

Universidade Federal da Paraíba,  
Rio Tinto, Paraíba, Brazil.

JOÃO MARTINHO DE MENDONÇA

## VOICES AND SILENCES: SOME THOUGHTS REGARDING REFLEXIVITY IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMS

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the author's voice as an expression of subjectivity and reflexivity in ethnographic films. It analyzes three different ways of working with the author's voice to establish correlations between emotional, audio-visual and theoretical-methodological levels. The voice as a special kind of performance is suggested as an object for further research and practice, although the approach presented here focuses on the ways these voices could be situated in an effort to consider problems of contemporary anthropology, which have been apparent since the 1980's. Our major concern is to ask how ethnographic films can contribute to anthropological thinking, paying special attention to ethnographic experience, dialogue and subjectivity. The films of anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Jean Rouch, as well as a more recent Brazilian film-maker, Edgar Cunha, are used as an analytic basis from which the author's voice can be reevaluated. It is expected that this discussion will contribute to the critical reconsideration of already released productions as well as further projects.

**keywords**  
ethnographic  
film; reflexivity;  
subjectivity; Jean  
Rouch; Margaret  
Mead; Edgar  
Teodoro da Cunha

Há um sentido fundamental no qual a reflexividade é uma característica definidora de toda ação humana. Todos os seres humanos rotineiramente “se mantêm em contato” com as bases do que fazem como parte integrante do fazer (Giddens 1991, 43).

## INTRODUCTION

This article deals with reflexivity in anthropology through an analysis of ethnographic films<sup>1</sup>. Here, we pay particular attention to authors’ voices, using these to aid us in perceiving a specific kind of engagement in discourses that are particular to different moments of the discipline’s history and which are not necessarily pertinent to the universes of meaning of the cultures of the subjects of the films. We hope to thus illustrate the ways in which the constitution of sound in ethnographic films can be situated as one of the areas of reflexive attention of the wider discipline of anthropology.

We presume that the ethnographic film has a dubious, audio-visual and imagery-rich nature and that this permits us to situate the question of reflexivity in anthropology in a medium other than the textual. By confronting the strategies used to deal with the sounds and images captures during fieldwork (production), their re-elaboration and frequent (post-production) enhancement, we can understand the visuality and orality that are conjugated in these productions as a form of anthropological knowledge, as well as a cinematographic product destined for a particular audience.

We start from the hypothesis that one can think in terms of a performance of the voice (as well as of the camera); that anthropological work in which an agent produces and elaborates his or her own performance implies a variable relationship to the different ritual performances of the subjects who are filmed. Here, we shall concentrate more on the voice of the anthropologist, going beyond the content said voice announces, but without losing track of its relationship to moments of silence and other elements of sound and imagery.

The reflections presented below, however, do not seek to enter deeply into theories of performance, something that would demand a greater use of works by such theorists as Turner (1982, 1987), Schechner (1985; 1988) or Dawsey (2005). With regards to

---

1. I would like to thank Paula Morgado, Sylvia Caiuby Novaes and Rose Satiko Hikiji for their commentaries while I completed this article.

analyzing the voice, in particular, Zumthor's research (2007) on performance, text and orality (among others<sup>2</sup>) suggests a promising jump-off point for future investigations.

Our intention here is to sketch out an analytical exercise regarding authorial voices in three films. Basically, we seek to show that ethnographic films incorporate multiple dimensions of language and experiences. We try, for example, to perceive how emotions and feelings participate in the elaboration of meaning in the film. The notion of the "sonorous field" which we use in this endeavor is inspired by the works of Lourdou (2000) and France (2000). The idea that the documentary genre has its own "cinematographic voice" (Nichols, 2005), as well as its different "modes of representation", is also considered in the analysis presented below. Our approach to the subjectivities present in the films takes as its reference an article by David MacDougall entitled "The subjective voice of the ethnographic film" (MacDougall, 1989), as well as the reflections of Eliska Altmann (2009).

With regards to the problem of reflexivity, I would like to present the present article as a first attempt to engage with the concepts of film-maker David MacDougall (1989; 1997b; 1998). In this vein, then, let me cite Pink (2003):

(...) MacDougall (...) argues that "[a] concept of 'deep' reflexivity requires us to reveal the position of the author in the very construction of the work, whatever the external explanations may be" (MacDougall 1998, 89). This means that reflexivity, as an explanation of the motives, experience and conditions of the research is not enough. Instead, what is required is recognition of the constantly shifting position of the fieldworker as the research proceeds and as she/he experiences "differences in levels of understanding as well as the shifts of mood and rapport characteristic of fieldwork". This experience, MacDougall argues, should be embedded in the film and can reveal more about the researcher/film-maker's (shifting) perspective(s) than can simple after-the-event reflection (1998, 89), (Pink 2003, 188).

To put it bluntly, the challenge consists in looking at classic and more recent ethnographic films in order to delineate some pertinent questions about the ways and means of visual anthropology.

---

2. Oral history and literary approaches also deserve some attention and, in this context, I note *Na captura da voz: as edições da narrativa oral no Brasil* (Almeida and Queiroz, 2004).

We shall minimally attempt to clarify why “Visual anthropology is therefore emerging as a different *kind* of anthropology, not a substitute for anthropological writing” (MacDougall 2006, 268).

## THE AUTHORIAL VOICE AS A LIMIT OF OUR ANALYSIS

The three films that we shall look at here focus on rituals in Brazil (South America), Nigeria (Africa) and Bali (Indonesia). Authorial voices, inserted in the post-production processes, are present in all three of these films. Their authors and their experiences are also found, however, in other elements of the films (such as in the way the camera is handled, for example<sup>3</sup>), and this, in turn, allows us to seek out the reflexivity that we have referred to above.

Although it is important to pay attention to the more general dimensions of producing sounds and images, by focusing on the authorial voice, we can highlight the reflexive attitude these anthropologists had towards the experience of fieldwork. The fact that our three examples come from widely separate times (ranging from 1936 to 2005) implies that we must be cautious and pay attention to how anthropological thought evolved over this period. In this way, authorial voices will serve as an axis for understanding as well as limiting the extension of that which these films might suggest in terms of analysis. Other voices (explicitly or implicitly present in the films) permit us to limit the risk of conceiving of the authorial voice in absolute terms. To the contrary: we believe that this voice must be captured and analyzed within the multiplicity of voices that, to a certain extent, provide its widest horizon of possibilities.

The first two films that we will deal with are classics of visual anthropology. The authorial voices, in this case, are those of Margaret Mead (in *Trance and Dance in Bali* (1952) and Jean Rouch (in *La Chasse au Lion à L'arc / Hunting the Lion with a Bow* (1965). The third film is entitled *Ritual da Vida* (2005), by Brazilian anthropologist Edgar Teodoro da Cunha, who received his training through the Grupo de Antropologia Visual (Visual Anthropology Group – GRAVI) at the Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia da USP (The Laboratory of Sound and Imagery in Anthropology at the University of São Paulo – LISA/USP). Minimally, I hope to demonstrate the ways in which these three voices are connected to the sounds and images that appear in their films.

---

3. With the exception of Margaret Mead's production, given that it was Gregory Bateson who filmed it.

What do these authors say and, more importantly, how do they say it? To what degree do these voices echo within anthropological disciplinary discourses? Going beyond this, what do these voices (or their silences) have to say to us or make us feel? Why is the perception of these voices important for ethnographic films? How can we speak in terms of anthropologists' vocal performances in these films? How can we situate this vocal performance (if that's what it is) in light of the rituals which are the focus of the rest of the films' images and sounds? What is the importance of the different emotions and subjectivities that are expressed here? The material presented below is constructed around these questions. When different voices appear in the films' sonorous fields, we often find the anthropologists' voices among them, either recorded directly in the field or added during post-production. At these moments, the ethnographers' positions become explicitly manifest<sup>4</sup>. This is true not only in terms of content, but also in terms of these voices' expressiveness<sup>5</sup>. According to Jacques Aumont:

(...) as a phonic phenomena, the voice is characterized, above all, by its timber, which permits one to identify it; it can be modulated through intonation, by the tone and rhythm of phrases, which transforms its expression in ways that are frequently spectacular. (...) (Aumont 2003, 300).

The expression of the authorial voice cannot, however, be conceived of separately from the construction of meaning within the film through the use of sound, imagery and other voices. It is in this interweaving of interconnected meanings that the ethnographic perspective is created: not only through the ethnographer's voice, but also through all the relationships constructed in the film (between the subjects' actions, the framing, noises, other voices, visual effects, camera movements, etc.) with which this voice (and the concepts that inspire it) relates.

Remarking about poetry and its oral transmission, Paul Zumthor raises an important point which we can use here regarding the voice as a bodily presence (and performance). Both the camera and the views it creates depend upon bodily support (from the cameraman) in order to be produced. In the same way, the voices that are present in the film originate in vocal actions that presuppose

---

4. This is the case of the three films we've examined here, where the position of the author is clearly stated.

5. In a still provisional sense, I call these sonorous forms of expressivity the author's vocal performance.

a bodily presence. We can thus consider “(...) the voice not only as itself, but also (even more so) in its quality as something that emanates from a body and which represents this in sound (...)” (Zumthor, 2007, p. 17).

It is, however, within the films themselves that one hopes to find the elements that need to be clarified. The authors’ silences are often as significant as their bodily performances. Voices and silences must thus be taken together as indicators of bodily presence and of a singular and unique perspective with regards to ethnographic encounters and anthropological work.

### **TRANCE AND DANCE IN BALI<sup>6</sup>**

This film by Margaret Mead is one of seven making up the “formation of the character in different cultures” series, released at the beginning of the 1950s. In an earlier work, I sought to situate Mead’s production in the context of her diverse contributions to the uses of images in anthropology (Mendonça 2005, 115-122). For a critical examination of this film, as well as of the use of images in Mead’s Balinese research, or for a contextualization of the theories employed in this research, I suggest Jacknis (1988) and Samain (2004).

Mead’s voice is present throughout the film’s twenty two minutes. At the beginning of the film, however, two columns of text run vertically across the screen for some two minutes. These describe the film which is about to begin:

Trance occurs in Bali in many different forms. One of the most spectacular is the *Kris* dance, in which men and women turn their krisses against their breasts, without injuring themselves. One form of the *Kris* dance combines this religious practice with a Balinese dramatic theme: the conflict between the Witch and the Dragon. (...) The performance ends with ceremonies for bringing the actors out of trance.

After this synthesis of the final part of the film, the text remarks that “The play begins outside the temple, to the music of an orchestra”. Then the screen fades to black. The two following scenes are of the orchestra referred to in the text.

A cut takes us to the third scene, in which two dancers execute typical dance steps while Mead’s voice-over takes up a sort of

---

6. *Trance and dance in Bali*, 1952, 22 min.

continuity with the introductory text. She briefly introduces the dancers and then the Witch (*Rangda*). “This is the Witch (...)”, says Mead’s voice. The same witch that the earlier text referred to. Thus, we now see in greater detail, through images and the author’s commentary, the drama which was referred to in the film’s introductory text.

This structuring of the film seems to enable, on the one hand, our accompanying of a traditional Balinese narrative (the conflict between the Witch and the Dragon), as it was choreographed on two occasions (1937 and 1939) while, on the other, an analysis of the bodily expressions that occur during the dance and the trance which the dancers fall into. One can say that Mead’s voice takes up what was already discussed in the film’s introductory text, seeking to provide an analytical description of each scene or set of scenes as they occur.

This is a voice which finds and echo in Mead’s other films, as well as in her books published about Bali (which contain hundreds of photographs) (Mead and Bateson, 1942 and Mead and MacGregor 1951). Mead is interested in observing, analyzing and describing Balinese behaviors, most notably the trance phenomenon in theatrical productions and its relationship to the question of how personalities are formed from infancy on.

Gregory Bateson and another researcher, Jane Belo, produced images for this film, Belo being responsible for the slow motion images. Both the dance scenes and the bodily contortions during the trance appear in slow motion. This change in the fluency of the movements favors observation of corporal expressions (gestures and postures) in some cases. Mead’s voice says “The dance, in slow motion”, after which more than twenty seconds of general and medium range shots occur in which the author’s voice is silent.

Another part of the film then begins and, once again, we hear Mead’s voice. This pattern continues to the end of the film. Long silences (such as the twenty seconds referred to above) are rare, however, with only five in total throughout the film. Most of the time, the intervals between Mead’s verbal insertions are around ten seconds in duration.

This means that in each part of the film (a set of takes specifically dealing with one topic – the men’s *Kris* dance, for example, or the Witch dance, the Dragon, dancers in a deep trance, etc.) the author’s voice is placed over the scene in order to emphasize

the descriptive interests associated with her (and Bateson's) Balinese research as a whole. There are no scenes in which Mead's voice does not appear, presenting or detailing the material on the screen. When the author's voice falls silent, the music surges: the soundtrack was arranged by Colin McPhee. But is it perhaps the case that this music is completely unrelated to the Balinese and the ethnographic experience?

Implicit in the sonorous field that connects Mead's narrative voice and the music is a dialogue between Mead and Bateson, on the one hand, and Jane Belo and her husband Colin McPhee, on the other. Belo (an anthropologist) and McPhee (a musician) had undertaken research in Bali in 1931 and had returned in 1937, when they maintained constant contact with Mead and Bateson (Mendonça 2005, 44, 48). Jane Belo and Colin McPhee's publications (McPhee, 2000 [1944]) are referred to at the end of the film, together with the two books in which Bateson's Bali photos were published (Bateson and Mead 1942) (Mead and MacGregor 1951).

Jane Belo was responsible for several of the film's shots and she later produced a book on Balinese trance (Belo, 1960). In its preface, Mead notes that "it was due to Jane Belo's preliminary work about Balinese art, ritual and trance that made us think of going to Bali (...)." (Mead 1960). There is thus no doubt that the music that Colin McPhee<sup>7</sup> arranged for *Trance and dance in Bali* gives the film an atmosphere that distinguishes it from others in the "Character formation" series, given that the scenes of trance and dance are accompanied by Balinese-inspired music, with the typical tones of a traditional gamelan orchestra.

It is this music<sup>8</sup> that increases in volume whenever Mead's voice falls silent for longer periods. The scenes that accompany it were

---

7. Colin McPhee composed musical pieces for piano and orchestra (one of them dedicated to Margaret Mead) based on traditional Balinese music. He emphasizes, however, that these are personal compositions both in terms of their structure and the set of elements that dialogue with other musical traditions. This information is available at: < <http://www.musicsalesclassical.com/composer/work/30585> > and at: < <http://www.laphil.com/philpedia/music/balinese-ceremonial-music-colin-mcphee> >. Accessed on 5/30/2015.

8. It was not possible to obtain more precise information regarding the musical piece that was specifically arranged for Mead. However, everything indicates that several different instruments were used that, together, sound like the traditional sounds of the Balinese orchestras, as was the case in the composer's previous piece entitled *Tabuh-Tabuhan*. Available at: < [http://issuu.com/scoresondemand/docs/tabuh-tabuhan\\_30585?e=8906278/4921183#search](http://issuu.com/scoresondemand/docs/tabuh-tabuhan_30585?e=8906278/4921183#search) >. Accessed on 5/30/2015.

shot by both Bateson and Jane Belo. These are the five moments in which Mead stops speaking for longer periods: four young dancers in medium and long shots; the movements of the Witch (*Rangda*) in long shots; dancers with daggers (*Kris*) in medium and long shots in slow motion; a woman sitting, lost in a deep trance, in medium shot; and, finally, a man seated in deep trance, to whom a ritual sacrifice (a chick) is made, in medium shot and close up.

These last two scenes, in which Balinese continue in trance after the conclusion of the theatrical piece, belong to the second part of the film. This begins at fourteen minutes with (as in the first part) a fade to a short text in which the following scenes are summed up: after the conclusion of the piece, the dancers (still in a trance state) are taken to an internal area of the temple where they are awakened through the use of holy water and other techniques. In this part of the film, Colin McPhee's soundtrack is also modified, becoming slower and softer, as if to emphasize the residual effects of the trance after the theatrical piece has been concluded.

Mead's voice presents all of the following scenes, pointing out one or another gesture or posture. For example, regarding the sitting woman, Mead says something like "(...) now in a deep trance state, she remembers, with her hands, her dance". The authorial voice then falls silent and Colin McPhee's soundtrack surges. The spectator is thus pushed to note the gestures being made by the woman's arms and hands while the rest of her body remains totally prostrate.

Although Mead's commentaries sometimes sound redundant, they achieve greater meaning when they are understood in the light of the other films of the series and the books that are mentioned (not by chance) mentions at the end of the film. It is here that the analytical attitude and anthropological interpretation are revealed with all their strength. Jacknis remarks upon Mead's "Character formation" series that "(...) All the films were edited to portray a definite theoretical interpretation of the material, perhaps the first films in anthropology to do so. (...)" (Jacknis 1988,170).

The identification of the film's dramatic subjects and the brief narrative regarding the struggle between the Witch and the Dragon are thus aspects that permit the spectator to at least recognize what is happening on screen. But the main point that is emphasized by the voice over has to do with the gestures and postures of the Balinese body and its accompanying *ethos*. Silence during the gestures presupposes that words are incapable of translating

these “intangible aspects of culture” (Bateson and Mead 1942, xi), captured by the camera<sup>9</sup>.

The feminine timber of Mead’s voice, its soft rhythm, its pauses and its scientific-analytic insistence joins together with Colin McPhee’s music and the images of the Balinese in their religious-artistic performances. The entire series is edited by Joseph Bohmer in order to compose a combination of dramatic, musical and discursive elements. Bateson and Mead did not make any sound recording in their research: the on-screen images are from the 1930s and the sonorous field, in this case, has been completely added in post-production. Of the seven films in this series, *Trance and dance in Bali* is probably the most famous. But what type of attitude and emotional charge does this authorial voice express? There is a strong emotional charge in both the trance images and in the beauty of the dance moves depicted by the film. But Mead’s descriptive commentaries do not sound completely insensitive to this fact. To the contrary: they express (through subtle tonal variations) a discrete enchantment, curiosity and devotion to her fieldwork, demonstrating a search for a more sober comprehension of the scenes being presented, sometimes in slow motion. This also highlights the intent of more analytic and distanced observation.

The author’s voice thus does not identify with the subjects of the film: it assumes an explicative attitude and is clearly directed towards the academic and scientific publics of the U.S. and Europe. It is probably the voice of one who was “there” directed towards one who is “here” (in evoking of Geertz distinction “being there/being here”) in a space quite far from that where the fieldwork was conducted. It is almost as if one were watching a lecture in which ethnographic images serve to guide an analysis of the possession trance.

At the same time, it must be said that Mead’s commentaries are directly related to the scenes on the screen. In other words, they were conceived to explain each sequence of the film: they are not a text to which images were attached, in sequence. The commentaries sometimes directly point out that which is on the screen. In this manner, images do not serve to illustrate words, but rather words serve to illustrate images. Mead’s voice interacts with the film’s scenes, shifting from the position of one who attentively observes to the verbal exposition of an analysis of what has been observed.

---

9. Bodily trance is a form of possession that would later be extensively explored by Rouch’s cinematographic productions in Africa.

## THE LION HUNTERS <sup>10</sup>

This film by Jean Rouch was released in 1965 and presents scenes filmed during seven French ethnographic expeditions to Nigeria, which began in 1958. Here we see how this author's off-screen voice is quite different from that of Margaret Mead's in *Trance and Dance in Bali*. Regarding Rouch's anthropological and cinematographic work, I will briefly note the works of two essential authors Paul Stoller (Stoller 2005) and Marco Antonio Gonçalves (Gonçalves 2008). In the analysis below, however, I mainly used two interviews with Rouch himself (Rouch, 1995; 2000) as well as Philippe Lourdou's article regarding the films of Marcel Griaule (Lourdou 2000) in order to reflect upon the sound and production issues.

Two African collaborators of Rouch, Idrissa Meiga and Moussa Hamidou, are credited with the sound recording. The first sound that appears is the *boto* poison magical incantations by Gao hunters. This is followed by leonine roars while the screen presents the image of a prize the film won in Venice. Right after this, Issiaka Moussa appears in a medium shot, sitting and playing his one string instrument (the *godi*), while the initial titles roll, followed by a brief introductory text, identifying the period, the institutions involved and places where the images were recorded.

This cuts away to images showing the faces of children in close up. Rouch's voice then comes in from off-screen: "In the name of God, children listen to the story of Gawey-Gawey, Gawey-Gawey, the story of his parents, the story of his grandparents, the story of the lion hunt with a bow!". The exclamation point here seeks to convey the change of tone in the author's voice, changes which will now be constant throughout the narrative. These kind of changes lead the authorial voice to take on various shades: sometimes poetic and speculative; sometimes descriptive and didactic; sometimes dramatic and passionate. Unlike the more constant, descriptive and analytical tone Mead employ's, Rouch's voice constantly and effectively expresses emotion.

I will not relate many examples of this emotionality, other than to highlight the times when, as images of the trapped animal suffering under the fatal arrows of the hunters (who now chant the *boto* poison magical incantations) flash by on the screen, Rouch's voice overrides those of the hunters (although all the voices continue to be heard). This author's voice, taken together

---

10. *La chasse au lion à l'arc*, 1965, 77 min.

simultaneously with the hunters' vocal gestures, begins to translate and express the saga of the Gao hunters, using a stronger, declamatory and dramatic tone. The *boto* poison magical incantations refer to the whole process of the venom's manufacture, shown in detail earlier in the film. The action of the poison on the lion marks the beginning of his death rites, the highpoint of this film, conceived as a feature-length presentation.

If the author's voice is present throughout the film, pausing only briefly as it keeps up with the scenes flashing by, it can still be said that its placement in the scene bears a resemblance to the placement of Mead's voice in *Trance and Dance in Bali*. The differences between the two films are remarkable, however, in terms of the attitude expressed by Rouch's voice, which identifies with the characters in the film (the hunters). The Rouchian narrative not only gives names to the subjects, objects and scenery on the screen, but also translates the words of the subjects and allows the viewer to listen to excerpts of their conversations. The sonorous field is sometimes completely saturated by the effect of Rouch's and the hunters' overlaid voices.

The difference in tones accumulates through the eventual use of ever more poetic forms: "(...) the country where this story takes place is called *Gandy Kan Ga Moru Ga Moru* (...), the lost land. In order to travel to this land, one must cross the *Issa Berit*, the great river of the Niger. (...) The mountains of the moon, mountains of crystal (...)". Rouch's voice also offers up quite didactic descriptions, set over close-ups cut with medium and long shots, of the processes of fabrication of poison, arrows, traps and etc. This is where the ethnographic perspective appears with the greatest emphasis in Rouch's voice, which takes on a slightly more distanced tone.

Two silences in the author's narrative can be described. These also demonstrate yet another difference between Rouch's film and Mead's *Trance and Dance in Bali*. Here, the silences come after the hunters set the lion traps and also before the lioness attacks the *Peul* cowhand. In the first case, the silence marks an attitude of identification with the subjects in the screen, effectively maintaining silence in order not to negatively affect the hunt. In the second case, the silence creates a moment of suspense, which is finally broken by Rouch's voice, explaining the situation: a cowhand came too close to the lioness and was attacked and, during the panic which followed, the camera was turned off but sound recording continued.

While Mead's silences are preceded by commentaries that introduce the following scenes, Rouch's seek to evoke in the spectator the silences and emotions of the ethnographic experience itself. Expositive silence which invites the spectator to observe and contemplate, on the one hand; participatory silence, which seeks to plunge the spectator into the ethnographic experience of lion hunting on the other.

On the other hand, Rouch's film is not directly conceived to combine with or compliment other films or books. It is a single production, self-contained and independent. Its predominantly narrative structure attempts to condense several moments captured through seven ethnographic expeditions over an equal number of years in the same story. Aside from the authorial voice, there are no sounds other than those recorded on the premises: ambient sounds and the sounds of voices and animals.

It's also worth noting that Rouch made use of a simple special effect – a straight cut in the same scene – in order to express the result of the hunter's invisibility magic. What we see, then, is the hunter literally disappearing into the scene, becoming invisible. This effect highlights the ethnographer's complicity with hunters. It is quite unlike the slow motion effects in Mead's film, which express a distant and scientific approach as a refinement of the observer's position. In this sense, we can also see how the off camera voice in both films express completely different, if not entirely opposite, attitudes towards the ethnographic experience. Rouch's voice closes the film, speaking over a medium shot of the same children with which the film begins:

Children, listen! This is the story of Gawey-Gawey, the story of hunting the lion with a bow, the story that Wangari once told, (...) the story of Tahirou Koro, chief of the hunters, chief of the *Boto* poison, the story of Yeya, his younger brother, who sings the poems of the *Boto* poison (...). This story, children, is one you will never live, because when you are big, you will never hunt with the bow. Thus it ends: the story of Gawey-Gawey is over."

The author's voice, in this case, addresses the new generations of Nigerians, the children who might someday see and hear the story of the Gao hunters. The explicit casting of the story towards this public expresses the intention of a shared anthropology. We know that Rouch's collaborators are Africans. Some, like Damouré Zika, also participated in his other films. Thus, Rouch's

initial and final voice-overs are ideally directed towards Nigerian children. While hunting culture (its beliefs and all the techniques involved) seems doomed to disappear, the author puts his camera at the service of memory, dedicating the stories to the new generations yet to come.

But it is also clear that the final version of the film was initially directed towards an European public, not by chance being shown at the 26<sup>th</sup> International Exhibition of Documentary Films at the Venice festival of 1965. As masterful as the ethnographic and performative qualities are of the narrative of *Hunting the Lion with the Bow* are and however great Rouch's sympathy with the hunters, the film is not without a Europeanized voice and gaze with regards to African hunting customs, which are supposed to be dying out, as the final words of Rouch in the film suggest. These will no longer be practiced in the future – a future implicitly understood as belonging to a European-born modernity.

Rouch's final voice-over therefore dramatizes the colonial underpinnings of the anthropological project: here, the author tries to register what soon will be eliminated by the modernizing voracity of industrial societies. This is what allows us to clearly see the echo of Rouch's narrative within the anthropological discussions of the times.

This “salvage ethnography”, the idea of “recording the culture before it disappears”, has been present in anthropology at least since the first ethnographic undertakings of Boas and Malinowski. The same idea still appears in a conference by Mead, published in 1975, in a book organized by Hockings (Hockings 1975): a visual record of the vanishing customs around the world (Mead 1975).

Up until this point, we have considered films made between 1936-1939 and between 1958-1965. Now, however, we will jump directly to the third millennium in order to better formulate the problems that we have outlined above with regard to authorial voices.

## **RITUAL OF LIFE**

Bororo funeral rituals have been the subject of films for quite some time now, beginning with a film made by Major Reis of the Rondon Commission in 1917. Even the Rede Globo Television Network has filmed these rituals in Brazil, presenting them on their Sunday night news and entertainment show, *Fantástico*.

The current vitality of the Bororo funeral rights is quite strong, although there is always the risk they could disappear<sup>11</sup>.

In any case, Bororo societies have been visited by anthropologists throughout the 20th century and it is in this context that *Ritual da Vida* (*Ritual of Life*) was made. The relationship between a Bororo group and the team of film-makers was described by anthropologist Sylvia Caiuby Novaes in the seventh chapter of her book *Jogo de espelhos* (*Play of Mirrors*, Novaes 1993), wherein she reflected upon the funeral rite realized by the Bororo for a Salesian priest murdered in Meruri village. Other of her works can be consulted in order to gain more anthropological insights into the rites (Novaes 1981; 1998)<sup>12</sup>. One of the film's merits perhaps resides in the fact that it does not simply deal with the funeral rites, as we shall see below.

“Reality is not found in the leaving nor in the arriving: it appears before our eyes in the middle of the journey.” This text taken from João Guimarães Rosa's book *Grande Sertão: Veredas* appears on the screen as Brazilian anthropologist Edgar Teodoro da Cunha's 2005 film begins.

We hear the sound of water. Images then flash by on the screen, fast and blurred. Then comes images of running water in close-up. In one plan, we see the reflection of the sun's light and, in an audible and visual effect, we shift to another plan, showing running water, this time without reflected light (suggesting dawn after the first sunbeams). A buzzing sound makes itself heard and we cut to scenes of a ceremony in a village courtyard. Here, we can see the source of the buzzing, which flows in and around the murmuring voices of the people participating in the ceremony:

(...) The sound we hear is the sound of a bull-roarer, a ritual object named the Aije, which is also the name of a supernatural monster who presides over the final moments of the funeral. The first view of the Aije marks boys' initiation, which is the next scene of the movie. In fact, the sound of the bull-roarer is the “voice” of the Aije, a being who inhabits the mud of the riverbanks and, for Bororo, this initial scene can be read as directly referring to this being in its broadest sense in both the Bororo cosmology and the funeral ritual. (Ferraz, Cunha, Hikiji 2006, 296)

---

11. And it is effectively one of the subjects problematized in *Fantástico's* report.

12. Sylvia Caiuby Novaes is also responsible for the orientation of the author's doctoral project, regarding the film *Ritual da Vida*: “Imagens do contato: representações da alteridade e os Bororo do Mato Grosso” (Cunha 2005).

Two children are sitting after having passed through the ceremony. They are presented in a long shot and they are the first human voices identifiable in the film<sup>13</sup>. They comment on what they have just experienced. One of the boys observes that at one point he nearly fell down. We are then treated to another moving camera effect (with blurred images) and the voices and ceremonial sounds fall silent while in another scene, everyday images of a Bororo yard appear, together with a subtitle that reads “Tadari-mana village / MT”. A woman attempts to start a fire; another wields an ax. A small child plays on the ground. Together with these scenes we hear ambient sounds and, finally, the author’s voice enters in from off screen:

“Once, I heard a story that talked about the Bororo’s condition in the world, which talked about the way they think of life and death (...)”. The story relates how a stone and a bamboo sought to care for the Bororo, the first by offering immortality and the second by rebirth through children (bamboo shoots). We see scenes of Bororo performing handwork, braiding straw and we then see that this is being used to renew the roof of a house. At this point, the author’s voice falls silent. A fade marks the passage to another location, “Rondonópolis / MT”, also presented in a subtitle. We then see many long shots of the city, with Bororo engaging in urban tasks: shopping, going to the barber, the bank, etc.

We hear a song on the radio. A Bororo makes a comment and the music swells in volume for a moment and then decreases. Above this, the author’s voice enters once again: “This has been a long day and the night also promises to be long. As I write, I hear the sound coming from the *Baito* (...)”. The author’s voice continues, telling us how that Friday was. Friday is the day the FUNAI truck takes the Bororo to the city. Eduardo (Bororo) attended a meeting and then had his hair cut (the hair cut scenes that had already appeared a little while before). The off-screen voice also says that shopping was done (we see general shot people climbing aboard a truck): “(...) rice, sugar, noodles, oil, sausage, mate, coffee”.

At that point, another effect marks the passage to the next scene: a moving truck, viewed from behind, shot from the truck bed. The author’s voice falls silent, giving way to sounds from the ceremony

---

13. The possible Bororo identification of the Zunidor sound as the voice of “Aije” was pointed out to me by Rose Satiko Hikiji, to whom I am grateful for calling my attention to this dimension of the supernatural voice, given that its peculiarities allows one to widen the possible argumentation traced out here regarding the notion of the “voice”.

“the sound that comes from the *Baito*” (the central building of the village where Bororo ceremonies take place), but the images show us the Bororo returning to the village in the FUNAI truck.

After a while, the ceremonial sounds fall silent and the author’s voice begins once again, now without other sounds, talking about the Bororo’s arrival in the village and the moment when they receive the news of the death of Antenor’s daughter (who had been in the hospital) and how her body was brought to the village by car. The images shot from the back of the truck are followed by nocturnal images of small fires and of the moon. The author’s voice talks about how all the televisions and radios are silent and notes the crying and ceremonial chants which “(...) run throughout the night and continue the next day.” There the author’s voice then falls silent for a long time, while we see several scenes of weeping and ceremonial songs.

There are four other moments when the author’s voice is inserted in the film, well spaced out. One of these talks about the rain that fell (together with the scenes of the first burial). Another offers up some brief theoretical reflections (following several ceremonial and/or quotidian scenes and after two voice insertions, also well separated, of the Bororo Eduardo Kogue and Jose Carlos Eku-reu). A third insertion tries to interpret the final moments of the Bororo funeral that lasted nearly three months (“... between the first and last burials, Bororo society is remade and transformed”). The fourth and final voice over is taken from the same Guimarães Rosa book quoted from at the beginning of the film:

I pass through things and in the middle of crossing I do not see, I was just entertaining the idea of exits and arrivals. We want to cross the river swimming and to pass through, but on the other side there’s a point that’s a lot lower, very different from what we first believed. To live or is not dangerous.

In general, then, the seven author’s voice insertions throughout the film (with a total duration of thirty minutes) do not seek to take part of or explain each scene shown, as was the case of the story of hunting the lion or the film about Balinese trance and dance. The silences of the authorial voice are, however, far more long lasting than in either of the two other films that we analyze here.

The origin of the authorial voice in the film is revealed in the second insertion, which reports that “as I write, I hear the sound coming from the *Baito*”. The majority of the comments are appar-



ently extracted from the anthropologist's fieldwork diary and inserted over the scenes during the film's post-production. This also explains the subtle variation in tonalities in the author's voice, which becomes slightly more grave when it narrates the arrival in the village and the news of the death of Antenor's daughter.

The authorial voice seems to therefore assume a markedly reflective attitude with regards to the scenes, as well as with regards to the author's own ethnographic experiences. This attitude is reinforced by the long silences through successive scenes. The various parts of the movie are distinguished through the sound and visual effects used (splits, fades, blurs, slow motion, etc.).

The Bororo funeral, witnessed during ethnographic research, is not linearly portrayed in the film. The scene of the two boys sitting together after the ceremony, presented early on in the film, is taken up again at its end, which suggests the idea of memory and flashback, given that the images and sounds of the initial rituals are followed by scenes from that Friday in Rondonópolis, before the arrival of Antenor's daughter's corpse in the village. The different moments presenting scenes of daily life and ceremonies, along with the author's sparsely distributed voice (perhaps taken from different field diary fragments?) favor the perception of the complexity of fieldwork, as well as highlighting the inter-subjective condition of that experience.

At the same time, the film seems perhaps to be trying to pass along the feeling of something that is immortalized (Bororo society?) between the arrival of the body and the departure of its bones. Here, perhaps, is the reason for the choice of the quote from Guimarães Rosa (and the reference to the voice of Riobaldo) regarding the middle of the crossing, when things are present although still unseen, given that ideas about arrival and departure insistently occupy the author's thoughts. This is also the reason why the Bororo funeral can also become a "Ritual of Life", when society is "remade and transformed" and thus revitalized.

The steady tone of the authorial voice here does not express the same analytical and purposeful attitude of Mead's voice, nor can it express the passionate and enthusiastic attitudes of Rouch's voice. Introspective, quite sober and perhaps a little sad at times, Cunha's voice evokes a personal reflection; a process of discovery. If Mead's film gives one the impression of a lecture and Rouch's sometimes has the feeling of effectively accompanying the ethnographic experience, *Ritual of Life's* tone presents an act

of introspection<sup>14</sup>, as if consciousness or memory of the ethnographer's experience could be opened up to the viewer.

Would the ideal viewer of this film therefore preferably be situated in academia, among other anthropologists? The reflections and abstractions set out by the authorial voice in the narrative of the events shown demonstrate a degree of complexity. But if we consider that the songs, cries and other ceremonial sounds heard in the film are a strong presence, with their beauty and intense emotional charge, the author's voice appears to be limited to short inserts followed by long silences. It seems to seek to share the author's work and experience with the Bororo themselves – with Eduardo and the Tadarimana community, the people who listened to the anthropologist and who welcomed him to their village.

## **VOICES, REFLEXIVITY AND FIELDWORK**

To what extent, finally, do the films presented here reveal the conditions of the field work that created them? In the case of Mead's film, her post-produced voice deals with the space of representation and the appearance and behavior of the people portrayed on the screen. But her film does not talk about conditions of fieldwork. Mead's comments allow us to understand what her anthropological outlook sees in the scenes shown. They do not provide other elements showing the nature of the ethnographic experience, but these may be obtained, on the other hand, through the images themselves or through other, external, sources. It is known, for example, that questions about Balinese trances were discussed by the authors not only with academics, but also with the Balinese themselves during a series of film sessions held during the field research itself (Jacknis 1988).

In Jean Rouch's film, however, the author's voice sometimes references the ethnographic experience itself, such as in the initial scenes where the anthropologist, in a vehicle, drives out to the distant region where the hunters are on the savanna, sometimes traveling off-road. Or later, when he mentions that he received a telegram (shown on camera) which led him to return to the region for a new hunt. The ambient sounds (noises, voices and music) that

---

14. The relationship between images, ethnographic experience and field diaries has been an object of our earlier work: Samain and Mendonça (2000) and Mendonça (2001). Ever since the publication of Malinowski's diaries in 1967, the subjective and personal side of ethnographic work has been a constant topic of discussion.

are absent from Mead's and Bateson's work<sup>15</sup> are certainly other means of accessing the sensations and experiences of field work<sup>16</sup>.

Rouch's post-production choice of maintaining a participative camera and an active voice, however, pushes the spectator's interest to focus primarily on the hunt, closely following the hunters. This persistent (visual and sound) concentration upon the hunt overwhelms the occasional and subtle reflexive elements in the film. The authorial voice is very clear about what it wants to talk about and that is the story of hunting the lion with a bow<sup>17</sup>.

In *Ritual of Life* something very different happens. The signs which point out the ethnographic experience are clear and many, both in terms of what the post-production authorial voice says and what the film's scenes show. The passage of the days and nights in the village, the day trip to the city, the fasting, the author's retiring to write in their diary, the manner in which one of the Bororo speaks to the anthropologist who is behind the camera, the car which makes the runs between the city and the village, the moments of waiting between the stages of the rituals, etc. The film is thus not simply a documentary of a funeral rite: it also shows the ethnographic experience in which the funeral rite is observed by the anthropologist.

## VOICES AND SUBJECTIVITIES

The theme of reflexivity in anthropological works necessarily leads to another related theme: subjectivity. One must remember that this term "subjective voice" (MacDougall, 1989) as it is used in ethnographic films does not exactly match what we have called the "authorial voice" in this article. The first notion is broader and may be able to take in several other voices and subjective experiences in the course of a given ethnographic film<sup>18</sup>.

---

15. This topic of absence or "instrumental restriction" should not have been a methodological option, according to the authors.

16. There is a moment in which the camera stops recording but the sound continues and Rouch not only relates the hunting accident, but also the trajectory of filming from the in-field interruption to point where filming begins again.

17. Rouch's conception of "commentary via image" (Rouch 2000, 127) for this film is of enormous importance for research methodologies for visual anthropology (*feedback* or elicitation through images).

18. One can take the direction indicated by MacDougall in the sense of deconstructing the notion of authorship itself, as Eliska Altmann seems to suggest in an article dedicated to the importance of subjectivity in ethnographic film (Altmann 2009).

MacDougall addresses the problem of subjectivity through a concept of perspective that is not necessarily identified with a voice, but is rather related to the predominant mode of expression in the film, which is, in turn, related to the way images are designed and edited. Whether it is the perspective of the first person testimony, second person implication, or third person exposition, all these communication possibilities express subjectivities (MacDougall 1989, 101-102).

Maybe we can see an emphasis here: 1) in the first person perspective (testimony) of *Ritual of Life*, punctuated by Edgar Cunha's observations; 2) in the implication perspective<sup>19</sup> in *The Lion Hunters*, with Jean Rouch's narrative, identifying with the vision of the hunters (and the camera functioning in a manner similar to the hunters' bows and eyes) in a way that captivates your audience; 3) the third person perspective (exposition) in *Trance and Dance in Bali*, where Mead seeks to speak to her audience about the behavior of third parties, e.g. the entranced Balinese.

These reflections about the "subjective voice" makes me think about that which theorist Bill Nichols calls the "documentary voice"<sup>20</sup>:

(...) When a documentary defends a cause or presents a position, it does so through "voice" (...) As every voice that speaks, the documentary voice has its own style or "nature", which acts as a signature or fingerprint. It attests to the individuality of the filmmaker or director, or sometimes, the decision-making power of a sponsoring or directing organization (...) (Nichols 2005, 116- 135)

Nichols also proposes six "documentary modes"<sup>21</sup> which serve, in an act of didactic compression, to cover the different tendencies or "voices" that are present in documentary tradition.

---

19. A sharper analysis would perhaps show that a film such as *The Lion Hunters* was able to combine different perspectives, including first person testimony. *Ritual da Vida* also demands a more complete analysis in this sense. Only Mead's film seems to fit with a certain degree of ease, into the category of exposition.

20. In 2012 in Bahia Bill Nichols presented the *Seminário Internacional "Ouvir o documentário" (International Seminar: "Listening to Documentary")*, for which we prepared a communication entitled "Pesquisa, captação e tratamento de vozes no documentário 'Passagem e permanência'".

21. Poetic, expository, observacional, participatory, reflexive, performatic.

Our films thus predominantly belong to the following modes: the expository (Mead), where we “(...)follow the advice of the commentary and see the images as the proof or demonstration of what is said (...)” (Nichols 2005, 144); the participatory (Rouch), where “(...) the historical world provides the meeting point for the processes of negotiation between the film maker and his subjects (...)”; and the reflexive (Cunha), where “(...) the processes of negotiation between the film maker and the spectator become the focus of attention (...)”. (Nichols 2005, 162-164).

These classifications seem insufficient, given that they only tangentially touch upon our central focus. Perhaps looking at the authorial voice as post-production “commentary” in terms of how it is inserted into the “scenic plane” (Lourdou 2000, 104), would be of use here:

(...)“Scenic” is everything, in any given commentary, that is related to the *mise en scene*. We should see in this the role that the commentator plays in the presentation itself (is the author commentator, a simple spokesperson, speaker, writer...?); its role in the presentation of images (is or is not the commentator the one who presents the images, being the one who realizes or operates the film? Was he also present in the images?) (...) (Lourdou 2000, 119)

Claudine de France understands the commentator as manifesting themselves in “three simultaneous, although distinct aspects”, which are frequently intermixed. These are scenario, methodological, and scenic, mentioned above (France 1989, 7). Through this route, the analysis presented here may gain greater structure and coherency.

My objective now, however, is to deal with the subjectivity of the authorial voice in terms of its belonging to the universe of anthropological discourses<sup>22</sup>. At the same time, I will endeavor to demonstrate how the values attributed to this subjectivity are modified by the discipline’s practices. Does the search for vocal performance, the emotional tonalities, and the tonal rhythms and variations help us to clarify this authorial subjectivity?

It is at least possible to ask how we can relate the emotions we perceive in the author’s voices to the ways in which fieldwork

---

22. The relationship of these films to different national traditions or “styles” of anthropology and the situating of these within a (neo)colonial critique is a topic that cannot be discussed in the present article due to space limitations.

creates a specific, historically circumscribed experience for ethnographers, marked as this experience is by theoretical-methodological conceptions?

### **AUTHORIAL VOICE: FROM WHERE DOES IT COME AND TO WHERE DOES IT GO?**

Mead saw the camera as an instrument which could be gradually incorporated into anthropological methodology (Mendonça 2012). The legitimacy of anthropology as a science was a pressing issue in the first half of the twentieth century and, although Mead's films were edited in the early 50s, the author strongly defended the discipline's scientific character, although she didn't ignore that which she considered to be bias: subjectivity. She admitted that subjectivity was part of research and did not deny the importance of it in the formation of researchers (Mead 1970). However, Mead also thought it was necessary to control subjectivity in the name of universality of the method and scientific knowledge.

Balinese dance and trance, as viewed through the camera lens (operated by Bateson and Jane Belo in the late '30s), inspired Mead, more than ten years later, to adopt a detached, analytical and expository voice, as this was seen as the best way to present scientific material in the post-war Anglo-European academic context of Mead's peers. The content of her narratives, presented as a voice over in the film, reaffirmed that which was already presented in the photographic analysis of *Balinese Character* (Bateson and Mead 1942): relations between culture and personality as presented by gestures and body postures (manifestations of the Balinese ethos).

Rouch's case is somewhat different. Aside from being originally educated as an engineer, Rouch is one generation younger in relation to Mead. He learned to use the camera himself at the same time that he studied anthropology. From 1946 on, Rouch's abilities as a film maker permitted him to experiment with several different possibilities of filming, editing and narrative. *The Lion Hunters* began filming in 1958 and this continued over the following years. By the time it got onto the cutting room table, Rouch had already established his own way of talking about anthropology through his films.

Jean-André Fieschi suggests that Rouch's films are part of the "domain of the oral story" (referring to the beginning narrative of *The Lion Hunters*) and that it is distinguished from the "undifferentiated mass of ethnological films" by its "tone, which

demonstrates a certain poetry”. Fieschi also remarks about the development of Rouch’s style of narrative in the films of the 1950s:

(...) But the voice that accompanies these images, transports them and seems to order their course as well as submit itself to them is Rouch’s. The voice of this narrator, counter, commentator, is striking as it announces, in its own warm and persuasive way, that we’ll see what we’ll see. This voice duplicates representation, rather than explains or comments. It holds back from the image but “carries” it: a narrative voice and the voice of the narrative. (Fieschi 2010, 23)

In the decades which followed Rouch’s film, anthropology itself would undergo a revolution in which the subjectivity of anthropological works would be recovered within a critical project that sought to highlight the rhetorical, political and esthetic dimensions which permeated even the most obstinately scientific and pretentiously objective projects<sup>23</sup>. Rouch’s works anticipated this movement, which sought to bring art and anthropology together. Referring to an interpretation of the film *Les Maîtres Fous* (The Mad Masters) presented in an article by MacDougall, Marco Antônio Gonçalves speaks of “emotional meaning”:

(...) This emotional meaning connects with another conception of ethnography that links, in turn, to a surrealist project that is committed to the idea of personal intuition and subjectivity and which is not within the parameters of what is considered to be strictly scientific . (...) (Gonçalves 2008, 81)

The fact that Rouch’s films anticipate the questions discussed by anthropology in the 1980s is also pointed out by Renato Sztutman (2004) and Paul Stoller (Stoller 2005, 110). But it is probable that Rouch’s preferred public was more present in European film festivals than in universities or anthropology departments. Detached from academia, Rouch’s voice perhaps had more projection in movie halls generally unfrequented by anthropologists.

When we move towards considering the voice of Edgar Cunha in *The Ritual of Life*, we find ourselves in another century. The creative options the author experimented with in editing the film (recording and linking images and sounds) are not only less costly, they have also been freed from the constraints of most of the last century,

---

23. This was the “experimental moment” represented within the U.S. American tradition by George Marcus, James Clifford, Michael Fischer, etc.

when anthropology and ethnographic film-making were discussed within narrow limits, guided by scientific notions of objectivity<sup>24</sup>.

In this new context, the realist and naturalist conceptions of ethnographic images have been put into question. Cunha was thus able to create a film with strong visual and sound effects<sup>25</sup> whose main topic was not only the Bororo funeral rite and the renovation of Bororo society, but also anthropological work in itself. This topic takes in the discussions and reflections that have been continuously renewed since the 1980s, when Brazilian anthropologists began to critically and vigorously accompany the debates occurring internationally in the field<sup>26</sup>.

In Cunha's work we see the authorial voice of anthropologists who are four or five generations far from Mead. The critiques of the critical anthropology of the 1980s, which Rouch's work anticipates, were present throughout the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Based on hermeneutics, an interpretative and critical anthropology opened space for the reflexive exercise of subjectivity and the valuing of those elements of the ethnographic experience which had before been understood as residual (diaries, photographs, etc.).

Cunha's authorial voice exercises this reflexivity when it links the text of his field diary to images shot during fieldwork. Without describing or narrating everything that appears in the images, without making incisive statements or explanations, Cunha evokes his ethnographic experience and the progressive exercise of anthropological understanding in the field. The images maintain their strength and, at different times, they are presented without any comments at all. In the most dramatic moments, for example, the authorial voice falls silent in order to mark respect for what the images show, as well as to highlight said images' irreducibility.

Cunha's use of visual and sound effects, on the other hand, emphasizes dimensions of ritual ecstasy, but also delineates the film's production itself as the expression of a subjective view, punctuated by a voice whose universe of meaning is more specifically situated in the writing (and literature) than in oral forms of expression.

---

24. Eliska Altmann's article, mentioned above (2009), points out the tension between scientific objectivity and artistic subjectivity in the history of ethnographic films.

25. Some effects seem to want to translate certain scenes in terms of representations of the subjects' inner states (in the shaman's use of the maraca, for example, or in his boidily performance).

26. See, for instance, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira and Mariza Peirano's works, among many others.

Finally, the distribution<sup>27</sup> of *The Ritual of Life* seems to have been preferentially geared towards the anthropological community, at a moment in which visual anthropology had already become institutionalized in many countries, with universities containing courses and study groups that were exclusively dedicated to this field (Ferraz and Mendonça 2014). Together with these developments, evidently, festivals and exhibitions designed to specifically showcase ethnographic films have multiplied worldwide. Today, there is a much larger context for demonstrating these works, which is something that is quite different from the times in which Mead was producing her Balinese series.

### **VOICE AND VISION: CONCLUSIVE THOUGHTS**

Almost a century passed between the moments in which subjectivity was systematically avoided in anthropology and today, when it is not only admitted, but cultivated. The role of ethnographic cinema in this process<sup>28</sup> has perhaps not yet been sufficiently acknowledged in the discipline's wider circles. Can we use considerations regarding the authorial voice, however, as a possible means of linking the themes of contemporary anthropological discussion which appear in the written literature? Can such considerations contribute to a more fertile development of ethnographic film-making and anthropology itself?

We would like to end here by providing some clues. We note that in none of the cases described above is the authorial voice alone. Even in Mead's work, which references films in which no sound was recorded, it is well known that the author discussed questions regarding trances with Bateson, as well as other researchers and the Balinese themselves. The authorial voice is thus here conceived and situated in the midst of many other voices, that are implicitly or explicitly present, in the film or before and after the ethnographic experience.

Consideration of the authorial voice, in any case, should not be done without a concept of dialogism. This point is of crucial

---

27. The distribution of the ethnographic films under consideration here should be linked to the final destiny of these authorial voices and to the different places where these voices were heard. Mead and later Rouch faced many restrictions regarding the circulation of their films in the times in which they lived. Today, however, it seems that there are more specific spaces available for the exhibition and discussion of filmed anthropological works.

28. David MacDougall (1997a; 1998) and Paul Henley (2009) offer up approaches that seem to be of great importance for the discussion of the relationship between voice, authority and subjectivity.

epistemological importance for Bakhtin, in his reflection on the humanities:

(...) Any object of knowledge (including humans) can be seen and known as a thing. But the subject as such can not be perceived and studied as a thing because, as a subject, it can not remain subject staying silent; consequently, the knowledge we have of it can only be dialogical. (...) (Bakhtin 1992, 403)

For Stephen Tyler, a postmodern ethnography should concern itself with the notion of polyphony, as opposed to the so-called “metaphor of vision.” Although the postmodern ethnographic text does not deny authorship, it is a fruit of cooperative work, a text that consists of fragments that are used to evoke, in the minds of “readers and writers”, an “emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality (...)” (Tyler 1986, 123-126). For Johannes Fabian, this means go beyond “(...) a theory of knowledge construed around a visual root metaphor (...)” (Fabian 2013, 113). For George Marcus, “(...) Ethnography has opened to the understanding of perspective as ‘voice’, just as the distinctly visual, controlling metaphor of structure has come into question. (...)” (Marcus 1991, 207).

How should we interpret such criticisms, however, when the opus under consideration is not the ethnographic text, but rather ethnographic film and audiovisual production? How can we connect a conception of filmic visuality with criticism of the “visual metaphor”? If the authors mentioned above conceive ethnography only as textualization of experience, what happens when we use their insights to consider ethnography as an audiovisual experience as well? Can we think of “perspective as voice” in ethnographic films? These are relevant questions if we want to call into question “(...) the differences in power relations that give final shape to the ways and means of representation of knowledge. (...)” (*Ibid.*)

This issue of power relations at the level of language itself and in the relational sense of the voices inserted in ethnographic films, is highlighted in the authorial voice of the ethnomusicologist-filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha in her film *Reassemblage*<sup>29</sup>. She incorporated gender perspectives in her work and seeks to advance a critical questioning of anthropological discourse. In one of her books, Minh-ha notes that “(...) speaking, writing, and discoursing, are not mere acts of communication; they are above all acts

---

29. *Reassemblage*, 1983, 40 min. In this film, a masterpiece, she criticizes the notion of “speak about” the other and their several implications in documentary.

of compulsion. (...)” (Minh-ha 1989, 52). We must save for another moment, however, a closer look at these positions in terms of thinking about the use of the voice and modes of representation of knowledge in ethnographic films.

For Claudine de France “(...) It seems that one of the most important consequences of the introduction of cinematography as a research tool has been the profound modification of the set of relationships encoded in immediate observation / deferred observation / language (...)” (France 1998, 23). This quote allows us to see that it has not only been the way one does research that has been modified with the use of the camera, but also the uses and statutes of language itself, whether oral or written. These must also be rethought in the course of anthropological work with images<sup>30</sup>.

Conceiving of the voice as a “production of meaningful sound” (Fabian 2013, 176) is perhaps one of the paths we might follow, on another occasion, to deal with the relationships between body, language and performance in audiovisual anthropological practices. We should perhaps question the implications of the filmic and vocal gestures outlined here in terms of their vocal performance on the one hand, and in terms of the disciplinary discourses in which they find an echo on the other. Issues for future research...

translation

Thaddeus Gregory

Blanchette

text received

06.06.2015



---

30. I note, for example, Etienne Samain’s suggestive article “Oralidade, Escrita, Visualidade. Meios e Modos de Construção dos Indivíduos e das Sociedades Humanas” (1994).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Almeida, Maria Inês e Sônia Queiroz. 2004. *Na captura da voz: as edições da narrativa oral no Brasil*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica.

Altmann, Eliska. 2009. Verdade, tempo e autoria: três categorias para pensar o filme etnográfico. *Revista Antropológicas*, ano 13, v. 20:57-79.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1992. *Estética da criação verbal*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.

Bateson, Gregory e Margaret Mead. 1942. *Balinese Character: a photographic analysis*. Nova York: Special Publications of New York Academy of Sciences, v. 2.

Belo, Jane. 1960. *Trance in Bali*. Nova York: Columbia University Press.

- Cunha, Edgar Teodoro da. 2005. *Imagens do contato: representações da alteridade e os Bororo do Mato Grosso*. Tese de Doutorado. Faculdade de Filosofia, Letras e Ciências Humanas, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo.
- Dawsey, John. 2005. Victor Turner e a antropologia da experiência. *Cadernos de Campo*, n. 13-14:163-176, São Paulo.
- Fabian, Johannes. 2013. *O tempo e o outro: como a antropologia estabelece seu objeto*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Ferraz, Ana Lucia Marques Camargo e João Martinho Mendonça (ed.). 2014. *Antropologia Visual: perspectivas de ensino e pesquisa*. Brasília: ABA.
- Ferraz, Ana Lucia Marques Camargo, Edgar Teodoro da Cunha e Rose Satiko Hikiji. 2006. O vídeo e o encontro etnográfico. *Cadernos de campo*, São Paulo, n. 14-15: 287-298.
- France, Claudine de. 1998. *Cinema e antropologia*. Campinas: Unicamp.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (ed.) 2000. *Do filme etnográfico à antropologia fílmica*. Campinas: Unicamp,
- Giddens, Anthony. 1991. *As conseqüências da modernidade*. São Paulo: Unesp.
- Gonçalves, Marco Antonio. 2008. *O real imaginado: etnografia, cinema e surrealismo em Jean Rouch*. Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks.
- Henley, Paul. 2009. Da negação: autoria e realização do filme etnográfico. In *Imagem-conhecimento: antropologia, cinema e outros diálogos*, ed. Andréa Barbosa, Edgar Cunha e Rose satiko Hikiji. Campinas: Papyrus.
- Hockings, Paul (ed.). 1975. *Principles of visual anthropology*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Jacknis, Ira. 1988. Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in Bali: their use of photography and film. *Cultural Anthropology*, v. 3, n. 4:160-177.
- Lourdou, Philippe. O comentário nos filmes etnográficos de Marcel Griaule. In *Do filme etnográfico à antropologia fílmica*, Ed.: Claudine France, 101-123. Campinas: Unicamp, 2000.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. 1989. *Woman, native, other. Writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- MacDougall, David. 1989. The subjective voice in ethnographic film. In \_\_\_\_\_. *Transcultural Cinema*, 93-122. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1997a. De quem é essa história? *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem*, v. 2, n. 5: 93-105, Rio de Janeiro: UERJ.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1997b. The visual in anthropology. In *Rethinking Visual Anthropology*, ed. Marcus Banks, Marcus e Murphy Howard, 276-295. Londres: University Press of New Haven.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1998. *Transcultural Cinema*. Princeton: University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2005. Novos princípios da antropologia visual. *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem*. v. 21, n. 2: 19-31, Rio de Janeiro: UERJ.

Marcus, George. 1991. Identidades passadas, presentes e emergentes: requisitos para etnografias sobre a modernidade no final do século XX ao nível mundial. *Revista de Antropologia*, n. 34:197-221, São Paulo: USP.

Mcphee, Colin. 2002. *A House in Bali*. Singapura: Periplus.

Mead, Margaret. 1960. Prefácio. In *Trance in Bali*, ed. Jane Belo. Nova York: Columbia University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1970. The art and technology of fieldwork. In ed. Raoul Naroli, Ronald Cohen, 246-265, Nova York: Natural History Press.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1975. Visual Anthropology in a discipline of words. In *A handbook of method in cultural anthropology. Principles of visual anthropology*, ed. Paul Hockings, 3-10. The Hague: Mouton.

Mendonça, João Martinho de. 2001. Fragmentos dos diários escrito e fotográfico de Cardoso de Oliveira na região dos Tikuna do Rio Alto Solimões. *Revista Digital Studium*, n. 6.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2005. *Pensando a visualidade no campo da Antropologia: reflexões e usos da imagem na obra de Margaret Mead*. Tese de Doutorado, – Universidade de Campinas, Campinas.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2012. Visual Anthropology in post-colonial worlds: what has gone wrong? *Vibrant*, v. 9, n. 2: 213-252.

Nicholls, Bill. 2005. *Introdução ao documentário*. Campinas: Papirus.

Novaes, Sylvia Caiuby. 1981. Tranças, cabaças e couros no funeral Bororo: a propósito de um processo de constituição da identidade. *Revista de Antropologia*, v. 24:25-36.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1993. *Jogo de espelhos: imagens da representação de si através dos outros*. São Paulo: Edusp.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1998. Paisagem Bororo: de terra a território. In *Além dos territórios: para um diálogo entre a etnologia indígena, os estudos rurais e os estudos urbanos*, ed. Ana Maria Niemeyer e Emília Pietrafesa Godoi. Campinas: Mercado de Letras.

- Pink, Sarah. 2005. Agendas interdisciplinares na pesquisa visual: reposicionando a antropologia visual. *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem*, n. 21, v. 2: 61-85. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ.
- Rouch, Jean. 1995. Entrevista. Jean Rouch, 54 anos sem tripé. *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem*, n. 1: 65-74, Rio de Janeiro: UERJ.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. O comentário improvisado "na imagem": entrevista com Jean Rouch. In *Do filme etnográfico à antropologia fílmica*, ed. Claudine de France, 125-129. Campinas: Unicamp.
- Samain, Etienne. 1994. Oralidade, escrita, visualidade: meios e modos de construção dos indivíduos e das sociedades humanas In *Perturbador Mundo Novo: História, Psicanálise e Sociedade Contemporânea. 1492 – 1900 – 1992*, ed. Sociedade Brasileira de Psicanálise de São Paulo, 289-301. São Paulo: Escuta.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. Balinese Character (re)visitado. Uma introdução à obra visual de Gregory Bateson e Margaret Mead. In *Os Argonautas do Mangue*, ed., André Alves, 15-72. Campinas: Unicamp/Imprensa Oficial.
- Samain, Etienne e João Martinho de Mendonça. 2000. Entre a escrita e a imagem. Diálogos com Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira. In: *Revista de Antropologia*, v. 43, n. 1: 183-236, São Paulo.
- Schechner, Richard. 1985. *Between theater and anthropology*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1988. *Performance theory*. Nova York: Routledge.
- Stoller, Paul. 2005. A respeito de Rouch: reinterpretação da cultura colonial da África Ocidental. *Cadernos de Antropologia e Imagem*, v. 21 n. 2: 97-112. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ.
- Sztutman, Renato. Jean Rouch: um antropólogo-cineasta. In *Escrituras da Imagem*, ed.: Sílvia Caiuby Novaes e al., 49-62. São Paulo: FAPESP/EDUSP.
- Turner, Victor. 1982 *From ritual to theatre: the human seriousness of play*. Nova York: PAJ Publications.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. *The anthropology of performance*. Nova York: PAJ Publications.
- Tyler, Stephen. 1986. Post-modern ethnography: from document of the occult to occult document. In *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*, ed. James Clifford e George Marcus, 122-140. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Zumthor, Paul. 2007. *Performance, recepção e leitura*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.



## FILMOGRAPHY

Bateson, Gregory e Margaret Mead. 1952. Trance and dance in Bali. Institute for Intercultural Studies, Univ. of Pennsylvânia, Estados Unidos da América. NTSC, cor, 22'; DVD.

Cunha, Teodoro da. 2005. Ritual of Life. Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia (LISA), Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil, NTSC, cor, 30'; DVD.

Minh-ha, Trinh T. 1983. Reassemblage. Estados Unidos da América. NTSC, cor, 40'; DVD.

Rouch, Jean. 1965. La chasse au lion à l'arc. Les Films de La Pléiade (CNRS/IFAN), França/Nigéria, SECAM, cor, 80'; DVD.