

CROSS-CULTURAL LITERARY DISPLAY

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摘 要

本論文乃是有關文化呈現及研究上的一些實驗，包括筆者個人經驗的自省，以及對於美國人、歐洲人等此類經驗的省思。構想系來自民族社會學中有關跨國文化間書寫及聲音的發展情形，如小說、戲劇、及民謠等。結論為每一個表現的實體都是建基於其文化淵源的深度，然而該作品的成就則取決於其作者如何把該文化素材展現給廣大的讀者或觀眾、聽眾了。

ABSTRACT

This paper is a self-reflection account of experiments in the study and presentation of culture. Literary ideas stem from the ethnographic genre of cross-cultural written and visual display in terms of novel, drama, and ode. Each format is based on "in depth" cultural understanding. In this paper, the works of Adolf Bandelier, Hilda Kuper, and Edward Twum-Akwaboak are briefly introduced.

1

His head of silver hair reflected the Aegean sun—a fixed vision strained the veins at his temples. I was standing close to him following his gesturing arm over an island and sea to the horizon. Pointing, he said, "there, do you see that place between that island and the shore? In that strait entered the Persian navy, a thousand warships to engage in battle with the Athenian fleet."

Looking out impatiently, did I "see" what he described? The man climbed the hill behind us. I went along silently until he halted. He said, catching his breath, "at this place Xerxes remained; somewhere here on his silver throne." We sat for a long while gazing over Salamis. Sir Felix Barton explained the battle until I could "see" the flat Saronic Gulf churning under the movements of triremes.

My impression seemed "real" because the presentation was convincing. My information came from a scholar steeped in the cultural history of Themistocles' Greece. Filtered through the words, I "saw" the defeat of the Persians at the entrance to Athens. What I "experienced" from that battle arrived to my senses vis-a-vis the generations of interpretation, the energy and skill of my teacher to profess a consensus of history, the spirit of the twentieth century, the altered geography and climate, the past of my sixteen years, and the emotion at the very moment of explanation. At that time, when I traveled with my teacher, I was able to grasp his words as gestures of expression: interesting and useful. But I was insecure with the so-called "facts" because I had not collected the data myself.

My interest is in cultural research, presentation, and instruction. This orientation resulted from travels and anthropological studies. As a teenager, I attended an archaeological lecture series in which illustrations were presented. Technical problems caused the images to be unclear. I thought, if a scholar is able to spend years in field research, a visual display of the results should be readable to give value and meaning for an audience. In our current mass of data, it is important to select an orientation and develop methods of illustrating the subject. In many ways, the presentation¹ is just as important as the research itself. Research for me began in Sri Lanka during 1973 under the auspices of the Experiment in International Living, South Asia Program. I conducted a study of community land tenure which transformed itself into an account of one individual cultivator of rice. It was a research metamorphosis that took place within a month's time. An *ethnography* of a community was unlikely to be achieved. So I rested with the comfort that I could interview an individual person and talk about attitudes concerning belief system, natural resources, wealth, ownership, prestige, responsibility, and social intercourse at various level. As a result I completed an account (specific and generalized with comparison). But the presentation was all too standard in the format of ethnography beginning with the latitude and longitude of the site.

As I studied South Asian culture, I felt that the study only of a specific culture confined my approach. I embarked on a wider range to include languages, and literatures of a variety of disciplines. As always the interdisciplinary approach produces interesting experiments. In 1975, I rendered a poetic history of the metropolitan expansion of Southern Asia³ relying on archaeological evidence and the ancient words of Tamil, Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhala, Malay, and Chinese encyclopedic texts from the T'ang Dynasty. The resulting work was unusual, not true history: *an ode*. I over-

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stepped the “facts” into the realm of my mind’s image. Yet, much of the material gave allusion to “reality.” For example, the *Ramayana* epic, which is a tale of the abduction of the princess Sita by the demon King Ravana, includes an overview of the islands of Southeast Asia. Since the good prince Rama sent an army to search and rescue Sita, agents journeyed the four directions and described the foreign lands. For my use of the material, I utilized the ancient account poetic styled to view Southeast Asian islands by national product, government system, environment, and cultural trait.

Only after completing that work did I really consider writing for an audience. I had learned that I would have to present cultural material in a discipline that crossed boundaries in itself. So, I chose that study of anthropology to specialize in cultural data collecting and presenting. In graduate school, L.L. Langness expressed to me a point which I have dwelt on. He said that many students of anthropology receive a Ph.D. with a knowledge of a narrow aspect of anthropology. I decided to diversify in order to research the data stemming from various cultural and theoretical areas.⁴

My anthropological field experience with the Department of Anthropology, UCLA, was a revisit to an area of in the United States. I went with the Pajarito Archaeological Research Project to northern New Mexico. I met with Native American storytellers and filmmakers to experience their craft and compare it with non-native ethnographic expression. My personal discovery came in Adolf Bandelier’s ethnographic novel *The Delight Makers* which is an example of how a turn-of-the-century researcher lived and wrote in the environment of the New Mexico northern pueblos in order to tell a story about a particular abandoned cliff dwelling and pueblo. As Bandelier lived at the site and among the people who presently inhabit the surrounding areas, he was able to feel or sense the place:

This story is the result of eight years spent in ethnographical and archaeological study among the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico. . . I was prompted to perform the work by a conviction that however scientific works may tell the truth about the Indian, they exercise always a limited influence upon the general public; and to that public, in our country as well as abroad, the Indian has remained as good as unknown (Bandelier 1890:iii).

The characters in Bandelier’s ethnographic/historic novel are composited from imaginative cliff dwelling life in the volcanic *tufa* canyon and local experience with living pueblo people in the adjoining Rio Grande Valley. The characters and the presentation of ethnographic material are convincing. But, the question arises: Does

the reader look for “facts” or conjectured literary entertainment in the presentation?

In the lower or western part of its course the Tyuonyi rushes in places through thickets and small groves, out of which rise tall pine-trees. It is very still on the banks of the brook when, on a warm June day, noon-time is just past and no breeze fans the air; not a sound is heard beyond the rippling of the water; the birds are asleep, and the noise of human activity does not reach there from the cliffs. Still, on the day of which we are not speaking, a voice arose from the thicket, calling aloud, —

“Umo, — ‘grandfather!’”⁵

“To ima satyumishe, — ‘come hither, my brother,’” another voice replied in the same dialect, adding, “See what a big fish I have caught” (Bandelier 1890:5).

Bandelier wrote in his preface that he covered “sober facts” in a style of “romance” with the hope to produce the “Truth about the Pueblo Indians”. . . “more accessible and perhaps more acceptable to the public in general.” His ethnography was successful in terms of his novel presentation to a non-Native American (foreign) audience.

I specifically mention the novel because it represents a work. I glanced through twenty years earlier assuming it to be a “factual” story book. During my UCLA research, I walked in the canyon presented by Bandelier. *The Delight Makers* made sense for the first time as a kind of *docu-drama* as in the sense of motion-picture. As I studied the canyon wall’s stone built rooms, *cavates* (remains of cliff dwelling areas of pueblo habitation in the *tufa* walls) and cave paintings, I could see what Bandelier was attempting in his novel presentation. And, it seems that if I was to present the people of the ancient cliff pueblo and dwellings perhaps I would use a similar approach, except I would attempt to incorporate a pueblo way of telling the story.

Dave Warren, of Santa Clara pueblo, suggested that cultural studies should “be sensitive to traditional attitudes and institutions. . . such studies should be aware of currently evolving forces impinging on Indian society and must recognize these forces as possible factors of change, perhaps conflict” (Warren 1973:6). From what I had learned in northern New Mexico from pueblo natives, friends,⁶ and others, I came to realize that studies must have a consciousness of intent and content as well as presentational style.

Continued research in Sri Lanka employed the approach of my personal discovery in New Mexico. I planned motion-picture experimentation as trials using traditional means to produce cultural documents “by,” “for,” and “with” participants of a community who were unaccustomed to film production. The field pro-

cedures utilized were first, script writing, second, still photographic work, third motion-picture production, including editing in the field, fourth, the showing and discussion of the material, and fifth the keeping of the documents on location.

2

Hilda Kuper⁷ is a pioneer at the experimental procedure of fieldwork “for,” “by,” and “with” the participants of her field experiences in Swaziland. *Sobuhuza II: Ngwenyama and King of Swaziland* is a work which she was “appointed to write” as an official biographer . . . “advised by a committee . . . selected by Cabinet and approved by the King” (Kuper 1980:14). The official biographical style, she states “is by definition selective” (*ibid*). And it goes beyond the participant of the life account to “the culture which he has deliberately identified himself; and it is a story not only of a great King but of the institution of traditional kingship in a complex world of power politics” (*ibid*).

The various writings of Hilda Kuper display a range of experimental style to include her ethnographic monograph *The Swazi* (which is part one for southern Africa in the series of Ethnographic Survey of Africa, International African Institute, London, 1952). In the comprehensive writing she surveys and presents:

The People (Nomenclature, Royal Generalogy)
Ethnic Composition and History
Physical Environment
Demography
Linguistic Data (Traditional Literature, Music: Dancing)
Social Organisation (The Homestead, Territorial grouping, Marriage Regulations, Divorce, Kinship, Succession, Age: Age Classes)
Economy (Land Tenure, Cultivation, Animal Husbandry, Diet, Hunting, Building, Arts and Crafts, Division of Labour: Specialisation, Distribution of Wealth, Recent Economic Developments)
Political Structure (Traditional Central Organisation, Local Government, Slavery, Legal Procedure, Modern Administration)
Religion, Ritual And Medicine (Ancestral Cult, Nature Worship, Rain-Making, Christianity, The Incwala [ritual of kinship], War Ritual, Medicine Men and Diviners, Death and Burial) (Kuper 1952)

Her *An African Aristocracy: Rank Among the Swazi* (1947) is a dimensional presentation which demonstrates an aspect of the monograph on the Swazi. If *The Swazi* is a source for an overview of the Swazi, then *An African Aristocracy* is a

specialized examination. And, I believe it to be a more interesting step which deals with branching issues into other areas of Swazi life.

In *An African Aristocracy* there are sections on age mates, kinship, individual variability, lay-outs on the annual cycle of economics, and social role placement assumed by men and women at various stages in the life. Ernest Manheim states in a review that:

... [her] method of reporting is in the best tradition of modern anthropology; Malinowski's influence is openly acknowledged, as is also some partial divergency from the functional method... Swazi culture is presented not as a case in point but with the retiring empiricism of the historian who subordinates interpretation to description (Manheim 1948:166).

Different from her other writings about the peoples of Southern Africa (i.e., *The Uniform of Colour: A Study of White-Black Relationships in Swaziland*, 1947; *Indian People in Natal*, 1960), her plays are less "official" and open to a broader audience outside of her discipline of anthropology. *A Witch in My Heart*,⁸ which was published in 1970 is a profound piece of literature which is acted to show the Swazi life of a single homestead. The drama is presented at high schools in Swaziland and is also printed in the Zulu language. In the words of the playwright:

To me the situation was less about witchcraft and more about the heart – a symbolic heart reflecting deep human emotions – love, hate, jealousy, hope, and despair (Kuper 1980:ix).

The drama is set in Swaziland during the 1930's when the British minority controlled much of the land. As the playwright continues to state:

It happened that the people about whom I wrote were Swazi, and among them these emotions were expressed in a particular cultural idiom in which witchcraft was an essential and accepted element, a part of the general order and disorder of life (*ibid.*).

The drama covers witchcraft, barrenness, polygyny, social structure, generalogy, justice, rural and urban life style, and other cultural dimensions. Yet, as the playwright states it is not a monograph for generalizations about culture for the specialist who is interested in "the usual rather than the exceptional, 'the' person rather than 'a' person; and interpret... 'findings' in the context of theories and assumptions developed in particular schools within the discipline" (*ibid.*). In reference to the drama, it describes much of the ethnographic "facts" as presented in the more formal academic works. In the drama's "introduction" (ix-xxix), she gives a mini-

ethnography of the Swazi people in relation to the play. And, she admits that a ritual is abridged to the scale of the drama: "The description of divination in the play is simplified for dramatic effect (*ibid.*:xxiv)." Knowing her previous work among the Swazi, she sounds authoritative enough to state without statistics and measures that:

To have no child is the greatest pain (*ibid.*:xxi).

Barrenness, in the first place, is generally interpreted as a sign of displeasure of the ancestors (*ibid.*)

The childless woman is incomplete, abnormal – a thing to pity, scorn or beat (*ibid.*:xxii).

and,

The world of the ancestors is a static replication of that of the living. . . (*ibid.*).

The ancestors are more powerful and wiser than the living. . . They are one of a number of occult agencies which can explain failure, unhappiness, misfortune and death (*ibid.*:xxiii).

The casual method of presenting the material in *A Witch in My Heart* is used to prepare a general audience for the drama. That audience which the "Introduction" addresses is most likely not familiar with Swazi culture, as indicated when the playwright explains that diviners are of considerable intelligence and not charlatans (*ibid.*:xxiv); or (through the voice of the character father)—"A home is built by respect, and strength, and truth in self. These are the things desired by the ancestors" (*ibid.*:3). The Swazi would not try to explain these concepts to themselves.

As in the style of any formal drama, information is given in the dialogue which regarding background for social or role structure to the audience as given by the character mother in conversation with her husband about their son:

As you say – he is my son, my only living son. His life is mine, and well I know that I, his mother, must try to keep the peace between his wives (*ibid.*:3).

The drama covers the use of *idiom*, i.e., "let me not stab your tongue . . ." (*ibid.*:16), *humor*, i.e., "white people do not know where to look for manhood, they hide the above in a hat, and the below in trousers. . . (*ibid.*:29), the *phenomenon of a thunder storm*, i.e., "I think the king is fighting with his mother, and all the royal ancestors are taking part" (*ibid.*:34), *philosophy*, i.e., first old person, "Why do we suffer so? Is the life of all people, suffering?" second old person, "We suffer so because we stand upon a bridge, and the one end that was built in rock has broken, and you and I are too old to reach the other side, and the young are too foolish

to distinguish sand from stone" (*ibid.*:48).

3

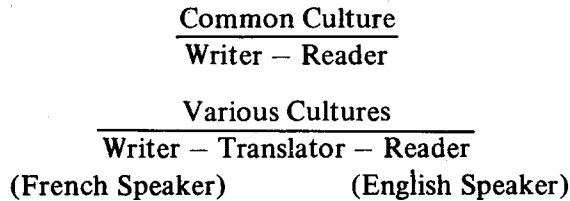
Edward Twum-Akwaboah (1979) wrote another kind of book just to present and explain African Literature (volume I, West Africa). Although his work deals with only West Africa, what he says impinges on the understanding of the African literary traditions:

Prior to the 1950's, the vast majority of literature written about Africa was published by foreigners. These writers who included anthropologists, missionaries, government officials and "Africanists", trained in various subjects like history, government and politics, have attempted to write travelogs, historical accounts and novels about Africa. A few of these scholars have also written critiques about African literature. The anthropologists among these critics have reviewed African literature favorably but the literary-trained critics have been most unsympathetic. The latter have used the European literary tradition as a yardstick for the review of African literature and have thus considered any departure from the "norm" as cause for much critical analyses. Besides, both the European writers and critics did not understand many African institutions well enough to be able to successfully utilize them in their creative works, or critically appraise them without biases (Twum-Akwaboah 1979:1).

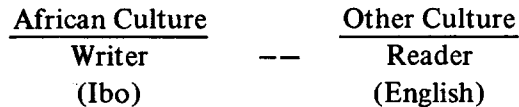
In continuation, Edward Twum-Akwaboah makes the following literary evaluation. First, a number of foreign fictional and critical writings about Africa perpetuate the "prejudices and preconceptions about the continent" where "traditional religion instilled fear" and "Christianity would liberate" (*ibid.*:1-2). Second, foreign educated Africans returned home and some wrote about Africans from the perspective of two schools: (1) the 'African personality' writers "have attempted to relive their past and record some of the rich cultural heritage which has been dying away very fast", and (2) the 'negritude school' of the old French speaking colonies who "do not merely relive the traditional culture but they also attempt to expose some of the shortcomings of the European contact with Africa" (*ibid.*:2). Third, African writers tend to utilize the literary style and language taught to them at the university which includes the use and modification of Dickens, Descartes, and Conrad styles appropriate to the subject matter. Fourth, the African writer must consider an indigenous audience and an international market – "Being aware of his foreign audience, the writer must often explain things which his own local readers can take for granted. He must act, as it were, as both anthropologist and a literary artist. Paradoxically, however, the more he explains the cultural background the less interest

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he retains for the readers who share his culture” (*ibid.*:3). Fifth, the African writer must have the audience in mind beyond the local tradition. Edward Twum-Akwaboah charts literary inter-cultural communication:



The foreign educated African writer is now interpreting his, or her, own culture in print:



Edward Twum-Akwaboah states that (West) African writers “have effected a beautiful marriage between the imported European languages and genres and their traditional heritage in their works” (*ibid.*:5).

4

Hilda Kuper, a native of southern Africa and a Swaziland citizen has struggled in her writings to reach the population of her Africa, the scholars in her discipline of anthropology, and the international reading public. In contrast to Bandelier who attempted pueblo American novels there are some shared techniques— but Bandelier lived and wrote many years ago; he was a student of the nine-teenth century European literary tradition; and he wrote about an idealized vision of Native Americans who lived many generations ago in the Santa Fe areas.⁹ Hilda Kuper, on the other hand, lived among the Swazi people from the 1930’s (the time period of her play and novel); she has written about the conditions and vicissitudes of the southern African peoples living in-and-out of co-existence; she has noticed her own ‘Africinity’.

It is the participation of the writer which makes the written work unique. A written work is not standard; it is the work of Hilda Kuper, or Adolf Bandelier. The writing depends on the writer; and, that implies the writer’s background and ability including nationality, family heritage, research and literary skill, motivation, and

psychology. The writer is the one who draws connections to make patterns from the data in order to display meaningful configurations. The writing process is never anonymous: it is a composition of experience.

Ethnographic research and the presented ethnography is a dialogue between the culture of evidence and the individuals of the discipline interpreting or defining that culture. The ethnographic process is an interaction of people in participation to present the values of the evidence. In my usual agenda of life, I do not always remember that once I stood in Greece behind Xerxes. I live in the present, and my feelings and skills operate to sort out daily tasks. Writing ethnography is an intentional task in the realm of aesthetic and academic presentation on culture.

The novel, the drama, the ethnographic account are cultural devices to communicate ideas and human attitudes. Some are to be 'read' and affectively enjoyed others are to be 'studied' for the purpose of eliciting "facts." The sources regardless of the display have a point of view inherent. The question is does life as lived have a point of view? Certainly experience in living gives an orientation. And, those registered feelings can be organized into a creative work: motion-pictures, plays, paintings, music compositions, and writings. And, the final outcome of the work is based on the foundation of knowing your own ability to present human life.¹⁰

Notes

1. Ethnography is the written or otherwise presented work representing a culture or a cultural system.
2. The resulting work *Menike* is an ethnographic account of a Sinhalese cultivator, 1973.
3. *Metropolitan Ascent in Southern Asia* is an unpublished manuscript written in 1975.
4. The UCLA Anthropology graduate seminar series at that time provided an excellent chance for the new graduate students to take a glimpse of the different aspects of the anthropological field based on the various interests of professors in the department.
5. Adolf Bandelier gives further definition to some native words in his novel which are already translated as umo — grandfather: The word "umo" properly signifies "grandfather;" but it is used indiscriminately for all ages and sexes in calling. An old man, for instance, will call his grandchild "umo;" so will a wife her husband, a brother his sister, etc. (Bandelier 1890:5).
6. See the Rundstrom work: *Japanese Tea: The Aesthetics, The Way: An Ethnographic Companion to the Film — The Path*, 1973.
7. For a conversation with Hilda Kuper refer to Langness and Frank, 1981.
8. See also her novel *A Bite of Hunger*, 1966.
9. Bandelier wrote ethnographic accounts about Native Americans who lived contemporaneous with him, but he always seemed to observed beyond them to the time when the Native American Southwest cultures were independent of European intrusion.
10. See James Goodwin's "Narcissure and Autobiography," 1979.

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