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**DOUBLE EXPOSURES**

*The Subject of Cultural Analysis*

**MIEKE BAL**

*with*

*Das Gesicht an der Wand*

*Edwin Janssen*

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11. Crimp's case against Fuchs is strongly focused on such categorial exclusions.
12. My translation.
13. De Jager (*Images of Man*: 3).
14. See Andrea Miller-Keller's analysis of this work (68–69).
15. Bersani's article ("Is the Rectum a Grave?") posed the question of AIDS in conjunction with his reading of Freud's contradictory discourse on male sexuality and masochism. For a confrontation with Bersani's argument with painting, see van Alphen (*Francis Bacon*).
16. Damisch ("Le musée": 24). Damisch's study *L'origine de la perspective* is constantly if implicitly involved with this incompatibility.
17. Harrison (76). Harrison's contribution is largely a critique of Wollheim's concept of the "adequately sensitive, adequately informed, spectator" (Wollheim, *Painting*), which represents a—necessarily inadequate—attempt to combine aesthetic essentialism with reader-response theory.
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## FIRST PERSON, SECOND PERSON, SAME PERSON

*in which the best scholarship  
gets entangled in a narrative of  
display in its very attempts to  
avoid such discourses, but where  
unknotting those knots turns out  
to be worthwhile*

## NARRATIVE UNDER SUSPICION

In the preceding chapters, the focus on museums was an attempt to elaborate a theoretical perspective through close attention to its concrete realm of application. At the same time it was an exemplar of a broader problematic, a paradigm of an approach. If exposing is a form of discourse, discourse in turn is always at least in part expository. Therefore, I want to explore the consequences of the juxtaposition of the

"literal" expository practice of museums with that of academic writing, and confront the insights won through the previous analyses with the kind of scholarship I see as most central in cultural analysis today.

To frame the analysis, let me start with two statements about description, that verbal equivalent of showing. "Transcription is always also description," writes anthropologist Johannes Fabian in *Power and Performance* (110); and continuing this idea, philosopher and historian of art Hubert Damisch writes: "Describing, in this sense, is always already narrating," a statement in *L'origine de la perspective* (239). Something seems to be the matter, epistemologically speaking, with description. And that something seems to be a contamination that infects "pure" neutral rendering, pure objective verbal presenting and representing, with the taint of narrativity. Fabian takes description as already implicated in this process, but warns that even transcription is "always part of a process of interpretation and translation" (110).<sup>1</sup>

What else can a historical and philosophical erudite treatise on linear perspective and its origin in Italian art (history) have in common with a critical anthropological study of a proverb and a theatrical performance based on it in Shaba, Zaire? Both these publications, like the new museology, are aware of the discursive problems of expository writing, and try to experiment with forms of exposition derived from the linguistic metaphor. And they both practice exposing—in the sense of showing, pointing at—as a form of exposing their arguments.

#### TELLING STORIES IS HARDER THAN YOU THINK

Let me briefly tell the two stories. One evening at dinner, Fabian ran into the expression, probably proverbial, "le pouvoir se mange entier" (power is eaten whole). The saying was just cited to him, pointed out as it were, without explanation. It appeared to "apply," and that applicability made it an object of exposure. This was the first episode. Trying to find out what the proverb means in the Shaba culture, he asked people, and one day (second episode) he asked a group of theater actors. After an intense session of brainstorming, the group decided to work up their next play around the saying. This was the third episode. Fabian was present at preparations, rehearsals, and performances, considering that what happened is the best possible form of modern ethnography: the construction of knowledge about a culture with the people and through collective research and

discovery. The real performance of the actors becomes an allegory of the idea of performance as an epistemic model for ethnography. Having just examined the case of Courbet's *Real Allegory*, this caught my attention.

Damisch's pursuit of knowledge concerns the origin of perspective as well as of the thinking about perspective—perspective as a discourse—and proceeds on an equally "democratic" basis. He provides close readings of the treatises on perspective, the experiments that led to what can only be anachronistically called its "discovery," and of three paintings, constructed as a group, which he studies in relation to one another in order to understand the origin of perspective through the transformations in its use. Exposing his own mode of exploration, he adopts a linguistic form that not only states, but exposes, how his knowledge came to be: writing about the Renaissance treatises, he writes in dialogic form.

Both these books address up front the basic epistemological problem of their discipline and, I contend, of the humanities and the social sciences in general. Both are exemplary works of "new," critical, and self-critical scholarship. What I would like to do is to connect their innovative mode of expository writing with the paradigm of new-museological analysis to take the critical and self-critical epistemology one step beyond its current state.

For Fabian, the central problem at the core of his discipline is to account, not only for knowledge as a product but also for its production in an epistemic situation where power inequality has made the discipline's traditional paradigms virtually useless if not exploitative by definition. For Damisch, the problem is the paradox of a historical search for an origin. To avoid mythification, origin must be understood as doubly problematic. It presupposes a beginning which must be revolutionary in order to be perceived, yet must be absorbed in a tradition in order to measure its revolutionary impact. But for that beginning to be truly absorbed that very tradition must ignore the event which it acknowledges as its origin (79).

In addition to the centrality of the problem of exposition in these texts, I selected them because of their relevance to a third text: a philosophical analysis of epistemological problems in relation to feminist theory, Lorraine Code's *What Can She Know?* (1991). That relevance is best seen when one realizes that the two case studies grew out of a search for an epistemology through which more justice could be done to the subjective status of the objects the writers sought to understand. Code examines the epistemological problems of objectivism and tries

to overcome the binary opposition between the various forms of that position and the alternative, various forms of relativism, including subjectivism. Her refusal to accept that these two positions form the sole and rigidly structured framework for a philosophy of knowledge, and her attempts to develop a rational position that is not predicated upon the acceptance of that opposition, is at issue here.

Their relevance as an epistemic practice whose theoretical basis is outlined by Code is one of the elements these books have in common. Johannes Fabian is a well-known critical anthropologist. His book *Time and the Other* is an important text of the movement of anthropologists impatient with and thoroughly suspicious of the colonialist legacy that subtends their field. His collection *Time and the Work of Anthropology* brings his critical analysis to bear on more recent and contemporary anthropological efforts and debates. *Power and Performance*, the recent text I discuss here, gives the lie to those who tend to conclude from Fabian's critical work that there is no way one can do it right.

Here, the same author who would never be satisfied with the well-meaning attempts to democratic and non-exploitative ethnographies is showing his hand. The critic becomes the storyteller, or the critic becomes curator, and puts on his exposition. He shows, not the culture he is studying but the way he acquired his knowledge; he shows himself at work—in a manner comparable to the one deployed in the exhibition *Exhibition-ism* at the New York Museum for African Art in the winter of 1994–1995.<sup>2</sup> And at the same time, whatever else this study may also be, it remains true to the discursive habits of ethnography: it is a narrative text written “in the first person.”

In addition to being a philosopher, Damisch is primarily an art historian, and as such a presenter of images and a teller of tales, too. His *Théorie du nuage*, “Theory of the Cloud,” was as pathbreaking as Fabian's *Time and the Other*. In that book he took clouds to be, as he formulates it in his later study on perspective, “emblems of what perspective excludes from its order . . . while also of the logic on which it is based and which gives it coherence” (297). His attention to exclusion and the need to show it made me prick up my ears. Moreover, his topic is the search for an origin, and states as much in its title, and that topic promises a text that is at least doubly narrative: as story of origin and as story of the search for that origin.

Both studies represent an object lying rigorously outside the subject of inquiry. This object is a discursive habit of a different people in terms of cultural

identity and location, the people of Shaba in Zaire in the one case. It is a different discursive apparatus in terms of time, in Renaissance Italy, in the other. Both are explicitly engaged in overcoming the object status this “third personhood” entails for their “other,” the object of exposition, the one pointed out. Fabian's intention “to explore the meanings of ‘le pouvoir se mange entier’ and to do this following a ‘method’ that works as an ethnography with, not of, the Groupe Mufwankolo” (55) echoes Damisch's search for “an analysis which would be less *about* a painting than it would have to reckon *with* it” (240). And there, too, lies their relevance to the inquiry Code proposes into the relationships between subject and object of knowledge, whose possibility emerges when the traditional objectivism's self-evidence is suspended.

Thus, at first sight, in terms of narratology and seen from the perspective of the object of study, both narratives can be seen as primarily “third-person narratives,” including the tensions inherent in that discursive mode. But both authors struggle with precisely that dimension of their professional discourses: the false neutrality challenged by contemporary epistemology as it translates into a third-person narrative, with an invisible narrator and a non-identified focalizer. How to get out of this mode that characterized nineteenth-century realistic novels, and expose their own exposing? As it turns out, these books both explore and demonstrate the possibilities and the limits of the aspects of expository discourse that the present study focuses on.

Both authors turn their texts around, and the self-reflexive side of these studies involves the first person in their quest. The neutral, distant narrator becomes part of the exploration, so that the embedding narrative is written in the first person. Where Damisch opens his preface with the statement of his impatience, Fabian espouses the conventions of realist fiction when he opens his first chapter thus:

On the evening of June 17, 1986, in the midst of a relatively short stint of field work in Lubumbashi, the capital of the mining region of Shaba in Zaire, I was writing up the day's events when I made a discovery. [3]

By placing the events to follow in a specific time frame and with himself as the story's narrator in specific circumstances, and with the first event of the fabula

to come as the potentially spectacular interruption of a durative occupation: it could be practically any novel.

But telling stories is harder than you think. Between a realist, neutral narrator and a modernist first person, the problem of the status of the object of narration is yet to be examined. Here, the special status of that object as the one pointed at by the first-person narrator is of crucial importance. In the case of epistemological narratives, the issue becomes that of the subjective status of the object of inquiry. How can the object of exposition become from "subject matter" a full subject, so that the "you" of the writing is able to talk back to both expository agent and object of display, as two distinct but equally acknowledged "first persons"?

Both authors make that status an important element in their experimental narrative. In a first move Fabian sets up a situation in which the object is cultural knowledge, not "a culture." This object is not studied but constructed on the spot, by, with, and through the cultural group that is both under investigation and conducting that investigation. This is the discovery alluded to: that ethnographic knowledge is not simply a dialogue, let alone a neat and clean third-person narrative, but a performance. Disenchanted with dialogism in anthropology, the equivalent of conversationalism in museology, Fabian aims to move decisively beyond that deceptive posture.

Damisch, whose object is not a cultural group but a cultural discourse, sets up a specific enunciation of perspective as his interlocutor. The group of three anonymous Renaissance "urbinate" perspectival city views, the most famous of which is *The Ideal City at Urbino*, form the "text" exemplifying the discourse under scrutiny. Both scholars take the second person as the core of their examination, and both make action, process, and *performance* the core of their knowledge. Both books are semantically third-person, since they present an object; syntactically "first person," since they are written with explicit reference to the "I" doing the exposing; and attempt to achieve pragmatically a second-person narrative that implicates and addresses, activates and emancipates the "you." One important difference between these two texts and the museum cases studied so far stands out, however: the second person is not the addressee of the text, equivalent to the museum visitor, but the object on display. We will see what that difference does to the story.

#### THE "NEW" EPISTEMOLOGY

This imbrication of a project of critical epistemology, a narrative which inscribes the second person, and the centrality of performance struck me as significant, especially in light of recent developments in epistemological theory as they relate to narrative. To sum these up too briefly: the epistemological notion of objective truth and impersonal knowledge is bound up with the narratological notion of "third-person narrative," external and invisible narrator, and neutral representation. But if we realize that the Cartesian *cogito* that sustains the objective epistemology is *itself* a mininarrative in the *first* person, we don't even need Descartes' personal expressions of anxiety to realize that this conception of knowledge is inherently contradictory.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the Cartesian principles are all bound up with subjectivity and defined in terms of the individual subject:

- the basis of knowledge is one indubitable thing to which all other knowledge is systematically related; hence, to which it is relative; indubitable presupposes a subject of possible doubt;
- reason is common to and alike in all knowers; yet the quest for knowledge is undertaken separately by each rational being who is thereby:
- unassisted by the senses, and
- using the same method.

Where the subject of inquiry is so emphatically—and with so much contradiction—both foregrounded and neutralized, one might well associate this epistemological ideal with what Philippe Lejeune analyzes as "autobiography in the third person."<sup>4</sup>

Attention to the contradictions in classical epistemology, and attempts to elaborate alternatives to it, can be characterized as the "new" epistemology, developed in parallel and sometimes in conjunction with the "new" disciplines addressed in this book. Code challenges the over-ruling primacy of objectivity and the paradigmatic status of physics as the ideal model of knowledge. The attractions of physics are deceptive: they consist in providing the illusion that knowledge can always be analyzed in observational "simples" (139). Code proposes instead to give primacy to intersubjectivity ("a conception of cognitive agency for which intersubjectivity is primary and 'human nature' is ineluctably

social": 72) and to give paradigm status to the difficult and complex epistemological project of *knowing other people*. Central in her analysis of the knowing subject is Annette Baier's concept of *second-personhood*, and the model for the mode of inquiry she proposes is *friendship*.

Her terms are strikingly close to those whose implications for expository activity I am analyzing here. As it happens, these terms are equally close to those used by Fabian and Damisch. Hence, it comes as no surprise that the discursive consequences of Code's theoretical position seem to apply quite specifically to the texts produced by these two "field" scholars. And narrativity is the locus of these consequences.

In the wake of her critique of physics as paradigm, Code suggests that there are *narrative* reasons why epistemology values simplicity:

Clean, uncluttered analyses are valued more highly than rich, multifaceted, but messy and ambiguous narratives. (169)

This remark strongly suggests that there is a relation between narrative form and epistemological competence; between the ability to handle complex knowledge and to tell and read complex stories, as well as between cleanliness and simplicity. And one way to respect and value complexity is by showing it: by refraining from over-ruling the object of exposition by a simplifying narrative. In this regard, the statement that the works by South African artists exhibited in *Zuiderkruis* gave testimony of a culture fed up with politics (instead of fed up with oppression) can also be read as an attempt to simplify and to thus offer clarity. But conversely, such a reading also shows the collusion between politics and epistemic simplicity.

The reason why museums made the best possible beginning to my inquiry can also be illuminated by this remark of Code's. Display, or literal showing, has its inherent problems, but also its inherent possibilities. Exposition exposes, lays bare, objectifies; but it also leaves the object intact, whole, and complex. In keeping with my previous analysis of the implications of the metaphor of conversation, here I am engaging the potential of narrative as epistemology as well as the problems a narrative epistemology might incur by confronting views of narrative in these three studies. These problems are connected to time and "person." These two aspects of narrative, it turns out, have a tremendous impact on the very pos-

sibility of reliable and responsible knowledge. They are also the features that specify exposition as a discursive mode, as a particular form of narrative.

#### NARRATIVE AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Code's first concern is to break away from the dichotomy between objectivism and relativism. Her view mediates between the two opposites by virtue of narrativity:

Broadly speaking, epistemological relativists hold that knowledge, truth, or even "reality" can be understood only in relation to particular sets of cultural or social circumstances, to a theoretical framework, a specifiable range of perspectives, a conceptual scheme, or a form of life. (2)

While not endorsing a stark construal of relativism, nor the equation of epistemological with conceptual relativism, Code mentions as major advantages of a moderate epistemological relativism the fact that it

is one of the more obvious means of avoiding reductive explanations, in terms of drastically simplified paradigms of knowledge, monolithic explanatory modes, or privileged, decontextualized positions . . .

as well as the "stringent accountability requirements" it entails (3). And these remarks nicely sum up the ambitions of Fabian and, less explicitly, Damisch.

Both go out of their way to avoid decontextualized reporting by experimenting with narrative structure. An aspect of the theoretical framework and the conceptual schemes is later explicated as narrative. In Fabian's case, ways of life correspond to Code's use of narrative. Code even makes narrative the core of her "epistemic responsibility." She argues that the moderate relativism she advocates entails the increased relevance of narrative:

Once epistemologists recognize the locatedness of all cognitive activity in the projects and constructions of specifically positioned subjects, then the relevance of narrative will be apparent as an epistemological resource. (170)

And she adds that the model of the Cartesian knower as neutral and not positioned has worked to obscure the significance of narrative.



The importance of narrative because of its capacity to map positioned subjects in relation to knowledge does not entail a facile rejection of all standards of objectivity. On the contrary, while on the one hand, "often, objectivity requires taking subjectivity into account" (31), on the other hand, denying that there are objective social realities "would obliterate the purpose of (feminist) political projects" (45). Rather, the subjectivities involved in the interactions that especially humanists and social scientists study are objectifiable, precisely because they can be related, made relative to, and positioned within narrative conceived as a mobile, dynamic conceptual scheme.

As I mentioned before, Code's choice of a paradigm to supplant physics is "knowing other people," and although she does not mention any particular academic discipline, it seems obvious that anthropology at its best could be the privileged discipline, with narrative as its central mode. That anthropology has not achieved such status stems from the connection between knowledge in the objectivist mode and domination as a political practice. It also stems from the discipline's privileged discursive mode. Given the alterity that has motivated ethnographic inquiry, at least until recently, the characterization of ethnographic discourse as narrative is at best too general, at worst mystifying. Ethnography is, primarily, a form of exposition, *showing* other peoples, cultures, habits as objects frozen in their timeless otherness.

But anthropology can also be conceived of as the exemplary project in knowing other people. Knowing other people—which, for Code, is best seen as based on the model of friendship—has features that clearly demonstrate why narrative is such an important resource for it. All of these features are prominently at work in Fabian's book:

- such knowledge is not achieved at once, rather it develops;
- it is open to interpretation at different levels;
- it admits degrees;
- it changes;
- subject and object positions in the process of knowledge construction are reversible;
- it is a never accomplished constant process;
- "the 'more-or-lessness' of this knowledge constantly affirms the need to reserve and revise judgement" (Code: 37–38).

This last feature points to the need for self-reflection as part of the epistemic endeavor itself.

The relevance of narrative as a resource is not limited to its use in documents and reports; the process of knowledge construction, which both Fabian and Damisch like to call performance, is narrative in nature on all scores. The events that constitute the process producing knowledge do not exist outside the narrative accounts of them, which constructs the knowledge by representing the events. Moreover, the knowledge claimants position themselves within a range of what Code calls "discursive possibilities which she [the reader] may accept, criticize, or challenge" (122). Thus she constructs yet another performative context of knowledge which does not admit reduction to simple components nor the separation of discovery, justification, and report.

Damisch paradoxically demonstrates the pervasive relevance of narrative in his resistance to it when he writes:

That a painting cannot be narrated is—as you noticed in the beginning—a kind of scandal in a culture so massively informed by philology as ours. (239)

Later on I will revert to the odd bracketed clause in the second person ("you"), but for now I wish to remark that this statement is noticeable for its inherent contradiction: the *Origin of Perspective* is a narrative of paintings. But Damisch is able to narrate a story of paintings because he conceives of paintings as actions, taking the progressive verb form literally. Moreover, "scandal" implies a story as well. And indeed, far from refraining from narrative, Damisch devotes the rest of his book to the narrative of the three paintings he has selected. His narrative is more consistently narrative than those constructed by the historians he despises. For it tells the story of the paintings' performance, including various characters, events, focalizers, and even narrators. His "epistemology of the group" turns three isolated and, perhaps, static paintings into a set of characters among whom events—relative transformations—take place.<sup>6</sup> Taking place: it is an apt description of what binds academic writing to exposition.

Code's central critique of the traditional Cartesian subject of knowledge challenges the individualism inherent in that tradition. In an argument on this issue, Code supplements the one put forward by linguist Emile Benveniste, and

that is the basis of my project to characterize exposition as a specific discursive act. She speaks of real people, not of grammatical positions, when she suggests that "persons essentially are second persons" (82). She means by that formulation that the dependency on caretakers and other people makes the development and sustenance of personhood in isolation impossible. Language alone, upon which knowledge is so heavily contingent, proves it. Similarly, Benveniste claimed that the first-person pronoun that produces linguistic subjectivity can only be semantically filled by a second person acknowledging and eventually reversing it. For him, the pronoun, not the concrete noun is the essence of language: *deixis*, not reference.

It is this dependency on others that constitutes the scandal, the stumbling block, of orthodox epistemology, and hence, it is the traces of that grafted status of the knowing subject that must be erased (172). Thus formulated, the problems and tensions within this epistemology resemble that of third-person narrative in the realist tradition, where subjective traces of narratorial intervention must often be erased or disguised. They must not be shown as responding to an implied second person thanks to whose curiosity, antagonism, or interest the narratorial "I" can constitute itself. On the other hand, when such an explicit narrative situation is foregrounded it is made the subject of a "higher level" embedding narration, which allows the fictional narrator to model the second person in his image and likeness. As a consequence, the narrator unwittingly remains the master.

In Code's view, the first person is more like a baby than a master. Solicitation by the second person crucially defines first personhood. And since this dependency must be repressed, the latter must hide behind impossible third-personhood: realism and objectivism. Similarly, in visual representation the allusion to perspective rather than full embodiment of it defines the position of the viewer as engaged in a first-second person exchange, not the painting as a third-person representation. It is an inconspicuous allusion which works both to stage and hide the subject.

Fabian as well as Damisch are quite outspoken in their second-personhood and thereby constitute themselves as ironic, self-aware, perhaps postmodern narrators. One of the ways they do this is by struggling with the very textuality they need in order to *perform* their knowledge. I have already quoted

Damisch's resistance to narrative, and Fabian's chapter title "Interlude: The Missing Text" points to a similar problem. In it he discusses the different conceptions and genres of textuality currently debated in anthropology, such as the equation of culture and text (Geertz, *The Interpretation*), or the experimental practice of literary genres in ethnography (Marcus and Cushman, "Ethnographies"), or the literary analysis employed by ethnographic texts (Clifford and Marcus, *Writing Culture*). But these are conceptions of textuality that do not affect his work, his performance, or writing this book. Then he begins to explore the predicament of the texts on which ethnographers base their writing: fieldwork notes, documents, recordings, protocols. The tremendous problem of *making* the text to which the chapter's title negatively alludes ends up *being* the text we are reading, which enables Fabian to come up with the following irony:

Never before did I have the chance to witness and document text production in such detail. But there is no hope ever to come up with a definitive text of the play. (91)

The irony makes a full circle when we realize that it is, precisely, the story of that irony that we are reading. For Fabian, of course, does narrate. But the product of his narrative agency is not so much the production of the text as his documentation of that production. Narrative as a mode entails that inevitably meta-narrative position: Fabian cannot perform (his role in) the collective construction of knowledge by a number of different subjects/characters without being the narrator-focalizer of the story of that construction. He presents this representation in a graphic form (93-94), pointing at the obvious structural features of the production as a complex object on display. In other words, when the narrative to be told becomes too "cluttered," to recycle Code's term, the irreducibly dense object must be reinstated, put on show, and pointed at.

To understand how this paradox is bound up with narrative on more than an anecdotal level, it can be compared to Damisch's analysis of linear perspective in terms reminiscent of narratological typologies of narrative situations. He posits that perspective provided painters with a network of indexical signs equivalent to the system of enunciation in language. Then, he demonstrates various possibilities of relating to the "law" of perspective, each of them equally narrative. Either one obeys or ignores the law, in which case two narrative situations

are unambiguously represented. Or, as a third possibility, one only puts in a sign or two of it, not necessarily coherent within the work, but just enough to make the "law" work: to make sure it will be assumed and endorsed by the viewer. This is how perspective, even within the practice of painting, is a discourse: it can be intertextually signified without being obeyed, and yet it will be read. This would be as close as one visually gets to a third-person narrative with an invisible narrator. Or, as a fourth option, a painting can refer to the model, only to deny it. Damisch demonstrates this with Raphael's *Ecstasis of Saint Cecilia*, where perspective is heavily signified, yet not obeyed.<sup>7</sup> Such a denial can work like a self-ironical statement. Damisch rightly adds that, rather than undermining or invalidating it, such a denial reaffirms the system.

This latter situation can be compared to Fabian's predicament of irony upon irony, when his denial of his narrative competence in fact affirms it. The struggle with text-making is a struggle for the ability to answer Damisch's very pointed question, "S'il y a histoire, de quoi est-elle l'histoire?" (12; if there is history, of what is it the history?). And this question is, I like to think, the meeting point of narrative and epistemology.

But, this is only so because that question does not bear a simple answer. For Fabian's predicament is that the production of the knowledge he wants to narrate is a performance in which he is an actor, and as I will argue later, in some ways he is its hero. His is a first-person narrative, autobiographical from the beginning. He needs to act in the text which he therefore cannot write up, for performance precludes narrative in the third person. He is on show himself.

Of *what* is he writing the history? Of himself writing the history of himself writing the history of . . . The predicament is like that of a curator who wants to be open about his policy but at the same time wants to maintain the objecthood of the art, and therefore puts himself in a showcase.<sup>8</sup>

Instead of providing a simple answer to his own question, Damisch's whole book develops the complex answer which, in the case of the origin of perspective, doubles up the subject of inquiry. He writes much later in the book a sentence that displays this difficulty in its very structure:

But there are various ways of conducting a narrative . . . which does not necessarily imply the a priori construction of a *scene*, and even less the production—

even if strictly for the sake of demonstration—of an apparatus (*dispositif*) where representation, in the modern sense of the word, would be asked to reflect itself in its operation, and simultaneously in its constitutive reference to the position of the subject. (364)

The discourse, here, seems to become hopelessly entangled in its subordinate clauses and double negatives, almost unreadable. Damisch is describing as well as demonstrating how difficult it is to be entangled in the first-person narrator's position of a performance that stages that narrator. The days of Brecht and the epic theater are long gone, and so is Freud's mystic writing pad, and what remains is the impossibility of answering the question, "If there is history, of what is it the history?" within the scene of writing.<sup>9</sup> In other words, we are glimpsing the limitation of the metaphor of performance, over-ruled as it is by expository narrative. Again, as in the previous chapter, a central metaphor, guiding the scholar into new ways of knowledge production, is creating more difficulties than it resolves because it is not itself specified and analyzed. Such self-reflection is the condition of the crucial relevance of narrative for epistemology. The acceptance and handling of that contradictory entanglement enables scholars to turn a problem into an opportunity.

Earlier I quoted a statement from Code which suggested that cleanliness or at least neatness had a lot to do with the preference for physics as the paradigm of knowledge. Another element of that preference is the resistance to narrative, subjectivity and, as some epistemological texts suggest, women as subjects of knowledge. Indeed, Wilhelm von Humboldt's judgment that

their [women's] nature also contains a lack or a failing of analytic capacity which draws a strict line of demarcation between ego and world; therefore, they will not come as close to the ultimate investigation of truth as man<sup>10</sup>

may only have been replaced with more sophisticated versions of the same. While I wouldn't wish to suggest that women have always and everywhere been

excluded from knowledge, my interest remains in the reason alleged for that exclusion, which strongly reminds me of the word "messy" in Code's statement. Indeed, feminists have amply demonstrated the vested interest of a "malestream" view in the securing of boundaries, of countries, as well as bodies, and intellectual territories. And the projection of the violation of those cherished boundaries on those subjects who, according to a biological iconism, are subject to it, speaks of the conceptual and emotional confusion underlying gynophobia. The confusion of subject and object which sustains this phobia happens to be a powerful ideologue or even an ideological code serving many purposes. We will encounter that code once more in the present inquiry.<sup>11</sup> This is one reason why a subject-oriented narratology can be helpful.<sup>12</sup>

The investment in boundaries is itself a subjective, emotional motivation for objectivity. As Code suggested, this investment enhances the need for observational simples as the basic unit of knowledge. For only when "things," elements, are simple can they be safely observed as radically outside the self. General epistemology thus partakes of another specific ideological code, that of the accumulative principle in the name of which many scholars claim that objects consist of the sum of their parts. This principle has hampered the development of semantics until the advent of discourse analysis, for example.

As a third participant in this ideological cluster we might count dualism, not only the most basic structure of Western thought, but also a pervasive mode of academic argumentation. Here yet again the structure lives off the artificial and often unwarranted isolation of well-delimited claims and arguments (boundaries!). The mode produces less than maximally good reasoning—as Janice Moulton argues. She came up with the concept of adversarial argumentation. According to Moulton, this mode fails because it excludes both complications of the issue when taken in context and plural approaches to it.<sup>13</sup> Given the need for sharp opposition and delimitation that mode demonstrates, it is structurally complicitous with objectivism, which depends on equally strong distinctions. In other words, the subject-object distinction of objectivism is structurally similar to, and contiguous with, the self-other distinction of the adversarial mode. And since it uses the model of war for the peaceful and constructive activity of intellectual work, it also betrays the intricate relationships among knowledge, violence, and domination. If strong boundaries provide emotional comfort, and

if that is especially so for subjects who need that comfort most, the *cultural*, representational forms that scheme takes remain to be interpreted, so as to enable the development of alternatives.

Damisch provides an element of an answer in his analysis of perspective as just such a device for demarcation. He has a keen sense of the issue when he writes:

In order for the things in this world to become objects for perception, the subject must take distance from itself. . . . But that movement, even in its slight theatricality, remains subjected to the law which is the law of representation: the distance the subject takes in relation to the object . . . allows him to escape to the immediately lived experience; but he can only discover that he is implicated, irremediably so, in the spectacle which takes its truth from that very implication. (345)

This implicatedness is the very essence of the system of perspective. Overcoming it constitutes the system's major motivation. Its analysis helps Damisch to understand the "difference within" perspective as illusion, bound up with realism but not with reality, a provider of the illusion of original and autonomous subjectivity. Ironically, the subject who needs to see its origin mirrored in the system of perspective, "that subject which is considered 'dominating' since it appears to be established in a position of domination is tenuously established (*ne tient qu'à un fil*)" (354).

Domination, then, is not the political background of representational realism but its product; knowledge production has not innocently inherited domination but actively produced it. Yet at the same time, that product is illusory, imaginary. The fundamental confusion that underlies the equation of speech and the look in a speech-act oriented theory of vision is that same illusory origin Damisch's entire book works to explain, yet discursively reaffirms in this theoretical moment. For the subject of vision is *not* the subject of painting but its addressee. Both in individual confrontations with particular images and in the visual narrative that museum exhibitions lay out, the viewer is a second person addressed by the image or by the expository agent. The subject of painting is the expository agent who *represents* his vision within the painting, so as to propose it as a model for identification. Flattered by this invitation to share the position of the master, scholars tend to step in and identify with

the subject, assuming that they see and think themselves what is exposed before them. Thus they relinquish their own subjecthood and vacate the slot of the "you."

First person, second person? Are these, in effect, the same person, and what would the consequences of such a conflation be? The question matters; for if first-person vision entails domination and appropriation, the obvious illusionary status of such vision, hence, the epistemology of perspective, may have a lot to do with the dogmatic tenacity with which it is being held on to. Hence, the unacknowledged elements of the speech act of exposing may be even more crucial to epistemology than has so far become obvious. The question is relevant in light of the obvious struggle both writers are engaged in, which is a struggle to explicitly do justice to the second person.

#### SECOND PERSON?

The concept of second personhood has a triple, not just dual allegiance. First, as presented by Code it indicates the derivative status of personhood; the fundamental impossibility of being, both psychologically and socially, a person without the traces of the person's grafted being. Code argues from the perspective of the social sciences, focusing on the vital need for care. Others make a similar case within psychoanalytic thought, theorizing the prefabricated symbolic order within which the subject comes into being.

Second, as presented by Benveniste and subsequent theorists in his vein, second personhood indicates the reversible relationship of complementarity between first- and second-person pronouns. The use of those pronouns produces subjectivity and constitutes the essence of language because, as Benveniste says, the pronouns do *not* refer. Note that both these allegiances are defined negatively, undermining the humanist individual who ruled over objective knowledge; the knowledge that effectively had an "object."

Third, the concept indicates the partner of the ethnographer and the historian, those persons, subjects, things, or discourses formerly referred to as the "object" but now engaged in the dialogue of the performance. To these second persons, the scholars have a strong allegiance that is both epistemological and political. The problem I am getting at consists of the conflation of first and second person in the very attempts to enhance second personhood.

The second person of exposition, the museum's visitor, has been bracketed. This bracketing, never explicitly carried out but nonetheless radical, will become a relevant element below. Narrative, as a structural form and as a discursive posture, presents a unique place to study the intertwinements of these three allegiances. This psycho-social, linguistic, and epistemological second personhood affects both parties, the "first person," subject of inquiry and writing, as much as the appointed second person, the interlocutors and fellow inquirers in Fabian's case and the historical "other" discourses in Damisch's case. First- and second-person positions are by definition reversible, and one way to measure the success of this epistemic style is to examine their actual reversibility.

From now on, I will treat these texts as discursively dense texts, as "literary" ("messy") narratives. In Fabian's case, the structural property of the text I will focus on in what follows is the narrative structure of embedding and the representation of "characters." For Damisch, I will look at the micro-stylistic feature of the use of grammatical "person," especially in the second part of the book. Throughout this analysis I will keep connecting narrative structure and epistemic meaning.

Fabian's beginning has been quoted already. It sets him up as a first-person narrator-character, engaged in reporting events that can be summarized as "his discovery." The story of the discovery is gripping: at the punctual moment of the evening in 1986, the narrator realized that the interpretive events around the proverb "power is eaten whole" constitute what he names "a new ethnography." Thus the anecdote of the discovery attributed to the "I" appears as a frame narrative, embedding a second narrative which elaborates the circumstances of the discovery, the narrative of the anecdote of being told the saying.

The structure of embedding is important here. In the first-level narrative, the narrator is the first person, and appropriately, he is on his own. In the second-level narrative, the embedded one—but the structure will not remain so neat—the narrator appears as a second person. He is being told, by his Shaba interlocutors, something in plain words that he does not understand, but upon which he needs to act culturally "correctly." As in Gide's *Faux Monnayeurs*, the modernist quest for meaning begins there.

The second-level narrative of the quest for the meaning of the saying overflows into the first level when its provisional denouement represents the shared

ignorance of the Shabans and the expatriate ethnographer, resulting in the brainstorming session that is the starting point of the experiment. The exchange is delicate. That delicacy stems from the inequality of knowledge—even if they can't interpret the saying, the interlocutors "know" it better than Fabian. It is enhanced by the problem that it is the first-person narrator who is telling both tales.

But there is yet another level. Woven through this narration are reflections on ethnography. This is the only place where the "you" as the equivalent of the exhibition visitor is explicitly situated; the addressee to whom the first person speaks when pointing at the object. At first sight these are casually inserted interludes, argumentative in kind. Yet they are in turn narrativized as Fabian's personal quest for the best method during the past ten years.

His discipline's longstanding cherished dialogic, communicative method had given him pause already, he tells us. He had been disenchanted, first because of its false ethical suggestion of equality, and second because, epistemologically speaking, it does not enable one to account for the *production* of knowledge. Since the dialogic model assumes that knowledge is shared, conveyed by those who have it—the members of the culture being studied—to those who desire it—the ethnographer—it begs the question of how the knowledge comes about.<sup>14</sup>

So far, then, we have three levels:

- (1) the punctual, first-person story of the discovery. The second person is invisible.
- (2) the story of the evening of the proverb dinner, continued during a few weeks of search for meaning, ending in the decision of the group of actors to stage the saying. This level is told in a first-second-person dialogue with reversible positions. Here, first and second persons are visible and unstable.
- (3) the story, again in the first person but with an implied second person—Fabian himself at an earlier moment, as well as his fellow-anthropologists—running through ten years but interspersed with many "achronies."<sup>15</sup>

Fabian is an engaging narrator, and his text is so explicit in its epistemic position, as well as overt in acting that position out, that it takes a second look at the overall structure of the text to realize a potential problem. A problem that, it is only fair to say, he could hardly have avoided, and which by no means

undermines his accomplishment. Yet the problem is major: by virtue of the very narrative form, the second person cannot but be subordinated to an extremely self-centered first person.

Indeed, the text as a whole mirrors the structure I just outlined for the first few pages. Chapters 1 through 5 have the form of, primarily, a first-person narration. This narration embeds many smaller narratives which can be characterized as second level embedded second-person narratives: stories told by the addressee of the primary narrative. This narration also embeds a laterally connected, partly also second-level, first-person argumentative narrative with a strongly implied second person identical to the first person. Fabian deploys many strategies, some of which are extremely effective, to empower the embedded second persons, the participants in the play-as-knowledge production. Thus, for example, in the third chapter he provides a short history of theater in Shaba and of the Mufwankolo group in particular, in which he is careful to furnish, in footnotes, individualized life histories for all characters mentioned. While this would be a troublesome individualistic historiography in a Western context, here it serves the emancipatory purpose of individualizing people so far mostly seen as ahistorical "folk."

Chapters 6 through 13 constitute the ethnography proper. Here, the second person—the group of Shaba actors—is the principal speaker. Fabian is meticulous in doing his utmost to enable these speakers. This part has, again, three forms. First, the text is transcribed in Shaba Swahili. Second, the English translation follows, symbolically in the second place. Third, both versions are provided with helpful footnotes, clearly meant to be subservient to the enterprise of opening up the main, second-person text. This text is "second person" in two senses: it is the text produced by the second persons, Fabian's interlocutors, and it is dialogical, since it transcribes the dialogues that took place in the construction of the play. In this part, the second persons remain in the first position. The bulk of the transcribed recordings seem in need of an explanatory, interpretive academic commentary. But relegating this commentary to footnotes is a rhetorical means of effectively preserving the primary position for the Shabans.

The concluding chapter is, again, written in the first person. This text has a meta-position in relation to the second part as well as the first, while it is also a continuation of the argumentative interludes in the beginning. The second person of this third part is clearly the "Western" anthropologist. This part resorts

to traditional exposition, where the second persons of the second part are cast back into "third personhood," or objectification.

Thus, a formulation like the following strikes me as out of tune with the careful narrative-epistemological strategies of the first and second parts:

First, it is wrong to assume that the Zairean "folk" . . . live only in the present and, as folk are said to do, only worry about forms of power and oppression as they exist now. (286)

Whereas this passage pointedly opposes tenaciously mistaken prejudices, and therefore is obviously very useful, it cannot help but state the "truth" about Shaba Zaireans who are thus relegated to third personhood in this very attempt to present them positively. This is a case of double exposure: by *showing*, pointing at the true nature of the Zaireans, the narrator exposes them. But by speaking in response to his colleagues he turns himself into a second person not of the Zaireans *with* whom he was constructing knowledge, but of his colleagues *against* whom, it now seems, he is constructing knowledge *about* the Zaireans as third persons, or objects on display.

This shift happens in the terms, albeit bracketed, of the Western heritage. At first sight the use of the term "folk" evokes this heritage while the quotation marks bracket it. More insidiously, however, the statement is a response to a judgment couched in the categories of Western philosophy: time, present, history. By responding to this judgment without exposing it, the statement confirms the categories in which this philosophy has framed its "others" all along. The Zaireans are all but put back on their pedestal in the ethnographic museum.

And indeed, one may want to look again at how the second person is staged in this complex, three-partite narrative. Embedded in a masterful and masterly first-person narrative, the Shaba actors who, as objects of the exposition are staged as second persons embodying an emancipated third-person position, end up serving the interest of substantiating Fabian's discovery. This discovery is not a first-level narrative distinct from the third level of the address to colleagues; together, beginning and end frame the middle which becomes one great example. The discovery is the true object of the narrative presented to the "you" of the discipline. The discovery is like "beauty" in an art exhibition: the ultimate

value, the gift of the curator to the visitor, that the objects on display are called upon to substantiate and to embody, but also merely to "illustrate."

This discovery thus concerned less the knowledge produced about the Shaba insights in power than Fabian's insights in his discipline. Self-reflection, however indispensable, sometimes approaches self-centeredness. And whether this becomes a serious threat to the knowledge production depends on the interplay between first and second personhood. In this case, the narrative structure of the text, both globally and in detail as analyzed for the beginning of the book, suggests that the second person has been subsumed under the first, thereby losing, if not its alterity, at least its power to put that alterity first. And as we will see shortly, this subsumption is reinforced because it also takes another form—that of mimeticism.

The problematic status of the second person becomes far more blatant in Damisch's case. Whereas he theorizes second personhood throughout his book as part of the problem (the "object") he is analyzing, I contend that epistemologically speaking, he limits it to a rhetorical strategy which he imitates from the ancient treatises he studies. As in Fabian's book, here the second-person position is shifting.

This book is explicitly divided into three sections. The entire book carries along, in parallel and intertwining, the epistemological debate addressed to the writer's fellow historians as the second persons, with the analysis of the history of perspective which is "about" the relationship between the first and second person of vision. This discussion receives primary focus in the first part, following up on the initially stated "impatience." The second part presents an engagement with the treatises, while the third part is devoted to the analysis of paintings.

The first part elaborates Damisch's challenging view that perspective is a discursive apparatus of enunciation (38) based not on the correspondence but on the mismatch between geometrical and symbolic point of origin (56). Damisch's thesis holds that it is that mismatch that produces visual subjectivity. The second part engages the ancient treatises and their writers as the second person, object of historical narrative, whom Damisch attempts to give subjectivity. These second persons become first persons in a real sense in the long, often full quotations—equivalent to Fabian's second part with the full Shaban texts. These fragments are quite thoroughly interpreted and addressed, from the point of view

of the modern scholar. This scholar explicitly presents his views as responses, and thereby acts as a second person responding to first persons.

It is the third part which is most important and presents the most problematic version of second personhood, both on the level of its own discursive strategies and on the level of the object of exposing. It contains the actual analyses of the three perspectival paintings in relation to one another. Here the author elaborates the epistemology of the group à la Lévi-Strauss, but then historicized through further comparisons, most notably with Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Wedding* and Velázquez' *Las Meninas*, up to Picasso's response to the latter.

Much to this reader's surprise, this third part opens with the use of the second grammatical person which we already saw in an earlier quote:

And now, this painting. This painting that you know better than anyone: which forces me, at this juncture, to call upon your testimony and to shift—according to a device frequently used in the old treatises—from *I* to *you*, and from one discursive regime to another, to an explicitly dialogic one. (157)

Dialogism becomes the central metaphor, on a par with Fuchs's conversation: the guideline or model used to articulate the epistemic posture to be adopted.

Now, the timing matters: "you" comes up at the moment that the narrator begins to tell the story of his own engagement with this painting. The rest of the paragraph further explains the point of this device. The narrator wishes to pay homage, by imitating them, to the discursive habits of the ancient writers, his previous second persons. More importantly, he intends the pronominal form to signal that "one cannot just put such a painting at one's disposal as one wishes, and like a random object or document" (157). In other words, he uses this device to remedy some of the drawbacks of exposing as a mode of writing.

If we take the use of the second person at face value, the "you" is called upon as a witness. It is thereby authorized as an expert, like a "native" curator, coming from another time, closer to the object displayed: "this painting you know better than anyone." This expert is then the focalizer of the description to follow, so that the description not only narrativizes perspective and the eye before which it unfolds, but first and foremost—on a higher narrative level—the expert witness focalizing it. But as Clifford Geertz has aptly reminded us many

times, writing "from the native's point of view" is both impossible and undesirable, deceptive in its phony democracy and increases rather than lessens the distance between "experience-near" and "experience-distant" conceptualizations. For as the agent of description, the verbal mode closest to exposing, this second-person expert is none other than Damisch, dissociated from the first-person narrator to gain more authority.

The author plays with this device as if to explore all its possibilities. The use of the second person varies greatly, to the point of inconsistency. Sometimes, the status of "you" as the expert directing the writing subject "I" is made more explicit, as in "If *you* insisted that we *exposed* this thesis in some detail, it is because it has been so badly received" (180; emphasis added). At other times, the identity of "I" and "you" is emphasized on an emotional basis: "the only question which matters to us, after all, to you as to myself" (182). But if the split between first and second person can be thought to signify the different functions of narrator and focalizer/expert witness, at other moments these two functions are conflated so as to evacuate the point of the linguistic game: "There is still a problem you have already mentioned once or twice" (249), where "you" incongruously is the writing subject/narrator. In the end, it seems, "you" and "I" overlap completely: they have not only the same identity—the same person in the psycho-social sense—but also the same grammatical function, the same linguistic "person." What, one may well ask, is the point of the game? That point, if any, must be sought in the third sense of second personhood: the expository one.

The connotative effects of this rhetorical strategy are varied, and do not always overlap with the narrator's stated intention. To assess these it is imperative to take into account the other part of the device, which is the use of a "third person," not as the object of exposition but, if such a thing is imaginable at all, as speaker. This third person is not the painting/"object" but the subjects Damisch refers to as the *contradicteurs*. By this term the narrator sets up as diegetic characters, in the wake of the rhetorical tradition, the implied opponents who were present from the beginning, namely his fellow historians, reluctant addressees of the book, in need of persuasion by effective pointing out of the truth of the object.

These characters appear rather late in the day, as Damisch frankly admits (385). But what interests me in that appearance is the rationale they are in charge of offering for the pronominal game as a whole. For Damisch introduces an explicit



"third person" with an epistemological aim. No more than Fabian, but for altogether different reasons, is he content with the mere dialogical form of writing:

As if dialogue did not suffice to give the debate its true dimension, and one had to appeal to a third person to put it in perspective. (385)

In an explanation presented on the mode of fictionality ("as if") and in a strongly visual vocabulary, the narrator justifies his use of pronouns in a combination of a truth claim ("true dimension"), a move of distancing (now, the third person is called upon as a witness), and a mimetic act (perspective on perspective). The statement is self-referential, characterizing as it does the expository mode of writing the "I" is engaged in. Putting the object (perspective) at a distance, he puts it on display, so as to get a better (truer) perspective on it, and to that effect he needs the "third person." Exposing couldn't be more adequately exposed.

This dazzling case of double exposure illuminates the problematic at the core of the present study. The effect of the pronominal game stands out most strongly when the three grammatical characters appear on stage together. This happens, for example, on page 386:

But one/I [on] can respond differently to the objection attributed to the *contradicteurs* (an objection you are far from taking lightly).

The structure is clearly mustered for a defensive purpose. The depersonalized first person (*on*) is going to refute an objection he came up with in the first place, but which he attributes to his third person; the second person, the expert/authority, is said to take the objection extremely seriously, so that the third person has to be satisfied. But since the first person comes up with the objection, we must conclude that the third person, too, is identical to him. As happened in Fabian's text, the very attempt to strengthen the subjectivity of the second and third persons ends up reinforcing the epistemic and discursive predominance of the first person.

Damisch needs three persons, he claims, because the debate needs to be put into perspective. Perspective, on the other hand, is characterized by the deceptive illusions of true, neutral, objective, in other words, third-person represen-

tation of the world. Yet it works so effectively because at the same time it provides the viewer with a position as the first person who "owns" that world. In psychoanalytic terms, this illusion of mastery as ownership is an effect of the viewing position represented for mirroring identification.<sup>16</sup> As Damisch points out, perspective sets up the elision of the subject—tenuously inscribed already—in the viewpoint which is seen as the origin of subjectivity. And that elision is signified as *apostrophe* (402), enforcing a second person subsumed within the first person who otherwise would remain unsustained.

Thus the rhetoric of this third part resembles, mimes, its cognitive content. This is never said but alluded to, tongue-in-cheek, if only by the juxtaposition of passages about the one and the other. But another congruence is more explicitly stated. Toward the end of the book Damisch seems deeply gratified when he is able to suggest that the three points involved in perspective, the viewpoint, the vanishing point, and the distance point, correspond to three locations: here, there, and yonder. What more adequate spatialization of the speech act of exposing can one imagine? A bit later he writes that perspective as a paradigm, as a model that projects, does more than posing the other in front of the subject as always already there before him; but it also introduces a "third person" (*un tiers*). What emerges is a triangular visual regime that corresponds to the Lacanian (law of the) father who comes to break the untenable duality of mother and child wherein the mother cannot be the other because the third person is needed, while she is already second person to the child.

Among the three spatial positions, or places—here, there, and yonder—three subject positions are distributed: I, you, and s/he. Thus vision becomes the discourse upon which linguistic discourse feeds. The magic of threes works again. But no, we know that the "I" in perspectival vision is not the speaker. The painting is the thing "there," on display. It represents the "I" capable of reaching out to possess the other other, "yonder," deceptively laid bare, exposed, by the skillful hand able to make "you" believe you are "I."

Both books suggest an allegorical identification between argument and object. Damisch does so when he defines painting, his "second person" par excellence,

as something "qui donne à penser" (289)—just like philosophers. In remarks like these, he forgets the *difference* of painting his whole book tries to emphasize and makes painting be a bit too much like language. This is, I contend, why he is unable to see, in this otherwise extraordinarily clever argument, that the speech-act theory of painting as it is commonly practiced is ultimately a language-centered analogy; a product of the mimetic impulse, victim of an unexamined metaphor, deceptive like Fuchs' conversationalism.

And that confusion potentially threatens Damisch's argument and doubles up his rhetorical mixture of persons under his own identity. For the point (pun intended) of perspective is, precisely, that very confusion, but in the other direction. If it eludes the subject under apostrophe, the second person wins out. And rightly so: this is why visual images, far from being less discursive, offer an uncommonly apt model of the discursivity of exposition, if only we see it. If enunciation can be a model for perspectival painting, then the viewer acts, but as addressee. Far from "speaking"—the painting does that—the viewer acts, possibly but not necessarily actively, as second person. And that might well be intolerable for the "you," that fake second but, in fact, authorized first person, who knows the Urbinate painting better than anyone.

Fabian writes apropos of theater in Shaba that "mimesis had opened a battleground" (56), and if that is so, then there may also be one within these texts. A battleground, that is, where a struggle is fought between two contradictory impulses: to construct knowledge in an engagement with the other, and to subordinate that other once more. That battleground can host fierce struggles when the issue is "knowledge of other people" meant to be constructed on the model of friendship yet narrativized. The issue gets couched in a first/third-person narrative, albeit sophisticated and dynamic, which obscures its own expository agent even while foregrounding—in these cases—him. For narrative as well as epistemology are over-determined by their traditions and histories, one of which is the central position of the knower/narrator.

In the face of the narrative mode of discourse at the core of exposition, "friendship" may be a good model only to the extent that it elaborates and refines what the antagonistic mode of argumentation simplifies and obscures. Taken allegorically, or at face value to use Damisch's visual vocabulary, it obscures the dissymmetry that allows the third person, who appeared to be pro-

moted to second personhood, to "be disappeared" yet again. Damisch's beautiful analogy between the three points involved in perspective with the three grammatical persons involved in narrative, and the three locations involved in spatial organization, could do, by way of caution, with yet another triangle. I am referring to Gayatri Spivak's distinction between self, self-consolidating other, and absolute other," translated by John Barrell as "this, that, and the other" (10). This absolute other seems implied, feared, and then cast out by Damisch's dramatization of the third person as a projection of an opposition he is still able to master.

Second personhood, in all three senses distinguished above and integrated as they are in narrative, can easily become self-consolidating ("that" helping the first person along). Instead of exposition by an explicit and vulnerable first person respectful of a third person and engaged with a second, the discourse of exposition might become a simulacrum of its opposite: autobiography in the third person, the most disingenuous of genres. This is emphatically not a statement against the need for self-reflection, but, on the contrary, for a further analytical self-reflection. A self-reflection which partakes of a project to understand and improve exposition—a project that is political as much as epistemological—requires a sharp analysis, not only of intentions and methods, but, more importantly given the pragmatic nature of language, of *narrative*. Narrative, as it turns out, not surprisingly, is *telling*.

#### NOTES

1. Philippe Hamon's *Expositions*, obviously relevant for the present study as a whole, establishes in particular the connection between description and exposition.
2. This show advertised its concept in the following words: "*Exhibition-ism* probes the process of conceiving and constructing an exhibition, examining how specific Western museum practices contradict the ways art is understood and experienced in Africa." Information flyer, Museum for African Art. For a further elaboration of the concept, see the essays by Chris Müller and Mary Nooter Roberts in Roberts and Vogel, *Exhibition-ism*.
3. For an analysis of Descartes' anxieties and the way these informed his epistemology, see Baier, "Cartesian Persons," in *Postures*. On the influence of language on Descartes' thought, see MacIntyre, "Epistemological Crises." For the feminist implications of this typical mode of thinking, see Bordo, *The Flight*, and "The Cartesian Masculinization."

4. Lejeune, "Autobiography," writes of Rousseau, that exemplary first-person writer's autobiography, in the third person: "He gives us a lesson in objectivity" (45).
5. The allusion is to the title of Code's earlier study *Epistemic Responsibility*.
6. The "epistemology of the group" clearly shows structuralist tendencies, and sometimes even the formulations recall Lévi-Strauss, esp. *The Raw and the Cooked*. For an analysis of Lévi-Strauss' concepts and method used there, see Derrida, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*.
7. Raphael, *The Ecstasy of Saint Cecilia*, about 1515–1516; Bologna, Pinacoteca Nazionale. Damisch: 38–40.
8. This is exactly what Bob Flanagan did in the exhibition in the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, Fall 1994.
9. Allusions are to Freud's short text "Note Upon a Mystic Writing Pad" and Derrida's commentary "Freud and the Scene of Writing" in *Writing and Difference*. Both texts deal with the difficulty of writing and reading that Fabian is contending with.
10. Cowan, *Humanist*: 349, quoted by Code: 10.
11. The term ideologeme is borrowed from Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*. Van Alphen (*Bang*) has theorized ideology as a code rather than a semantic unit.
12. See Bal, *Narratology*, for a textbook version of such a theory, and *On Story-Telling* for a discussion of the importance of the subjectivity network.
13. See Moulton, "A Paradigm," in Harding and Hintikka, eds., *Discovering Reality*. The argument is related to the one put forward in chapter 2 here about issues of cultural property.
14. This problem is connected to that addressed by Geertz, in his distinction between experience-near and experience-distant concepts ("From the Native's Point of View" in *The Interpretation*), as well as to that discussed by Turner, of the question when and to what extent the members of the culture are the most adequate informants (*The Forest*: 38). In *Time and the Other*, Fabian adds a third problem, the illusion of coevalness that dialogism implies, whereas the writing of ethnographies undermines that coevalness.
15. Genette's term for bits of narrative that cannot be placed chronologically. See *Narrative Discourse*: 40, 84.
16. This is how represented focalization is such a powerful tool for manipulation. Through it, a text or image can provide an attractive mirror image that solicits identification. The image is not the bodily represented other, but the textual masquerade of that other. For more background on this theory, see Silverman, *Threshold*, chapters 1 and 2.
17. Spivak, "Overdetermination": 131, quoted in Barrell, *The Infection*: 10.

## A POSTCARD FROM THE EDGE

in which postcards, undeliverable for lack of a recent address, can still be returned to sender

## PLAYING GAMES

This chapter is about the complicity of critique. It analyzes the impossibility of showing and saying "no" to the object in the very gesture that shows it. Imagine you are visiting a small exhibition, say, at the Africa Museum in Berg en Dal near Nijmegen, the Netherlands. It is called "The Colonial Imagination: Africa in Postcards." It consists of images. Many of these images show women. Raymond Corbey, the curator of the show