earth that remain behind from the subsidence of tectonic plates. Accretions of all those who may have come but didn't stay. They plot; they figure out a way to float off together, or to disappear altogether beneath the water's surface.

Continents, continent—temperate, moderate, and chaste. What we want is an incontinent writing, words that face up to the threat of overflowing, the danger of being overrun. There is safety in the continents of discourse, in the security of their containment. Not so the island, especially at the tail of its archipelago, incontinent witness to the coming and going of meaning, truth, politics, value. Even here, between and among these fragments of writing, our words are always flowing into each other.

> *Islands appear only in my dreams, someone says. She speaks of a beach, of walking down a flight of steps, of lingering for a moment on the stairs before descending into the sand. There was water underground, sweet water at the threshold of the seawater, but reaching it meant to cease living in this form, to abandon the world as it is, to remember the forgotten as forgotten. The bottom of the dream was like the bottom of the sea, she says. The poets of Morocco call this the* aferdu, *the place where the staircase of poetry sinks into the ground. Perhaps only myth can capture the sense of this form.*

Islands are scenes of appearance and disappearance, rising from the depths on a tide of submarine magma, only to be eroded once more by the sea. "Islands are either from before or for after humankind," writes Deleuze—they attest to both the emergence and the ultimate vanishing of the human.[34] Islands remind us that impermanence and precarity are the conditions with which all writing grapples. They are also the lived realities of so many of those that we as anthropologists write about. Tuvalu and Kiribati

face the threat of an imminent inundation. Thousands seek to pass into Europe through the islands of the Mediterranean, many to wash ashore with no prospect of passage or return. A paper boat on turbulent waters, our writing struggles to respond to lives and worlds that are at constant risk of being swept away.

Notes

1. Stark and Rayne, *El Delirio*.
2. Blanchot, *Work of Fire*, 327–28.
3. De Certeau, *Writing of History*.
4. Jackson, *Other Shore*, 173.
5. Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*, vii–viii.
6. Hurston, *Mules and Men*; Deloria, *Waterlily*. See also Cotera, *Native Speakers*.
7. The phrases "little tradition" and "minor literature" were put forward, respectively, by Robert Redfield's *Little Community*, and *Kafka* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.
8. Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*, 212–13.
9. Crapanzano, "Hermes Dilemma," 57.
10. Ingold, *Being Alive*, 16.
11. Bataille, *Accursed Share*, 209.
12. Spinoza, *Ethics*; Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*.
13. Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*.
14. Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, 13.
15. Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, 1.
16. Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 5.
17. Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, 2.
18. Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, 5.
19. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 96.
20. Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons*, 39–65.
21. Malinowski, *Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, 98.
22. Serres, *Troubadour of Knowledge*, 65.
23. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 451.
24. Bataille, *Impossible*.
25. Benjamin, "Storyteller."
26. Castaing-Taylor and Paravel, *Leviathan*.
27. See Cymene Howe and Anand Pandian, "Lexicon for an Anthropocene Yet Unseen," Theorizing the Contemporary, *Cultural Anthropology*, July 12, 2016, https://culanth.org/fieldsights/803-lexicon-for-an-anthropocene-yet-unseen.
28. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 14.
29. Zurita, *Dreams for Kurosawa*, 48.
30. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 19.
31. See Ram Kapse, "A Hundred Years of the Andamans' Cellular Jail," *Hindu* (Chennai), December 21, 2005; Joyce, "Daniel Defoe." Such adventures though don't always

turn out as expected, as in Michel Tournier's subversive retelling of the Crusoe story, in which the island itself ("Speranza") features as an animate, feminized presence, by which Crusoe and later Friday are—literally—seduced. Tournier, *Friday*.

32. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 155.
33. Laugrand and Oosten, *Sea Woman*.
34. Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, 9.