Check for updates

Article

CRITIQUE of ANTHROPOLOGY

Critique of Anthropology
2023, Vol. 43(1) 106–129
© The Author(s) 2023
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/0308275X231157544
journals.sagepub.com/home/coa

‘of evident invisibles’: Ethnography as intermediation

João Pina-Cabral
University of Lisbon, Portugal

Abstract

Evident invisibles emerge in the ethnographic encounter which change the *whence* and the *whither* of the ethnographic gesture. Long ago, Margaret Mead critiqued anthropologists for ignoring ‘the world in between’ that makes their fieldwork possible – this article takes the argument a step further, proposing that all ethnographic encounters are fundamentally ‘amidst’. Thus, it calls for a shift from *translation* to *intermediation* as the guiding trope of ethnography. Although the practice of ethnography requires the objectification of a ‘field’, *metaphysical pluralism* remains the fundamental condition of ethnographic intermediation. In light of that, the article critiques (a) the practice of describing our main methodological disposition as ‘participant observation’, arguing instead for the older term ‘intensive ethnographic research’; and (b) the implicit use of the trope of ethnography-as-translation. Ethnographic examples are taken from the author’s own fieldwork in the coastal mangroves of southern Bahia (northeast Brazil) in the late 2000s.

Keywords

Bahia, Brazil, fieldwork, ethnography, ethnos, intermediation, Margaret Mead, metaphysical pluralism, participant observation, translation

‘of evident invisibles’ is the title of one of E.E. Cummings’ earlier poems. It deals with transformation in the meeting of intentions: through the pristine forest, a faun is chasing a nymph; on coming upon an impassable river she, to avoid him, transforms herself into a bank of reeds; but, just as she is starting to metamorphose, the faun, struck by her innocence, feels ashamed and draws back; at that moment, her heart too transforms and the situation is no longer one of violence (see Rosenblitt, 2020: 63). Out of such reeds, Pan will make his pipes, and Syrinx’s musical voice will enchant humanity forever

Corresponding author:
João Pina-Cabral, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Av. Professor Aníbal de Bettencourt, 1600-189 Lisboa, Portugal.
Email: pina.cabral@ics.ulisboa.pt

(Ovide, 2019: 69). Heady romantic stuff, but nothing to do with ethnography, you may argue. Yet, there is something to learn in Cummings' suggestion that the reflexive awareness of shared sense-making gives rise to transcendental transformation, producing *evident invisibles.*

When the ethnographer moves out to spend time in new company, the gesture not only affects those who are approached, as much as it is made viable by their recognition of the ethnographer's presence. There is reflexivity (albeit of different kinds) on both sides of the encounter; the joint participation in the moment of company affects the nature of their now common world – it is there as evidence, not as an explicit act of communication. Therefore, the personal encounter that characterizes intensive ethnographic research yields transformation, both in the people who meet at the encounter, and in the joint world that the encounter affords.[1]

Following Heinz Von Foerster's suggestion, we might look at ethnography as *second-order cybernetics* – that is, if cybernetics refers to 'circular causal and feedback mechanisms', then second-order cybernetics occurs when 'the cybernetician, by entering his own domain, has to account for his or her own activity' (von Foerster, 2003 [1991]: 287, 289).[2] In interaction with worldly affordances (see Gallagher, 2020: 10–13), the ethnographer's gesture of seeking a new company, and postulating it as a 'field', gives rise to 'evident invisibles' because of the inevitability of feedback in the complexity of the process of worlding.

Thus, invisibles, in this sense, are not just what you grasp without seeing or hearing. Most particularly, they are what does not come readily labelled, and the meaning of which is produced jointly (cybernetically) in the interaction. Evident invisibles are shared, but their meaning is only to be achieved in the course of the participatory sense-making that company with other persons permits (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 2007).[3] This invisible evidence constitutes a relational 'climate',[4] which allows the ethnographer to make sense of the events that he or she encounters in the field – words, sentences, sensations, objects, situations. As in the work of the canoe carpenters I befriended in Bahia in the late 2000s (Pina-Cabral, 2012), the relation between the hand that acts (the faun) and the world that resists (nature, the nymph) turns out to be transformative of both.

In this article, I maintain that the discourse-based account of ethnography that constituted the backbone of anthropological methodology for most of the 20th century responded to a global condition where modern people were supposed to live in a Western scientific world, while everyone else saw the world otherwise. Over the years, there have been many ethnographers who have shown that this framework is problematic in practical terms (Evans-Pritchard for one; see Douglas, 1980: 31–3). Yet, the general implications of the binary cosmological partition between the West (supposedly modern and immersed in a scientifically inspired worldview) and the Rest have not left us. It is, I contend, high time for us to start working consciously against it and taking on its implications for how we conceive of the ethnographic gesture. The global condition in which we live today, where science and technology have visibly pervaded everyone's world, and where alterity no longer operates in binary manner across the supposedly incommensurable Great Divide of modernity means that we must urgently shift from the dominant trope of ethnography-as-translation between worlds to one of ethnography-as-intermediation within worlds.[5] I propose to do so by placing the focus on the ethnographer's intermediate condition.

The ethnographer amidst

Over half a century ago, Margaret Mead poignantly put a case for evident invisibles. This is how she introduced the topic by describing her relation to the beautiful Phoebe Parkinson, a Samoan-German who, at different moments of her life, was a native aristocrat, a powerful intermediary, a plantation owner, an anthropologist's wife, a degraded outcast, and finally died as a prisoner of war:[6]

> Many anthropological accounts begin – and go on – as if the anthropologist had arrived in a spaceship right in the middle of a completely isolated tribe where, without any help from an interpreter, he learned the culture of people who had preserved it untouched for thousands of years. […] the dream persists so that the monograph comes out uncontaminated by the days or weeks or even months spent *in the world in between*, where a mysterious process called 'culture contact' has a life of its own. […] all these individuals fade out of the picture, appearing at best as a set of unidentified names in the acknowledgments […]. (1960: 176, my emphasis)

Mead's was the language of the international order of her day. Today, much as we might characterize 'the world in between' in different terms, the tendency to obscure it remains with us. Anthropologists have known for a very long time by now that the ethnographic encounter is intrinsically cybernetic and that, as such, it can yield understandings that are not one-sided. Ever since Joseph Casagrande's (1960) pioneering effort at unearthing this aspect (where Mead's [1960] chapter is to be found) and, particularly since Paul Rabinow's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), there have been many attempts to grasp the complexities of the process (e.g. Sperber, 1985). It has also been argued that we must move beyond the notion of 'in between', for it hides the occurrence of intermediation: that is, the furthering of a shared ecumene in the course of the ethnographic encounter (e.g. Bowman, 1998; Pina-Cabral, 2018a).

The observer inhabits the same world as the observed, so there is no one who is outside the effects of power that structure the world within which the encounter has taken place – not even Mead's readers today. From July 1929, when they jointly decided to produce a biography of Mrs. Parkinson, Phoebe became an inseparable part of Margaret's world. As the people studied accept the ethnographer and eventually accept or reject the ethnographer's narrative of their world (for 'they' are concerned with what 'we' come to write about them), a transcendent transformation occurs, as occurred in the musical nymph's heart. I am reminded of the way the Japanese embraced *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (Benedict, 1989 [1946]) as a description of themselves in the post-war period. But, in a contrary direction, Evans-Pritchard's (1973) war games increasingly echo tragically with the present condition of South Sudan. Thus, such transformations can yield peace as much as they can yield war, but there is no denying that they are 'out there' – evident but largely invisible.

Ethnography (and all science) is foundationally dependent on the sort of transcendence that is only possible for living persons. Machines, suckling babies, crocodiles, and ghosts do not know what to do with the rich evidence stored in the library's bookshelves, in

Balinese smiles, or in the long silences of Bahian fishermen. That information only comes alive as evidence when triangulated with the world by a person who transcends their own immersion in the world. As we come to ethnography, each one of us is already a person, with an internal-arena-of-presence-and-action (Johnston, 2010). From within our presence, the world is moving 'out there', and we make sense of it, but only on condition that we have previously achieved presence – that is, it is our transcendence as persons that grants presence to the world 'out there'.

Thus, for ethnography to occur at all, the scientist has to have a self, the people she is attempting to interpret have to have selves, and the twain *ever shall* meet. In Bowman's words, 'in fieldwork … the anthropologist is forced to observe the way that he or she is infected with alterity in the course of seeking to understand it' (1998: 102). We are persons with selves and these selves are singular, but not individual – on the contrary, partibility is permanently a characteristic of persons and their selves (Pina-Cabral, 2018b).

In 1960, when she was asked by Casagrande to write about a moment of profound human encounter in the field, many years after Mrs. Parkinson's tragic death in a Japanese internment camp in 1944, Mead did not choose to write about any of the fieldwork for which she was more famous. She decided to evoke a fleeting moment of evident, if invisible, encounter between two women who, at the time, were feeling lost in their respective worlds: a young anthropologist on her way back to New York after fieldwork, undergoing a messy divorce that affected her professional career, and a widowed aristocratic plantation owner who, after a world war, finds herself being treated as a downgraded native outcast, afraid that her previous exalted existence would simply vanish 'in between'. Unlike everyone else around in New Ireland (today's Latangai in Papua New Guinea), Margaret and Phoebe shared the magic of the Samoan language and of the unforgettable experience of having been young women in Samoa (that other far away and, for them, blessed island). Mead never wrote the biography of Phoebe that she promised,[7] but she did leave us the deeply evocative memorial of the evident invisibles that moved them both. Phoebe Parkinson remains present today largely due to Margaret Mead's intermediation.

Somehow, later on, in Bali with her new husband (Gregory Bateson), Mead might not have had the same openness to the liminal spaces of transformation as she had during that moment of crisis in Phoebe Parkinson's distant plantation in New Ireland. Unni Wikan's Balinese informants explained pointedly to the Norwegian anthropologist that the ethnographers who had studied them had focused too much on words (seemingly having the Batesons and the Geertzes in mind; see Wikan, 1992). They accused them of having failed to grasp the 'resonance' of human interactions – that is, the effects of the interaction that make mutual understanding possible, and that shore up the outward sense of words.[8]

Note the musical reference in both metaphors: like Pan's musical reeds, Balinese 'resonances' shore up the meaning of words and objects through a process of triangulation that, as with sound, manifests itself reflexively, pluralizing itself in echoes, chords, and rhythms – they are 'evident invisibles'. They are what Chris Pinney (following Derrida, 1967) calls an 'excess to the present' (2005: 268).

This is the condition of a world that is worlds – a world that stubbornly remains plurally indeterminate. Indeed, there is no beginning or end to the *ethnographer's*

amidstness – ethnographers do not start from darkness, befuddlement, or silence, because all persons are always 'amidst' in the evocative Heideggerian sense of being 'thrown into the world' (Blatther, 1999: 55–6; Withy, 2011). The ethnographer always starts from a fully populated world, where they have met a multitude of plural engagements, and learned to respond to many different languages: *metaphysical pluralism* is the abiding condition (Pina-Cabral, 2017).[9]

I am defending here the idea that you can only get to meaning because you are already within meaning. Much in the same way as the notion of truth depends on knowing what an untruth is, so the doubt that prompts interpretation is a condition for ethnographic determination to occur at all – and it too demands a kind of transcendence: 'we become a metaphysician any time we decide upon in principle undecidable questions' (von Foerster, 2003 [1991]: 291). As ethnographers start from noise, they seek to bend the worlds in which they are immersed so as to encompass the worlds of the new company they have sought out in the 'field'. Thus, doubt is the seedbed of ethnography,[10] where the scientist seeks to measure this, determine that, resituate that other thing, etc., ethnographic narratives call for the establishment of *determination* (see Pina-Cabral, 2022). Measuring the world, that is, determining how aspects of the world one encounters (things at hand) have become objects in the shared participatory world of company, is how all science, and ethnography in particular, is accomplished.

Ethnographers are integrally part of the great game of science and technology that has now irremediably changed our planet. As scientific statements, ethnographic analyses are unavoidably bound by the critical apparatus of scientific writing – that is the one important way in which ethnography deviates from other kinds of creative writing. To begin with, ethnographers are obliged to objectify a 'field', that is, to produce a specifically nameable, measurable, determinate terrain (of whatever nature – whether it is Mead's Bali in the 1930s or Grohmann's [2020] British homeless today). Thus, ethnography has a schismogenic effect in that it inevitably casts a shadow over – that is, it invisibilizes – the third term of the equation, that is, the joint world where the ethnographer, the people studied, and the ethnographer's readers come to exist. My aim in this article is not to argue that we must deny or counter that schismogenic effect, as without it there would be no ethnography. I merely want to reflect on the nature of the negotiation that yields the joint world – I want to show that *ethnographic intermediation* is as much something that happens as a result of the encounter as something that retrospectively affects what went on before: that is, ethnography has a *whither* but also a *whence* (cf. Withy, 2011: 63). By focusing on it we can access the evident invisibles (the uncanny products of complexity) that the ethnographic gesture itself brings about.

In sum, the ethnographic gesture involves two conflicting drives: on the one hand, the drive to pluralize one's world by engaging in company, which is the only sure mode of validating one's writing, and on the other hand, the drive to objectify a field and propose a rational account of one's findings. The first relies on the creative use of indeterminacy, the second on the creative use of determination. This is the grounding aporia of all ethnographic aporias, since it is the spring that moves the need to interpret.

A while ago Stephen Tyler argued against that, saying: '[An ethnography] is not a record of experience at all; it is the means of experience. That experience became

experience only in the writing of the ethnography. Before that it was only a disconnected array of chance happenings.' He concludes, therefore: 'Perception has nothing to do with [ethnography]' (Tyler, 1986: 138). Contrary to this, authors who find inspiration in figures like Paul Stoller (for example, Uzwiak and Bowles, 2021) have recently been arguing for a greater attention to the sensory element of the ethnographic encounter. They claim, against Tyler, that to abandon the senses is to fail to see the very mode through which one reaches at one's ethnographic insights: 'it is through the intersubjective that meaning is generated' (Uzwiak and Bowles, 2021: 127).[11]

They are correct as far as that goes, but then they fail to critique the representationist background assumptions written into their own desire to improve on 'how ethnography can best represent human life' (Uzwiak and Bowles, 2021: 127). They are wrong there, for representation is not what the ethnographic account does – it does not 'represent' experience. It presents to its readers an analytical reduction (an objectivized abstraction) of whatever was gained through the ethnographic encounter – as far as that is concerned Tyler is right. And then again, the ethnographer's sensory experience is only part of what she did in the field. From the moment she started writing her field notes, she was attempting to capture structural effects that go on well beyond her experience – she was trying to reveal the evident invisibles in everyday encounters.

There is some truth in both positions and I want to argue in favour of an attitude that encompasses both accounts. Tyler is taking his position too far: experience *is* experience, in the sense of being embodied and holistic. Yes, but contrary to what sensorialists seem to believe, ethnography is both experience *and* writing. I am reminded of Steph Grohmann's pithy formulation, when she claims that 'as I was attempting to declare the field upon Bristol, Bristol had unmistakably decided to declare life upon me' (2020: 64).

Those who choose to forget one of the two sides of the ethnographic gesture do so at the cost of naturalizing their own intervention. Ethnographers who have carried out a lifetime of work are prone to being particularly conscious of this problem. The experience of having practised research in different places and over long periods of time changes the ethnographer's own subjectivity. Long ago, Stanley Brandes commented that his implicit point of reference when writing ethnography was no longer the place where he had been raised (that is, Manhattan), but primarily his own previous field sites (Brandes, 1992). Similarly, van Binsbergen (1991) wrote a deeply evocative article about his experience of being initiated as a *sangoma* – a religious specialist in a southern African cult of possession by ancestors. There, he argues that the anthropologist's intermediation is part of what he is reporting upon, for his own subjectivity becomes affected not only by this 'one' field experience, but by a lifetime of engagement with human alterity. An engagement which integrates both the personal field reactions experienced in a diversity of fieldsites *and* the reactions to a canon that is both evoked and evokes them. Thus, van Binsbergen goes on to argue for the double-sided nature of the ethnographic gesture:

> I refuse to deconstruct my knowledge of *sangoma*hood if, in the process, that means that I am professionally compelled to kill its powerful images on the operating table of intellectual vivisection. At the same time, it would be a waste not to ultimately subject this knowledge to the kind of systematic academic commentary I and especially many of my colleagues have

> shown ourselves capable of. Can one anthropologically discuss African religion without *condescending to reductionism*? (1991: 338, my emphasis)

His answer to this question remains ambivalent. He is not finally certain how he will come to achieve such a *tour de force*. In the meantime, he promises to try his hand at fiction as a more profound means; but would that really solve his problem? I am sure that the majority of fiction writers also experience that same sense of incompleteness, almost betrayal, as they too inevitably ‘reduce’ the holistic lived experience into written form. Perhaps there is a positivistic shadow fallacy hidden behind the expression ‘condescending to reduction’ (that, on second thought, van Binsbergen might deplore). Is the task of abstraction associated to ethnographic analysis something that needs to be apologized for (condescended to)?

Following on from Derrida’s inspiration, my suggestion is that such a ‘tight spot’ is a founding condition not only of ethnographic writing but, in a much broader sense, of all communication, all writing, and all scientific writing in particular. We have to accept that ethnographic writing is always a ‘reduction’ in a phenomenological sense. Merleau-Ponty famously argued for an ‘anthropological reduction’: ‘learning to see what is ours as alien’ (see Sato, 2014: 11). There is an irresolvably ambivalent ontological status to the notion of ethnography, and no writing (even ethnopoetics) can transmit the whole of the fieldworker’s experience, for that is an epistemological mirage.

Those who favour ‘sensory ethnography’ are correct as far as they go, but they leave out the need for objectification (the ‘writing’) without which the very initial sensory experience would not become ‘ethnographic’ in the first place. To the contrary, Stephen Tyler is putting the emphasis on the writing and playing down the fact that the immersion in the field is complete and is ontogenetic, in the sense of changing the very being of the anthropologist as person. This is so, however, only to the extent that the ethnographic engagement was ‘intensive’, that is, to the extent that the ethnographer allowed herself to participate in the form of life she is describing in a sufficiently intensive manner – that ‘life was declared upon her’, as Grohmann would put it.

Here, I mean that the ethnographic encounter can be more or less ‘intensive’ in the sense of having involved a prolonged, holistic, all-rounded engagement with a particular companionship. Ethnography is not mainly about describing persons’ actions or social situations; neither is it mainly about describing the ethnographer’s responses to those persons and situations. It is about that and more: for what is at stake in the ethnographic gesture is ultimately for the ethnographer to engage and share the public understandings of her new companions in the field. These are neither her personal ‘sensations’ nor what other people are capable of describing about their own personal experiences. As De Jaegher and Di Paolo explain:

> interactors move beyond the coordination […] of individual sense-making activities and become engaged in a joint process of sense-making. Here meaning is created and transformed through patterns of coordination and breakdowns. The phases of action and perception typically used to describe individual sense-making now acquire collective aspects and sense is created through the stabilization of patterns of joint activity. (2007: 501)

In short, there is an 'excess' in all ethnographic writing: on the one side, because the anthropologist is bringing analysis and comparison into the description; on the other side, because writing is an abstraction, an objectification both of what went on in the field and what the ethnographer was led to understand by comparing her own sensory experiences in the field with her experience of other 'fields' mediated by the ethnographic canon – however that particular ethnographer chooses to define her canon. The point being that there never is ethnography without a canon, for otherwise the very word 'ethnography' would have no meaning to start off with. That is the unavoidable wall (the tangle of evident invisibles) against which ethnographers bounce their descriptions, if you excuse the tennis ball metaphor.

Bahian intermediations

I will now attempt to describe some of the levels of intermediation that the ethnographic research I undertook in Bahia depended upon (Pina-Cabral and Silva, 2013). Of course I cannot hope to trace all the chains of intermediation (the complexities of holism would turn that into a practical impossibility), but I do hope to build an account that can be a humble companion to the stupendous tales of amidstness that Margaret Mead and her colleagues of *In the Company of Man* (Casagrande, 1960) left for us – taking recourse, of course, to the very different way they spoke in those days.

The natural history, so to speak, of my eventual presence in Bahia in the late 2000s goes back at least a decade, as it is connected with a growing fascination with Brazilian anthropology and with the collaborations and friendships I struck up with local colleagues. In mid-1996, I delivered a postgraduate module (based on my earlier fieldwork in Macau) at the Department of Anthropology of São Paulo University on the theme of marginality. I had recently published a text concerning the way in which naming practices reflected the intercultural condition of Eurasians in southern China (Pina-Cabral, 1994). As it happens, a local colleague, Aracy Lopes da Silva, had published a monograph on naming among the Akwê-Shavante that in many ways furthered and deepened David Maybury-Lewis's famous ethnography of this people (Maybury-Lewis, 1974; Silva, 1986). A journalist had found her work and had recently published a short piece on it in a national newspaper. Suddenly, she started to be hounded by people who wanted to give 'a true Indian name' to their children and who phoned the departmental office insistently. Considering Shavante modes of naming – which are mainly based on transferring valuable and largely secret names between older sponsors and young people – this was a deeply misconceived plan. Still, out of respect for their patriotic sentiments, Aracy did help two or three of them. But São Paulo has over 12 million inhabitants – soon there were simply too many callers, and the department was eventually obliged to block all such calls.

This fascinating equivoque had taken place shortly before I visited São Paulo. As it happens, Aracy and I shared a lot of common analytical interests so we decided that we would cross fields: I would come to Brazil to study naming practices in secondary schools; Aracy would go to Portugal to do the same. Tragically, however, she was to die soon after I left São Paulo of a rapidly evolving oncological condition. Eventually, in 2003, I was again invited to teach in Brazil by one of my ex-students in São Paulo, Omar

Ribeiro Thomaz – a fellow aficionado of Mozambican history. He insisted that I should carry out my part of the initial names project, suggesting that I go to Bahia. Having received a research grant from the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, I eventually found myself on sabbatical leave in late 2004 in São Salvador da Bahia – the state's capital city, a fascinating caddy of historical Euro-Afro-American interactions.

Here is where four anthropological friendships played a significant role. First, my ex-student Susana de Matos Viegas was finalizing her monograph *Terra Calada* (2008) on the Indians of Olivença (near Ilhéus, on the Bahian coast). She had been engaged by the Brazilian governmental agency FUNAI (the National Indian Foundation) to write a report on ancestral rights to land in the region. At that time, we could not have predicted how violent and prolonged would be the political struggles that would ensue from that report. They have not ceased to this day.

Second, Cecilia McCallum (2005), whom I had briefly met at the London School of Economics in the late 1980s, was now living in Salvador and carrying out research on public health. She had married a Brazilian lawyer with whom I soon struck up a particularly warm friendship. During our long stays in Bahia, my wife and I lived in a house they own in Valença, and later still, in his mother's house in a popular quarter of Salvador, the state capital.

Valença is a small town in the middle of the coastal mangrove region, 100 km south of the state capital. It turned out to be the place where I eventually decided to study how secondary school children developed a sense of the public meaning of their personal names (Pina-Cabral and Viegas, 2007). Cecilia's husband and his lawyer colleagues provided introductions to local society at various levels, from the most important landowners, to the teachers and school directors, to the local health officials, to the officials at the local court house and local registry bureau, to the fishermen, gardeners, and field hands that I eventually started befriending in the town's outskirts. My lawyer friends validated my presence, turning what could have been an almost offensive interference by an audacious foreigner into a mode of extending people's social connections in the *exterior*, as they put it – that is, places beyond local reach, whether in Salvador, in São Paulo (where I kept going to lecture), or in Europe.

Third, Ana Lúcia Pastore Schritzmeyer (2007), an anthropologist of law, who had been a colleague of Aracy, decided to come into the project with me. She wanted to see how the local courts in Valença dealt with name-changing cases and how the local registrar's offices worked at enforcing legal naming policies. My lawyer friends put us in contact with a nearby registrar's office where they received us with much kindness and curiosity. For slightly over a month, aside from interviewing the officers and attending their encounters with the public, we were granted access to their archives – a privilege indeed. The results of that research were eventually spread through the articles I wrote on naming in Bahia (e.g. Pina-Cabral, 2013, 2016).

Albeit short, this research collaboration taught me something unexpected. As a white bearded university professor, I was a distinctly uncomfortable presence for local people. Moreover, among the less literate of my interlocutors, my spoken Portuguese turned out to elicit a peculiar response: they understood everything I said, as I soon learned to adapt my speech to local Bahian modes of talking, yet I still sounded to them as if I was speaking a

foreign tongue. This was unsettling, as I could read it in their eyes. Ana Lúcia's presence during our visits to court archives in Valença and our stays at Taperoá's registry bureau, however, performed a kind of magic: at first, our interlocutors always started by responding to her rather than me, feeling safer that way. Soon enough, however, they overcame their initial surprise. As they judged me to be *simpático*, the initial fear turned into affability, and a shared mutual fascination took hold. There are now two or three adolescents going around the region of Taperoá whose names actually reflect their parents' conversation with us about name-giving practices.

At this point, I applied for a second grant together with Susana de Matos Viegas and we received it too. This time, we focused thematically on territoriality, as she was still working on land issues and my interest in names had been largely assuaged. At that time, I made a point of familiarizing myself with the more relevant markers of Bahian literature. In my youth, my own mother had introduced me to the strongly engaged social realism of Jorge Amado. His novels, and the poems of Vinícius de Moraes and Carlos Drummond de Andrade, have followed me around since the mid-1960s. In the late 2000s, as I explored the coastal mangroves of Baixo Sul (the region between Salvador and Amado's native town of Ilhéus), these authors' forceful social critique became very present in my mind. In the meantime, my colleagues in São Paulo had introduced me to one of the greatest writers of the Portuguese language, João Guimarães Rosa. His *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956) impacted me quite as much as it has impacted all Lusophone scholars who have worked on Brazil. Finally, as I dug deeper, I discovered *Viva o Povo Brasileiro*, the disturbing magical realist novel by João Ubaldo Ribeiro (1984), which traces a kind of map of the ideological origins of Bahia. The compounded analytical insights of their work, in spite of being carried out in fictional mode, amount to what Merleau-Ponty would doubtless have agreed to be an outstanding anthropological reduction.

Over a glass of wine, Araken Vaz Galvão, an erudite friend from Valença, told me that the main locale of Ribeiro's novel actually existed in the precise geographical centre of the large island of Itaparica, across the bay from Salvador. One day, my wife (Mónica Chan) and I took the ferry to the island and set out to find this place. Eventually, we came across the ruins of the church of Old Baiacu, halfway along the dirt track that leads to the present-day coastal settlement of Baiacu. The wonderful photographs that Mónica took might help to convey the numinous nature of the place (Pina-Cabral, 2012).

In the 16th century, Jesuit churches in Bahia were built with small stones and mortar, but the mortar was mixed with whale fat, of which there was a lot then, since, at that time, the bay was one of the major sites for whale reproduction on the planet. This means that the mortar is surprisingly long-lasting. Eventually, the Jesuits were expelled from Brazil at the end of the 18th century, the church was abandoned, the roof fell in, and wild fig trees started to grow over the walls. A few centuries further on, the parasitic relation was inverted; it is now the walls that survive within the upright roots of these enormous limb-like trees – it is a matter of dispute whether you are inside a forest or a church. After the end of slavery in 1888, the authorities moved the settlement to the coastal mud banks, as the former locale was swampy and prone to malaria. The old church, however, never lost its religious aura. Even though it looks abandoned, and horses and goats are often seen to wander through it and its adjoining cemetery, on closer inspection, it turns out to remain a

vital place of pilgrimage for Afro-Brazilian practitioners. For anyone who has read the novel, where the present cult is traced to a history of horrendous oppression and poignantly courageous survival, the evocativeness of the place is hard to bypass. It is a place pregnant with evident invisibles for anyone who cares to enter into it and study the graffiti on its walls, and the broken down images in its nooks and crannies (Figure 1).

The red dirt track continues towards the coast, so we decided to see where it led. As we reached the modern village – a poverty-stricken settlement of red brick and adobe houses – the tide was out. We could appreciate how wisely the settlement had been built around the tidal mudflats so that the waters of high tide regularly clean the ground and clear the mosquito ponds. Initially, setting our bare feet on that grey mud left us a little queasy. Soon, however, we discovered how hospitable and comfortable it could be.

Next to a few fishermen's huts built on short stilts, we saw an older man repairing a dugout canoe with an adze. As it happens, I have always had an irresistible fascination for maritime carpentry. Seeing Otávio with his adze expertly repairing the holes in a beautiful but well-weathered 7-metre dugout canoe, I was immediately drawn to him. Suffice to say that we struck up an easy friendship. Being an older man, locally respected as canoe master, and endowed with a quick intelligence, he experienced no reticence in responding to me. He was not a local, having come from further up the river Paraguaçú. One day, he later recounted to me, Otávio discovered that his wife had betrayed him with his lifelong friend and principal partner in the carpentry yard. That day, he left her, the house he had built, the children he had raised, and the business they shared. He boarded his canoe (*Faísca*, lit. spark) and moved down the river to this place, which was distant enough for no one to know him. For years, I kept going back to visit him with small presents of tobacco and beer, until one day he was no longer there. For whatever reason, he had upped and gone once again, no one knew where (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Church at Old Baiacu. *Source*: Photo by Mónica Chan.

Figure 2. Otávio in Faísca. *Source*: Photo by the author.

He told me that, these days, he only repaired canoes, as the *vinhático* trunks needed for making the better kind of canoe were no longer available as they were protected by environmental legislation. Every now and then, however, new canoes were being off-loaded quietly in the middle of the night from boats coming from Baixo Sul, near Valença. This pricked my curiosity. Step by step, with the help of my local sources, I finally managed to trace and befriend the merchant who transported them up north to Baiacu as well as his occasional employee, one of the region's better known *torneadores* (lit. turner, for that is what the canoe carpenters are called).

As I came to befriend them, I became interested in these men's families and in how they managed to make a living. I soon discovered, however, that if I were to move beyond the older men, whose age and reputation made them unafraid of me, I needed a female companion. My wife took the marvellous photographs that we eventually published (Pina-Cabral, 2012) and she shared my fascination for the region, but she could not

provide the intermediation that I needed, as she is Chinese and was locally taken to be one of the Japanese *colons* who abound in the region, with whom poorer people have very tense relations. Eventually, a fourth colleague, Vanda Aparecida da Silva (a Brazilian anthropologist then working in Portugal, who is now a professor at the Federal University of São Carlos) offered to come into the project with me. Together, we managed to penetrate the deeper recesses of local life in the roadside settlements scattered through the edges of the mangrove to the south of Valença (see Pina-Cabral and Silva, 2013).

My relationship with Romão, the master turner, eventually became quite close as we explored together the recesses of the mangrove, all the way to the old Franciscan monastery town of Cairú, and as we searched together for the source of the clandestine trade in *vinhático* (aka *amarelinha*, the particular kind of mimosa tree trunk that makes the best canoes) in the bandit-prone hillside towns to the interior of the main coastal road, where the last remainders of the original Atlantic forest are still to be encountered (Figure 3).

This description is meant to highlight three main aspects of ethnographic intermediation. First, the 'ethnographic field' is a complex product of our ethnographic labours, in the sense that it responds to a determination of a temporal stretch, a geographic context, a set of companions, and an aspect of social experience (where class, politics, age, etc. all become contributing factors). This production, however, is cybernetic, as it occurs jointly both prospectively and retrospectively. From the beginning, in Bahia, I had aimed at carrying out ethnographic research, but it never became truly ethnographic until I started writing it up. Had I failed to write it up, it would just be a personal experience. To turn it into ethnography, I had to revisit both the affordances provided by my personal and professional past and the 'futurity' (to use William James' neologism [1905 (1879/1882): 77]) that the moment afforded – that is, the constantly shifting 'whither' of each of our

Figure 3. Romão the turner. *Source*: Photo by Mónica Chan.

encounters. In Gallagher's words, 'my perception of your action is already formed in terms of how I might respond to your action' (2015: 454).

This intermediation did not start and finish in the field: it was not until after I got to be close friends with my Brazilian colleagues that I came to befriend Otávio, Romão, Chiquito, and their families. And indeed, it was not until Vanda and I published in São Paulo *Gente Livre* (Pina-Cabral and Silva, 2013) that we finally *produced* our 'field': that is, as we came to define it, the poorer people (*baixa renda*) of the coastal mangroves of southern Bahia in the late 2000s. Without being explicitly 'collaborative', the ethnography we wrote strongly supports the reforms that were being carried out in Brazil at the time by President Lula and whose effects on the lives of my companions in the field were so beneficial. This work continues to provide valid evidence of the destructive and inhuman nature of the policies subsequently fostered by President Bolsonaro.

The second aspect is to do with the object of research; that is, the ethno- part of the word ethnography.[12] The ethnographer's dislocation seeks a new field of human company (a newly resituated 'they'). Yet, the ethnographer interacts not just with singular persons in the field, but also with their public contexts, their habitats. In other words, she exposes herself to the *habitus* within which 'they' make sense of their world. From Ancient times, the Greek word *ethnos* (το εθνος) has carried strong exclusion/inclusion overtones, often associated with 'barbarians'. Further, in the 19th century, it came to acquire imperialist implications – both when used in folklore studies to refer to the 'people' of the nation that the urban elites both ruled and spoke for, and when used in exotic anthropology to refer to subject peoples abroad. The silent political implications that the prefix ethno- in the word ethnography evoked, therefore, naturalized a difference of condition between the supposed individuality of the ethno-*grapher* and the supposed collectiveness of her local respondents.

Instead, today, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the object of ethnography is not a previously identifiable (externally recognizable) collective entity; but a public condition, a local environment of companionship. Thus, the standard practice of referring in atomistic fashion to the company the ethnographer keeps in the field (e.g. the Nuer, the Arawêté, the Carib, the Swat Pathan, etc.) should be questioned. We must avoid silencing the dynamics of singularity/plurality, which are constitutive of and ineradicable from ethnographic research, both ethically and methodologically. Even when I, out of my relative distancing, feel that the Nuer I encounter are all equally Nuer, the Nuer I encounter will never think so (as Evans-Pritchard [1940: 3–4], in fact, corroborates).

Going deeper still: if I search thoroughly enough for the ultimate unity of a company, I will never be able to find it, for even my family is not destitute of strangeness, and even within myself I can find aspects of strangeness. All singularity rests on a complexity of collective engagements; communication precedes and produces the communicator. Thus, there is no atomistic origin. The company I kept in Bahia was fundamentally plural – what I met there were *ethne* (plural) not one *ethnos.* The atomistic assumption that each ethnography deals with 'one group' is the result of the invisibilization of the unavoidable intermediation. In order to grasp the ultimate irresolvability of entanglement (see Barad, 2007), I need to come to terms with the realization that both the persons and their *habitus* (here in the plural) that I encounter in the field are always in some way plural. The

ethnographer's objectification of 'forms of life' that are postulated as being 'different' can never be fully singular: there is no absolute groupness, as plurality is always ultimately anterior.

To conclude, *ethne* both are there for the ethnographer to observe and are the products of the ethnographer's observation. No emic/etic dichotomy can apply here, as it would imply a correlate ideal/real polarization, suggesting that the emic is somehow less true, otherwise it would also be etic. All that Gordian knot of implications needs to be drastically cut through if we are going to get rid of the contextually transposed assumptions that we have inherited from the modernist era (see Roberts and Sanz, 2018), for they turn out to be 'shadow fallacies', as Malcolm Ruel famously called them (1997: 57).

This being said, however, ethnography absolutely demands that its author determine a 'field', and that works to produce a boundary. For example, the study of 'the urban homeless' objectifies also those who are not homeless (even when the ethnographer herself shared the homeless condition; see Grohmann, 2020). How would I have written what I wrote if I was not able to tell you that it dealt with low-income folk in the coastal mangroves of Bahia in the late 2000s? Thus, ethnographers today must confront head-on the challenge of intermediation: we need to determine a field, but we cannot reach a perspective in which it will ever seem to us to be atomistic – that is, externally defined and clearly bounded.

Third and finally, the ethnographic context also determines the ethnographer. We all surely still remember Evans-Pritchard's classical account of how different it was to be an ethnographer of the deeply egalitarian Nuer versus an ethnographer of the deeply hierarchical Azande (1976 [1973]). My Brazilian companions – in Rio, São Paulo, Salvador, and Baixo Sul – were all producing me. Among other things they produced me as an author, in the sense that what I wrote about them turned out to be very different in tone and nature from what I had written about the Eurasians of Macau whom I had studied a decade earlier. It was not only the geographic context or the nature of the company that differed, but also the nature of who I was in relation to them.[13] Bahia produces its ethnographers as historically evolving persons – what better and more poignant example than the tragic and beautiful (intellectual + loving) story of Ruth Landes and Edison Carneiro (Cole, 2007; Rossi, 2015)? As I sat on a beach in Boipeba, enthralled in the reading of Carneiro's translation into Portuguese of his lover's masterpiece *A City of Women* (Landes, 1967), both of them affected me too. The personhood of the observer does not survive the participation.

Intensiveness and languages

As it happens, 'participant observation' is the principal way of referring to ethnographic practice today. This was not, however, the way those who first conceived of this methodological disposition named it. In the 1910s and 1920s, Rivers, Seligman, and Malinowski used a different expression: *the intensive method* (see Rivers, 1913). Malinowski – who first put this proposed methodology to test – never used the expression 'participant observation' at all. The first recorded use of the expression 'participant observation' is to be found in Edward C. Lindeman's functionalist manual *Social*

Discovery (1924), where it does not refer to a trained researcher but to a member of the 'community' studied who is specifically trained in order to 'observe'. In 1928, Vivien Palmer broadens its meaning but retains the two directions: 'The term "participant observer" […] includes both (a) a person who has identified himself with a group simply for the purpose of studying it; (b) a person who is really a part of the group but studies it in an objective, detached manner' (1928: 104, n1). A decade later, Lohman has already adopted the externalist fashion that focuses on the observer's participation when he claims: 'To play the role […] of a "participant observer" [one has to] select a community within the region in which to operate' (1937: 893). This is the sociocentric usage that will influence Parsons and Merton at Harvard, who are responsible for vulgarizing the term, responding to Mannheim's individualist inspiration (see Merton, 1968 [1941]: 549). Finally, only after the Second World War does the expression make its way into mainline anthropology from sociology at the hands of Parsons' students, primarily Clifford Geertz (see DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011: 9).

To my mind, the expression 'intensive method' is far preferable, since 'participant observation' is too connected to an externalist conception of the ethnographic encounter. First negatively, because 'participant observation' depends for its impact on a kind of oxymoronic appeal, which opposes participation to observation, as if the two were somehow different or incompatible. Silently, therefore, it validates the subject/object dichotomy and the emic/etic polarization, which depend upon for their meaning on the background assumptions we have inherited from Cartesian epistemology. Second positively, because 'intensity' highlights that there are other ways of doing ethnography that are no less valid for being less intensive. The intensiveness comes from the nature of the immersion in the field in terms of time, of language sharing, and of the sharing of a habitat. By moving away from the participation/observation dichotomy, we grasp better the sense of mutual transformation (metamorphosis) that the ethnographic gesture affords both to the ethnographer (as faun) and to the field (as nymph – to return to Cummings' metaphor). This point is fully corroborated by the critique that Wikan's (1992: 463) Balinese interlocutors made of an excessive focus on 'words' and a consequent lack of dependence on 'resonance'.

Furthermore, 'intensity' stresses that the ethnographer's amidstness is not solely dependent upon a one-on-one relation between individuals (participants and observers); it also involves exposure to and interaction with the public nature of the environments the ethnographer comes to share in the field. Many of the affordances the ethnographer encounters in the field result from previous acts of sense-making on the part of others. The ethnographer's field is scaffolded in structured ways that are, thus, predisposed to afford sense in particular ways – attributing greater ontological weight to some aspects over others (see Pina-Cabral, 2017: 161–5). In writing up, the ethnographer has to transform the sense she made into objectified information and that is irremediably tied up to her own conjuncture in the field – to what Merleau-Ponty called the 'anthropological reduction': 'learning to see what is ours as alien' (Sato, 2014: 11).

The relation is always one of second-order (or more) cybernetics because, in producing the field, the ethnographer engages with it as part of it. In interpreting the public aspects of her *ethne*, the ethnographer will necessarily have recourse to more holistic and

encompassing processes of interpretation than when translating the speech of any one respondent. Unlike one-on-one translation, this process of interpretation is not a two-way street but a messy crossroads – a kind of resonance, as the Balinese would call it. It always remains underdetermined, as the ethnographer will never be able to determine all of the causal links that go into making this or that social environment into a form of life. Evident invisibles will always be at work and much of what the ethnographer experienced in the field will ultimately remain outside or beyond her account of it.

At this point, therefore, we must consider the centrality given to objectified language (discourse) that has played such an important part in anthropological discussions over the past decades. Anthropologists are prone to focus on translation between languages as the basic fact of mind, then proceeding to treat 'cultures' not as 'forms of life' but as 'languages'. Yet, fundamentally, the issue is not that distinct cultures/languages are separate and different from each other (for, of course, they are). The hard question is anterior to that: it has to do with the very nature of the processes of communication that give rise to culture and to language. Translation between languages or cultures is secondary; the primary occurrence is *interpretation* – here understood as the capacity to make sense of the sense-making of others; that is, the capacity to act together with others in triangulation with the world.

Quine and Davidson agree with contemporary neurophysiologists that, from a neurological point of view, no one's synapses are equal to anyone else's: thus, there are no two identical instances of sense-making (Davidson, 2001). In short, we can only approximate the meaning of others – this applies both to persons and to collectives; both within and across 'cultures/languages'. Being capable of interpreting others (primarily humans, but also other animals) is what gives rise to language and culture, not the other way around. Intentionality and the capacity to attune one's behaviour in the world to the behaviour of other intentional beings is the fundamental feature of worlding (see Gallagher, 2020). Is anyone in doubt that, even without sharing a natural language, two persons are capable of making a lot of sense of each other's acts in the world? How would ethnography be at all possible if that were not the case? Yes, in order to engage in propositional thinking, humans do have to become persons, and that involves learning a natural language, but not any specific one. The discourse-based tendency silently facilitates the naturalization and atomization of languages (and cultures-as-languages), thus obliterating the intermediation – Mead's 'world in between'.[14]

This draws our attention to another aspect of Mead's comments: how many 'languages' are there at stake as an ethnographer moves about in the world? I place the word 'language' in scare quotes to indicate that we are prone to bypass too easily the complexity of what it might be taken to refer to. Anthropologists are prone to invisibilize the complexity of the process of communication, not only in the 'field' but in human communication in general: 'Language is a quagmire into which [the ethnographer] can sink deeply' (Wikan, 1992: 474). The centrality of the translation trope over the past decades has facilitated an assumption that monolinguism is the abiding condition of humans, which produces an imperialist schismogenetic effect, where languages (and cultures-as-languages) appear as incommensurable with each other.

Yet 'natural languages' are not a prison of thought. Ever since the First World War, monolingual English-speakers have become prone to take that as given. But others, who have lived their life-through steeped in plurilinguism, know only too well that all languages are malleable and that, in any case, no language is sufficient to fully encompass anyone's capacity to engage in worlding. For example, in colonial Mozambique where I was brought up, monolinguism was a mark of power. Poorer people in town all spoke at least three different languages. When, as an adolescent, I finally grasped this about the servants in our house, it was a kind of epiphany: they might well not know how to read and write or how to switch on a television, but they were in many ways more intellectually agile than me, for they were able to play with and between a number of what Davidson would call 'prior theories'. Soon, I too was to find out that, at a different level, I shared their condition of subalternity: my primary Portuguese was simply not enough to make a living as an academic. I had to learn French, then English, then Spanish … and, at the same time, I proceeded to forget the German and the Ronga that I had been taught as a youngster.

In light of that, I suggest that monolinguism is a mirage of power, in the sense that those who lack power never come to treat their language as a closed-in unit, with determinable and precise boundaries. The struggle for a language's 'purity' is nothing but an attempt to impose hegemony. For people in 'the world in between', like Phoebe Parkinson, the willingness to shift, mix, and move between languages is a mark of their capacity to survive subalternity, not a sign of linguistic incompetence or stupidity – as Mead so poignantly stresses in her essay. My own work on Eurasians in Macau taught me much about that (see Pina-Cabral, 2002).

There is, however, a further, more fundamental problem: no language is beyond pluralization. This is the principal lesson that the Brazilian writer Guimarães Rosa delivered to Portuguese-speakers: the pluralization of language is there from the start and is ultimately unstoppable; it is in many ways akin to the dividuality of personhood (see Machado, 1991). In Davidson's terms, all 'prior theories' are 'passing theories' – that is, 'linguistic ability is the ability to converge on a passing theory from time to time' (Davidson, 2005 [1986]: 107). This means that 'knowing a language' and 'knowing our way around in the world generally' is essentially the same kind of activity. Thus, 'we must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases' (Davidson, 2005 [1986]: 107).

In short, what the ethnographer does is *not primarily* an act of translation (Pina-Cabral, 1992; Wikan, 1992), both because indeterminacy and underdetermination are irreducible, and because of the evident invisibles promoted by the intensity of the research. What is at stake in ethnographic writing is primarily interpretation in terms of 'passing theories' and only very occasionally actual translation of words or sentences – for those words and sentences are only made significant by the evident invisibles (the resonances) that go with them.

Conclusion

Derrida commented, concerning Europe, that 'what characterises a culture is that it isn't identical with itself' (1991: 16). The flip side of this insight is that we can no longer afford

to root the ethnographic gesture in encounters with supposedly 'radical alterity', atomistically parsed into so-called 'cultures', represented by mutually incomprehensible 'languages'. The truly radical encounter with alterity lies *within* the ethnographer's own conjuncture: ethnographers intermediate because they are foundationally amidst; they are part of the world that the ethnographic gesture affords – it yields evident invisibles.

Moreover, the ethnographer's world starts in the field but does not end there, for the history of ethnography scaffolds the ethnographer's vision. Like all conventions, the canon of our discipline is a 'prior theory' that remains a 'passing theory': the whence of ethnography is a condition for the whither of ethnography and vice versa. As a gesture, ethnography bears a *telos*: it is a gambit for a future of better human understanding. The ethnographic gesture, thus, is the critical exercise of an ethos of ever-broader ecumenical embracement. If the research is intensive enough, the ethnographer encounters in the field both other persons and the public environments within which they live – their collectively shared forms of life.

Yet, ethnographers are duty bound to produce a 'field'; that is, to encompass plurality with singularization, vagueness with determination. Attempting to determine the indeterminate seems paradoxical, but only for so long as we stick to a world conceived in terms of classical physics. Once our naturalism no longer requires that we approach space, time, and matter as existing outside of life, then we come to realize that no emergence (no singularity) ever breaks itself totally free from entanglement (see Barad, 2007). This being the case, the ethnographic mystery of evident invisibility clears up and becomes a guiding light for breaking through to the transcendence that characterizes all ethnographic research.

Acknowledgements

This article is written as a follow-up to the Roundtable on 'Anthropological Perspectives: Past, Present, and Future' convened by Alexandar Boskovic at the Congress of the European Association of Social Anthropologists, Lisbon, 2020. I must thank my dear friends Stephan Palmié, Joan Bestard Camps, and Glenn Bowman for their learned debates and suggestions, which have influenced me so profoundly over the years; as well as the members of the first LabPub at the Institute of Social Sciences, Lisbon, for their invaluable comments: Francesco Vacchiano, Amanda Guerreiro, Nina Amelung, Maria Concetta Lo Bosco, Catarina Barata, and João Baptista. I warmly thank all of those who were my company in Brazil and whom I name in this article, as well as Mónica Chan, Manuel Ribeiro do Rosário, and Minnie Alice Freudenthal – partners in exploring the world.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, Project "Names and colours: Complexity of identity and personal naming in Bahia" POCI/ANT/61198/2004; and

Project "The territorial web: Personal belonging, mobility and work in contemporary Brazil" PTDC/CS-ANT/102957/2008.

ORCID iD

João Pina-Cabral https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7180-4407

Notes

1. I adopt here a position akin to that proposed by J.A. Redfield (2013) in his ethnographic reformulation of Husserl's idea of 'history of presence' (2013).
2. I thank Stephan Palmié for this reference.
3. David Howes' (2019) defence of an attention to 'participant sensation' in the context of his proposed 'multisensory anthropology', valuable as it is, remains bound within a culturalist (representationist) framework where sensation/perception and mind/culture are oppositionally placed, contrary to the conception of 'participatory sense-making' defended here. Howes' thorough and systematic misunderstanding in that article of Ingold's (2000) phenomenologically inspired critique is precisely a sign of that.
4. See Martin and Jefferson (2019) for the somewhat similar concept of 'prison climate'.
5. So far, the theme of intermediation by relation to ethnography has been studied mostly either to do with brokers and brokerage (e.g. Lindquist, 2015) or with intervention research (e.g. Murto et al., 2020). While intermediation may yield forms of 'collaboration' (namely of a broadly political nature), the notion is conceived here in a wider sense (see Boyer and Marcus, 2020).
6. Phoebe (Miti) Clothilde Parkinson (née Coe), born 1864 Samoa; died May 1944 in the Namatanai Japanese prison camp, New Ireland. See: https://www.jje.info/lostlives/people/parkinsonpc.html (accessed 4 March 2021).
7. She did compensate Mrs. Parkinson financially for her failure to publish it, at a moment when the latter was in dire need (Mead, 1960).
8. Mead's close collaborator Rhoda Métraux, in a jointly edited volume, actually defends resonance, but in a different sense: she defines 'the resonance of imagery' as the need 'to know the cultural models on which imagery is based and through this to work out how one image echoes and reinforces and counterpoints another' (Mead and Métraux, 1953: 343). Valuable as this suggestion is from a methodological point of view, it remains framed within the representationist (and textualist) background assumption that Wikan and the Balinese critiqued. In fact, Métraux warns us that she is principally concerned with 'verbal sources of imagery' (1953: 343).
9. See Bowman (1998: 94): 'the "self" [of the ethnographer] is a dynamic internalization of a series of subject positions and repertories offered it, through its development in social context, by others'.
10. I take this, in fact, to be a corollary of Davidson's (2001: 104) principle that 'one cannot have a general stock of beliefs of the sort necessary for having any beliefs at all without being subject to surprises that involve beliefs about the correctness of one's own beliefs'.
11. I am grateful to the referees of this article for their useful suggestions that promoted the following paragraphs.

12. Needless to say, this proposal here is contrary to the very spirit of Tobias Rees' book *After Ethnos* (2018), which calls for a separation between anthropology and ethnography and a further separation of anthropology from the notion of the human. Like most of the interveners in the debate that the journal *HAU* published about it in 2019 (*HAU* 9[1]: 205–12), I think that his deflationist approach is widely off the mark and does not contribute towards improving our debates. It strikes me as a classic case of cutting off one's nose to spite one's face.
13. On Lusotopy as an evident invisible, see Pina-Cabral (2014).
14. It seems worthwhile to note here that this critique of discursivism and of the 'linguistic reduction' is fully compatible with recent theories of the evolutionary origins of human propositional communication such as von Heiseler's (2020) theory of the social origin of truth, even although, there again, we find the same proneness to use the word 'language' to mean all forms of propositional communication.

References

Barad K (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Benedict R (1989 [1946]) *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Blatther WD (1999) *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bowman G (1998) Radical empiricism: Anthropological fieldwork after psychoanalysis and the *Année Sociologique*. *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* 6(2): 79–107.

Boyer D and Marcus G (eds) (2020) *Collaborative Anthropology Today*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Brandes S (1992) Sex roles and anthropological research in rural Andalusia. In: Pina-Cabral J and Campbell JK (eds) *Europe Observed*. Oxford: St Antony's/Macmillan, pp. 24–38.

Casagrande J (ed.) (1960) *In the Company of Man: Twenty Portraits of Anthropological Informants*. New York: Harper Books.

Cole S (2007) *Ruth Landes: A Life in Anthropology*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Davidson D (2001) *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Davidson D (2005 [1986]) A nice derangement of epitaphs. In: *Truth, Language, and History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 89–105.

De Jaegher H and Di Paolo E (2007) Participatory sense-making: An enactive approach to social cognition. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6(4): 485–507.

Derrida J (1967) *De la grammatologie*. Paris. Minuit.

Derrida J (1991) *L'Autre*. Paris: Minuit.

DeWalt K and DeWalt B (2011) *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Douglas M (1980) *Evans-Pritchard: His life, Work, Writings, and Ideas*. New York: Viking Press.

Evans-Pritchard EE (1940) *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Evans-Pritchard EE (1973) Operations on the Akobo and Gilla Rivers, 1940–41. *Army Quarterly* 103(4): 470–479.

Evans-Pritchard EE (1976 [1973]) Some reminiscences and reflections on fieldwork. In: *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, abridged by Gilles E. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 240–254.

Gallagher S (2015) The new hybrids: Continuing debates on social perception. *Consciousness and Cognition* 36: 452–465.

Gallagher S (2020) *Action and Interaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grohmann S (2020) *The Ethics of Space: Homelessness and Squatting in Urban England*. Chicago: HAU Books.

Guimarães Rosa J (1956) *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio.

Howes D (2019) Multisensory anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 48(2): 17–28.

Ingold T (2000) *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge

James W (1905 [1879/1882]) The Sentiment of Rationality. (Reprinted from *The Will to Believe, and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*). London: Longmans, Green and Co.

Johnston M (2010) *Surviving Death*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Landes R (1967) *A cidade das mulheres*. trans. Carneiro E. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira (Eng. edn [1994 (1947)] *A City of Women*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press).

Lindeman EC (1924) *Social Discovery: An Introduction to the Study of Functional Groups*. New York: Republic Publishing Co.

Lindquist J (2015) Brokers and brokerage, Anthropology of. *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Science*, 2nd edn, s.v. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Lohman JD (1937) The Participant Observer in Community Studies. *American Sociological Review* 2(6): 890–897.

McCallum C (2005) Racialized bodies, naturalized classes: Moving through the city of Salvador da Bahia. *American Ethnologist* 32(1): 100–117.

Machado AM (1991 [1976]) *Recado do nome: Leitura de Guimarães Rosa à luz do nome de seus personagens*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes Ed.

Martin TM and Jefferson AM (2019) Prison ethnography in Africa: Reflections on a maturing field. *Politique africaine* 155: 131–152.

Maybury-Lewis D (1974) *Akwê-Shavante Society*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Mead M (1960) Weaver of the border (New Britain). In: Casagrande J (ed.) *In the Company of Man: Twenty Portraits of Anthropological Informants*. New York: Harper Books, pp. 175–210.

Mead M and Métraux R (eds) (1953) *The Study of Culture at a Distance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Merton RK (1968 [1941]) Karl Mannheim and the sociology of knowledge. In: *Social Theory and Social Structure*, enlarged edn. New York: Free Press, pp. 543–562.

Murto P, Hyysalo S, Juntunen JK and Jalas M (2020) Capturing the micro-level of intermediation in transitions: Comparing ethnographic and interview methods. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 36: 406–417.

Ovide (2019) Les Métamorphoses*, trans. Sers O*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Palmer VM (1928) *Field Studies in Sociology: A Student's Manual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pina-Cabral J (1992) Against translation: The role of the researcher in the production of ethnographic knowledge. In: Pina-Cabral J and Campbell JK (eds) *Europe Observed*. Oxford: St Anthony/Macmillan's.

Pina-Cabral J (2007) Personal identity and ethnic ambiguity: naming practices among the Eurasians of Macao. *Social Anthropology* 2(2): 115–132.

Pina-Cabral J (2002) *Between China and Europe: Person, Culture and Emotion in Macao*. London/New York: Continuum Books/Berg (LSE Anthropology Series 74).

Pina-Cabral J (2012) *Dugout Canoes in Bahia: An Essay in Ergology, Photographs by Chan M, bilingual edn*. Lisbon: ICS, CD-Rom.

de Pina-Cabral J (2013) The core of affects: namer and named in Bahia (Brazil)', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19(1): 75–101.

Pina-Cabral J (2014) Lusotopy as ecumene'. In: Eriksen TH, Garton C and Randeria S (eds) *Anthropology Now and Next: Essays in Honor of Ulf Hannerz*. London: Berghahn, pp. 241–263.

de Pina-Cabral J (2016) Brazilian serialities: Personhood and radical embodied cognition. *Current Anthropology* 57(3): 247–260.

Pina-Cabral J (2017) *World: An Anthropological Examination*. Chicago: HAU Books.

Pina-Cabral J (2018a) Towards an ecumenical anthropology. In: Chua L and Mathur N (eds) *Who are We? Reimagining Alterity and Affinity in Anthropology*. Oxford: Berghahn, pp. 207–231.

Pina-Cabral Jd (2018b) Modes of participation. *Anthropological Theory* 18(4): 435–455.

Pina-Cabral J (2022) The debate's conjuncture: An introduction. In: *A Debate on Ethnographic Determination: Lisbon EASA 2020, debate forum in* Social Anthropology *30*. Available at: www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/saas/30/1/saas300105.xml (accessed 11 January 2023).

Pina-Cabral J and Viegas MS (eds) (2007) *Nomes: Género, etnicidade e família*. Coimbra: Almedina.

Pina-Cabral J and Silva VA de (2013) *Gente livre: Consideração e pessoa no baixo sul da Bahia*. São Paulo: Terceiro Nome.

Pinney C (2005) Things happen: Or, from which moment does that object come? In: Miller D (ed.) *Materiality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 256–272.

Rabinow P (1977) *Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Redfield JA (2013) Towards a history of presence: Husserl's intersubjectivity and Rouch's montage. *Journal of the Philosophy of History* 7: 1–31.

Rees T (2018) *After Ethnos*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ribeiro JU (1984) *Viva o povo brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira.

Rivers WHR (1913) Report on anthropological work outside America. In: Rivers WHR, Jenks AE and Morley SG, *The Present Condition and Future Needs of the Science of Anthropology*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution, pp. 1–28.

Roberts E and Sanz C (2018) Bioethnography: A how-to guide for the twenty-first century. In: Meloni M (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Biology and Society*. London: Springer Nature.

Rosenblitt JA (2020) *The Beauty of Living: E.E. Cummings in the Great War*. New York: Norton.

Rossi G (2015) *O intelectual feiticeiro: Edison Carneiro e o campo de estudos das relações raciais no Brasil*. Campinas: Ed. Unicamp.

Ruel M (1997) *Belief, Ritual and the Securing of Life: Reflexive Essays in a Bantu Religion*. London: Brill.

Sato Y (2014) The way of reduction via anthropology: Husserl and Lévy-Bruhl, Merleau-Ponty and Lévi-Strauss. *Bulletin d'analyse phénoménologique* 10(1): 1–18.

Schritzmeyer ALP (2007) Eliete ou Elias? Gildete ou Edmilson? Mamãe Edinal: Performances judiciais sobre identidades sexuais e de género.' In: Pina-Cabral J and Viegasde SM (eds) *Nomes: Género, etnicidade e família.* Coimbra/São Paulo: Almedina.

Silva AL da (1986) *Nomes e amigos: Da prática Xavante a uma reflexão sobre os Jê*. São Paulo: FFLCH_USP.

Sperber D (1985) Apparently irrational beliefs. In: *On Anthropological Knowledge: Three Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 35–64.

Tyler S (1986) Post-modern ethnography: From document of the occult to occult document. In: Clifford J and Marcus G (eds) *Writing Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 122–140.

Uzwiak BA and Bowles LR (2021) Introduction to Paul Stoller's sensory poetics. *The Senses and Society* 16(2): 127–131.

Binsbergen WV (1991) Becoming a Sangoma: Religious anthropological field-work in Francistown, Botswana. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 21: 309–344.

Viegas S de M (2008) *Terra calada: Os Tupinambá na Mata Atlântica do sul da Bahia*. Rio de Janeiro: 7 Letras.

von Foerster H (2003 [1991]) Ethics and second-order cybernetics'. In: *Understanding Understanding: Essays on Cybernetics and Cognition*. New York: Springer-Verlag, pp. 287–304.

von Heiseler TN (2020) The social origin of the concept of truth – How statements are built on disagreements. *Frontiers in Psychology* 11: 733.

Wikan U (1992) Beyond the words: The power of resonance. *American Ethnologist* 19(3): 460–482.

Withy K (2011) Situation and limitation: Making sense of Heidegger on thrownness. *European Journal of Philosophy* 22(1): 61–81.

Author Biography

João Pina-Cabral is Research Professor at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon and Emeritus Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Kent. He has published extensively on matters related to kinship and the family, personhood and personal ontogeny, ethnicity in postcolonial contexts, and ethnographic theory. He carried out intensive fieldwork in the Alto Minho (Portugal), Macau (S China), and Bahia (NE Brazil). His principal publications are *Sons of Adam, Daughters of Eve: The Peasant Worldview of the Alto Minho* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), *Between China and Europe: Person, Culture and Emotion in Macau* (London: Continuum Books, 2002), *Gente Livre: Consideração e Pessoa no Baixo Sul da Bahia* (co-author Vanda A. Silva, São Paulo: Terceiro Nome, 2013), *World: An Anthropological Examination* (Chicago: HAU Books, 2017) and *Transcolonial* (Lisbon: ICS, 2023). He has also co-edited with A.P. Lima, *Elites: Choice, Leadership, and Succession* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), with F. Pine, *On the Margins of Religion* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2008), with Christina Toren, *The Challenge of Epistemology: Anthropological Perspectives* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2011), and with Glenn Bowman, *After Society: Anthropological Trajectories Out of Oxford* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2020).