



Mementos, Artifacts, and Hallucinations from the Ethnographer's Tent. Ron Emoff and David Henderson, eds. New York: Routledge, 2002. 202 pp.

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This volume presents a collection of ethnographers' and natives' narratives derived from their encounters with alien cultures. Although some of the accounts are actual and some fictionalized, all are true to the ethnographic experience. The life one expects to live before entering another cultural community inevitably is not the life encountered once there. Whether entering the field for the first time or returning to the field, the ethnographer is surrounded by a plethora of bizarre meaning and experiences, much of which will never make sense. How *does* one produce plausible description and interpretation out of this state of existence? While in the field anthropologists decide every day which events and concepts they will document, and which are too insignificant or too painful to report, yet those judged not reportable remain part of the field experience. Over time the insignificant, incomprehensible, and unmentionable become salient, begging to be told.

This volume is truly enjoyable and informative for those who have been in the field in a foreign culture, those who are planning to go, and those who dream of going. I highly recommend it for neophytes headed to their first field experience at home or abroad. Some of these narratives take you right inside the ethnographer's head, exposing associations and emotions prompted by events in the field. In the first selection, Andrew Causey reacts to the rainy season in Sumatra, encountering what seem to be local spirits. He reminds himself, "This is not Texas" (p. 24). In the end, only his chief informant can help. Later in the volume, Kirin Narayan provides an introspective peek at an American ethnographer in rural India through a fictionalized account.

Amitava Kumar as a native explores his own inner thoughts on relocating from India to America. Ben Feinberg presents, in fictional form, the musings of a middle-aged Mexican father and husband attending a wedding with family and friends. Two selections, one narrated by a fictional native and one the actual anthropologist's account, explore the redoubling course of events in the field over decades of western and third world cultural interface. Laurel Kendall explores the ramifications of an informant disclosing a disturbing case of spouse abuse. As the anthropologist in a foreign culture, Kendall found all she could do was offer advice that had already been considered. The above previews do not begin to exhaust the marvel, insight, and



laughter this book provides. However, some contributions are weaker than others. In the end the reader's tastes and interests will dictate which they prefer.

While the book presents a collection of works in very different styles, editors Emoff and Henderson have done an excellent job combining these diverse species of ethnographic narrative into a meaningful and provocative volume. Their introduction, where they discuss how narrative and fictional approaches contribute to ethnography, does much to accomplish this task. They note that individuals, isolated moments of talk, and brief encounters may be turned into coherent depictions of people and their life ways. Emoff and Henderson broaden our understanding of ethnography and of culture, especially regarding culture's ontogenetic aspect. They draw attention to well-known ethnographers who inadvertently published misrepresentations of culture, and to the fleeting nature of events in the field as culture mutates over successive visits. In these instances narrative approaches help narrow and illuminate gaps of meaning that analytical categories create.

Although this volume seems intended for anthropologists, educators will also enjoy it and benefit from it. Several of the accounts take place during apprenticeships. All the narratives are about learning.

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