

**DOMINANT DISCOURSES OF POWER RELATIONS AND THE  
MELANESIAN OTHER: INTERPRETING THE EROTICIZED,  
EFFEMINIZING GAZE IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC**

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*The effeminate and sensual idealization of the Melanesian Other stems from National Geographic's gaze, which in turn is broadly linked to themes in Western cultural history. Race and geopolitics become organizing backdrops for narratives told about the Melanesian Other, and exemplify the "noble savage" theme as fetish. To travel in space is to travel in time. The fantasmagoric presentation of nude Melanesian men and women is for the consumption of Western white reader's back home. Immoderate sexuality and the uncontained body of black savage's poses a tangible threat to Western male viability in Melanesia. Mourning the passing of traditional Melanesian society and imperialist nostalgia makes racial discrimination appear innocent and pure in National Geographic, which masks the West's involvement with processes of domination. It is an eroticized, effeminizing gaze that reestablishes existing power relations in the imperialist scheme.*

**REPRESENTATION OF THE MELANESIAN OTHER**

*Reading National Geographic* by Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins (1993) is an evocative portrayal of a "world brightly different" (Lutz and Collins 1993:87). According to Lutz and Collins, *National Geographic* has devoted 35% of its coverage to Asia, 22% to Latin America, 15% to the Middle East and North Africa, 12% each to Africa and the Pacific, and 6 % to Polar regions (120). As an anthropologist whose focus is Melanesia, I was intrigued to learn that photographic representation of Pacific Islanders is 50 times higher in *National Geographic* than would be anticipated given the region's small proportion of the global population. Hollywood movies and World War II photojournalism (Lindstrom and White 1990) have been important contributors to the West's postwar depiction of the Pacific region. However, in creating an audience for images of cultural difference in the Pacific, *National Geographic* has an unrivalled worldwide reach to over 37 million people per issue. The contribution by Lutz and Collins (1993) to postmodern discourse and representation is taken as the main theoretical point of departure to critically examine the postcolonial depiction of Melanesians in *National Geographic*. When I started anthropological fieldwork in the eastern half of New Guinea in 1973 it was still an Australian colony, and did not become the State of Papua New Guinea (PNG) until 1975. In the western half of New Guinea the changeover from Dutch colony to Indonesian recolonization occurred just over 30 years ago. Data analysis in this paper is based on the 146 photographs of postcolonial Melanesians from the island of New Guinea that have appeared in the pages of *National Geographic* over the last three decades (see Table 1).

Dumont (1988) relates fashions in the exotic Other to shifting emphases in Western political and economic foundations, with the kind and amount of coverage vacillating according to prevailing international relations between the West and the rest. For Melanesia, race acts as a more significant backdrop constraining camera access than geopolitical interests *per se*. Backdrops, according to Appadurai "can be interpreted as sites of epistemological uncertainty about exactly what photographs seek to represent" (1997:1). Rydell demonstrates that the scale of evolutionary progress that placed the black-skinned Other (e.g., Africans, Melanesians) at the bottom of the human scale, the brown-skinned Other (e.g.,

Asians) midway and Whites at the top not only informed nineteenth-century explorers and home consumers of their images but has continued to operate in the West (1984). Race becomes an organizing principle of narratives told about Melanesian peoples.

Racial attitudes control cultural ideas about the nobility of the Melanesian Other. Melanesians exemplify the Noble-Savage theme as fetish because they display “the kind of pathological displacement of libidinal interest that we normally associate with the forms of racism that depend on the idea of a ‘wild humanity’ for their justification” (White 1978:184). The nature of an opposition between a normal humanity (White) and an abnormal one (Black) is sufficient to transform Melanesians from being merely exotic into an ontological Other to be done with as desire requires (White 1978). The idea of black savages who are noble has the effect of demeaning the idea of nobility itself. *National Geographic* photography places Melanesian subjects under the imperial gaze of a realist ethnography that is civilizing at home and orientalizing in New Guinea (see Appadurai 1997). In seeking to cultivate the savage, imperialists were transforming their own society. Cultural colonialism is a reflexive process whereby the Melanesian Other is put to the purpose of reconstructing the Other back home, and the two sites went hand in hand in the triumphalism of the bourgeoisie in the West (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

Knowledge of the Melanesian Other is a temporal, historical and political act (Fabian 1983). Mourning the passing of traditional Melanesian society and imperialist nostalgia makes racial discrimination appear innocent and pure, and masks involvement with processes of domination (Rosaldo 1989). To travel in space is to travel in time. Travel as science secularizes time for observation and description and space reflects the sequence of time as evolutionism (Fabian 1983). This paper investigates the representations and discourses of 146 photographs of the Melanesian Other appearing in *National Geographic* (Table 1). Photographs for representational analysis are identified with single quotation marks, and quotations for textual analysis from accompanying captions are identified with double quotation marks. Photographs of Melanesians in *National Geographic* are explained by the standard evolutionary model, and assigned to the Stone Age. Primitive Melanesian savagery is conveyed in article titles shown in Table 1 like “Headhunters in today’s world: The Asmat of New Guinea,” and “Fertility rites and sorcery in a New Guinea village.” The caption entitled “On the outside looking in” refers to “Papuan tribes...with their forest-based culture and animist beliefs” (O’Neill and Steinmetz 1996:16-7). Difference as distance becomes a “Journey through time” (Leydet and Austen 1982), as Melanesians proceed from location past to location present.

This paper conveys a different story than the *National Geographic* photographs originally meant to tell, one that is about their makers and readers rather than their Melanesian subjects. The *National Geographic* images of difference are denaturalized to override the temptation to imagine the Melanesian Other as basically living in a happy, classless and noble world in conflict neither with themselves nor us. The disproportionate attention to Melanesians in *National Geographic* is underlain by racist epistemology that says a lot about anthropology’s complicit role in this production of knowledge.

### INTERSECTION OF GAZES

Lutz and Collins’ reading of *National Geographic* established the intersection of seven gazes (1993:88). A deconstruction of the intersection of gazes in the 146 photographs of the Melanesian Other reveals the context of imperialism that envelops and reinforces the dominant discourses of power.

#### The Photographer’s Gaze

The photographer’s gaze marks the structure and content of the photo (Lutz and Collins 1993:193). The *National Geographic* photographer/writer teams are literally

and symbolically the whitest and most masculine great hunter/adventurers (Bright 1989:137-8). Photographers are regularly featured in the "On Assignment" page of *National Geographic*, and "Not on the menu: George du jour" (On Assignment 1996) typifies the flamboyantly virile photographer identified by Lutz and Collins (1993:185) as bravely roaming, observing and evaluating locales inaccessible for most of his audience. Among the ten authors on assignment to New Guinea, seven are male and two, Robert Gordon and Gillian Gillison, are anthropologists (Table 1). All ten photographers are men and they must confront the Melanesian Other across the distance of gender. Okely (1975) notes that contemporary anthropology shares in the masculine part of this ethos and Said (1989) comments on the racially white part. *National Geographic* and Western anthropology share in the reproduction of white male privilege.

### The Magazine's Gaze

The magazine's gaze represents the behind-the-scene institutional process by which a portion of the photographer's gaze is used and emphasized. The viewer cannot know if selection of photographs and the cropping and arrangement of photographs on the page are the results of editorial or photographic decisions. The editors' choices to commission an article and to fix captions are more clearly identified as the magazine's gaze (Lutz and Collins 1993:195). Marketing studies show that just over half the magazine's readers primarily view the photographs and only read the captions for additional thematic exposure to carry away with them. Barthes (1977:25-6) has commented on the anchorage function played by the caption writer's fixing of a vantage point on the photograph's meaning. The historical shift to caption functioning to illuminate the visual dips the picture in lyrical fixative and is crucial to the magazine's gaze (Lutz and Collins 1993:76).

### The Readers' Gazes

The gazes of the magazine readers perceive, receive and read the photo (Barthes 1977:199). This is conducted independently and in addition to the gaze of the photographer and the magazine. Through agency, enculturation, and diversity of experience, readers' gazes have a history and a future. Therefore the photograph is more than a material object. It evokes an imagined world before the photographer and author team arrives, it provokes further imagining of the photograph itself and remembrances of the story told (Lutz and Collins 1993:196). Fantasy is permitted through learned cultural models, which help interpret gestures and what is going on in the background and outside the photograph the reader is viewing. In vicarious viewing there is a presumption of consenting in the photo that leads to the illusion of having a relationship with the Melanesian Other. Paradoxically the readers' gaze can also be impoverished by not experiencing what the photographer experienced. Moreover, the elevated class position assumed by those reading *National Geographic* could also create distancing from the Melanesian Other (Lutz and Collins 1993:196).

### The Non-Western Subject's Gaze

The non-Western subject's gaze confronts the camera, looks at someone/something within the photo frame, looks off into the distance or looks at nothing at all. Lutz and Collins calculated that the Other looked at the camera about one fourth of the time (1993:197). About eleven percent of the Melanesian gaze focuses on the camera, as depicted in the tourist work featured in "The face behind the mask" (Gordon and Austen 1982:148-9). Having a Westerner in "Stone Age drummer" draws attention away from the Westerner beyond the frame (Kirk 1972:383). Lutz and Collins indicate that the Other has no discernible gaze in about fourteen percent of the *National Geographic* photographs overall, comparable to the somewhat higher nineteen percent for the photographs of Melanesians (1993:203). "The village: still the pivot of Sepik life" is lushly shrouded in green, and typifies these photographs, which are often of dark or masked tiny

figures read as landscape or activity rather than as individuals (Kirk 1973:376). Group photographs with a mutual gaze are found in forty-five percent of the Melanesian photographs. Gift giving in Trobriand clan sociality, depicted in “Neighbors lend helping hands,” illustrates how group photographs tend to portray a determined, coordinated, forward-looking Other (Theroux and Essick 1992:126). Group photographs with the Melanesian Other’s gaze running off into the distance only account for eight percent of the photographs in *National Geographic*.

### The Direct Western Gaze

Eight of the Melanesian photographs in *National Geographic* include outsiders who have a direct Western gaze in the photograph. Activity, vantage point and facial expression exchanged between the Westerner and the Melanesian Other dramatize cues to moral and social character. In ‘On the outside looking in,’ the reader views through the proxy of Indonesian settlers, but the Dani man does not look back (O’Neill and Steinmetz 1996:16-7). When there is lack of mutuality and reciprocity the gaze is distinctly colonial and the Westerner views the Other as exotic object (Lutz and Collins 1993:204). In “To connect with his flock” the White missionary assumes a superior colonial position by imperiously looking down upon his Melanesian audience (O’Neill and Steinmetz 1996:18). Incorporating a sloping structure into the composition creates the idea of descent or decline from the Westerner to the Other (see Maquet 1986).

The direct Western gaze, like that of the ethnographer, offers the validation of having participated in the life of the Other. In ‘To learn the ways of the Gimis’ (Gillison and Gillison 1977:126) in the New Guinea Highlands, anthropologist Gillian Gillison indicates “they were very puzzled by what I was doing.” In featuring their daughter in “Six-year old Samantha,” “Timeless ritual of youth,” and “Favorite of the Gimis” (Gillison and Gillison 1977:127, 132-3, 146) Gillian and David Gillison opened a moral evolutionary chasm that revealed a contradiction in social relations between the West and Melanesians, otherwise less visible. Having a Westerner in the local setting conveys complex intercultural relations believed to obtain between the West and the rest and creates greater imaginary participation through identification with the Westerner (Lutz and Collins 1993:203).

Alternatively, the direct Western gaze can act to undermine the authority of the photographer by revealing the photograph being produced, an artifact rather than an unmediated fact. Having a Westerner in the photograph prompts self-awareness in the viewer, which can promote distancing rather than immersion. Seeing of the self being seen is antithetical to voyeurism (Alvarado 1979/80).

### The Refracted Gaze of the Other

The refracted gaze shows the exoticized Other with camera, mirror, or mirror equivalent as tools of self-reflection and surveillance (Lutz and Collins 1993:207). Although more prevalent in the 1950’s in *National Geographic*, the refracted gaze has continued to be used to represent the Melanesian Other over the past 30 years. In “Style makes the man” (Kirk 1973:367) a Sepik man holds “a trade-goods mirror,” and in “Stone Age drummer” (Kirk 1972:383) an Asmat man confronts a tape recorder. These refracted gazes bolster the Western myth of the Melanesian Other as childlike and possessing historical self-consciousness only with discovery and colonization. The refracted gaze promotes the myth of history and change being characteristics of the West, and historical self-awareness for Melanesians only arriving with colonialism.

### Academic Gaze

The various gazes embedded in this project ultimately reach the reader through the gaze of an academic anthropologist. The academic’s gaze is a subtype of the Western reader’s gaze because it reflects existing discourses on cultural difference and social relations of the Other, but is distinguished by distinctive

intent and by the societal position of the academic as a First-World, White, middle-class, male (is this case), academic anthropologist. As with other readers, the academic's gaze is still voyeuristic and hierarchic, perhaps even more insidiously because of masquerading as science. My quest to experience fieldwork with Melanesians outside the world capitalist system led me to the Wopkaimin in the highlands of PNG. Wishing to experience a vanishing traditional society became ironic under the accumulating social forces attendant upon the development of a major open-cut mining project. Imperialist nostalgia became a mask to cover my involvement with processes of domination that enabled my ethnographic fieldwork (see Rosaldo 1989).

The academic anthropologist's gaze in this paper goes beyond an aesthetic/literal appreciation to anthropologize the West (Rabinow 1986). It critiques the images from *National Geographic* as cultural artifacts to illustrate how Melanesians have been naturalized, exoticized, sexualized, and then idealized with the coming of modernity to a premodern world.

### NATURALIZATION

The naturalized Melanesian Other appearing in *National Geographic* would be identified by Eric Wolf as "people without history," characterized by having pastor-oriented societies and personalities (1982). Not only are the unchanging Melanesians more primitive than civilized, they are also "natural" humans without history (Lutz and Collins 1993:108). When the White photographer-adventurer plays music back to the black Melanesian performer in "Stone Age drummer" (Kirk 1972:383), the refracted gaze of the Other informs a story about the coming of self-awareness to primitives through encountering the West. Rosaldo situates a cultural evolutionary ladder operating in the West that assigns a precultural bottom rung to Stone Age peoples like Melanesians (1989). A cultural middle rung is assigned to societies with historical dynamism like India and Japan. At the postcultural top rung are Westerners no longer possessing culture, but who hold on to history through their power to control the evolutionary advance of the rest towards democracy and capitalism. Through the standard evolutionary model of the Stone Age, Melanesians become people without history or trajectory.

#### Halo of Green

*National Geographic* considers their study of nature to be more scientific than their treatment of society (Lutz and Collins 1993:109). Thus the naturalization of the Other is a trope which naturalizes the time- and landlocked Melanesians in their place. In "Beside a river's elbow" (Kirk 1972:383), "Shrouded in rattan cane and palm streamers" (Kirk 1972:386-7), "Lifeline of a tribal culture" (Kirk 1973:356-7), "Magnificent feathered jewels" (Gillison and Gillison 1977:124-5), "Only 50-years ago" (Leydet and Austen 1982:153), "This is the most remote spot I have ever worked in" (Hapgood and Steinmetz 1989:246), "Tropical spawn of coral reefs" (Theroux and Essick 1992:121-2), "The world beyond the mountain wall" (O'Neill and Steinmetz 1996:11-2), and "Tightroping on roots" (Steinmetz 1996:42-3), the routine location narrative presents Melanesians as people of nature. Location images evoke in Western readers an imagined nostalgia of Melanesians as "natural people" prior to the ecological degradation brought by industrialization, which severed the link between humans and nature (MacFarlane 1987). Melanesians are naturalized through their remote landscapes and seascapes, and through their cultural practices.

#### Nature: the Subject of Labor

The passive and lazy Other often presented in colonial discourse is little in evidence in *National Geographic* (Gilman 1985), which focuses on the industriousness of the Other (Lutz and Collins 1993:106). The cultural appropriation of nature in the West is the object of labor, but in Melanesia it is the subject of labor, which further naturalizes the Other. Melanesian men are

represented as hunters in “Pork rides piggyback” (Leydet and Austen 1982:167), and “Tree people live in tightknit clans and hunt game like cassowary” (Steinmetz 1996:35). Both Melanesian men and women are shown fishing in “Women work while men relax” (Kirk 1972:402-3) and in “Piercing sunlit shallows with a wooden, metal tipped spear” (Theroux and Essick 1992:130-1), and they are shown gathering in “Everyday life” (Steinmetz 1996:41). A bountiful environment as the subject of labor further naturalizes and effeminizes the fecundity of the Melanesian Other.

Civilizing colonialism “enacted the principles of material individualism: the creation of value by means of self-possessed labor; the forceful domination of nature; the privatization of property; and the accumulation of surplus through an economy of effort” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:246). The hunting and ritual exertion of Melanesian men does not signify work to the colonialist gaze. Melanesian women seemed to have been coerced into doing what was properly male labor, their desultory scratching on the face of the earth in “Subsistence is an uphill climb” (O’Neill and Steinmetz 1996:12-3) evokes the ineffectual efforts of mere beasts of burden (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). The imperialist gaze perceives Melanesia as undomesticated, which is less the result of climate than it being a moral wasteland. Melanesians, the peoples of the wild, share its qualities. Unable to master their environment, they lack all culture and history (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

### EXOTICIZATION

*National Geographic* reflects a fundamentally strange, yet beautiful exotic Other and rarely depicts poverty, starvation, dirtiness and violence. The Melanesian Other is by definition attractive. Trafficking in ugly, revolting images of ethnic difference has been left to movies and television news (Lutz and Collins 1993:90). To maintain its high circulation, the magazine appeals to preexisting, culturally tutored notions about Melanesians as the Black Stone Age peoples of the Pacific. Racial attitudes transfix attention on the unusual scene, often spread over two pages of the magazine, and the Western readers’ humanness as the people who act and dress in standard ways is defined. Exoticized Melanesians become a spectacle and their significance is discredited as a strategy of containment against any depth of involvement with the world (Polan 1986:63).

### Effeminized Savagery

*National Geographic* photography shares an earlier Boasian salvage ethnography perspective that “ritual contained distilled history and cultural wisdom, [and] that it was the most conservative and thus the most meaningful remnant of culture” (Banta and Hinsley 1986:106). The enchantment with ritual stems from it being a key to the past and indicative of photographer and writer having traveled through space to travel through time, in accordance with the connection made by Victorian evolutionary anthropologists in the last century (see Fabian 1983). The display of Melanesians in indigenous dress suggests difference, social stability and the timelessness of a region characterized by nature, taboo, danger and adventure – a Stone-Age land out of time (see Graham-Brown 1988). The Asmat are referred to as “Stone Age inhabitants of a mosquito-ridden delta” (Kirk 1972:382). Among the Gimi in the highlands of New Guinea, Gillison and Gillison “found a community still living in a Stone Age culture,” (1977:126) Travel for the scientific study of primitive Melanesians is ultimately based on evolutionary stages, seeking out remnant cultural survivals.

The Melanesian world is male through the eyes of *National Geographic*. This stems from the Western cultural pattern that assigns things masculine to the cultural and things feminine to the natural (Ortner 1974). The male Melanesian performer of an initiation ritual in “Ritual adoption strengthens village ties” (Kirk 1972:390) is presented as rooted in tradition and living in a sacred and superstitious world. The picturing of Melanesians as living close to the supernatural and the past tends to flatter the image of Melanesian emotional life; ritual is

presented as routine procession routine (see Rosaldo 1989). The moment of group grief during an Asmat funeral merely becomes cultural display of special paraphernalia and performance in "Mourning the husband" (Kirk 1972:398-9) that presents widows squirming through the mud in anguish to mask their scent from the ghost of the corpse reposing in a sago frond coffin.

Lavish attention focussed on displays of bodily decorated men exoticizes and eroticizes the male Melanesian Other in rituals of fertility in "Possum, leaves" (Gillison and Gillison 1977:128-9) and "Crested with cockatoo feathers" (Theroux and Essick 1992:128), of marriage in "Five pigs and a hundred dollars" (Gillison and Gillison 1977:138-9), of ceremonial gift exchange in "Under sails of stitched pandanus leaves" (Theroux and Essick 1992:122-3), of head-hunting in "Feathered paddles churn the Pomatsj River" (Kirk 1972:380-1), in "Grisly relic" (Kirk 1973:374), and in "Once mortal enemies, still fierce competitors" (O'Neill and Steinmetz 1996:32-3), of sorcery in "To catch a killer" (Gillison and Gillison 1977:142), and of funerals in "A feast of beetle larvae" (O'Neill and Steinmetz 1996:30-1).

The story told about the Melanesian Other is one of exotically and erotically decorating the male body (Lutz and Collins 1993:91, 145). Portraits abound of men with artifacts through their nasal septums (see "Men make their own fashions," Kirk 1972:384-5) and decorated headpieces (see "Saying this," Gillison and Gillison 1983:152). "Style makes the man" is captioned "a trade store mirror prompts a bit of primping" (Kirk 1973:366-7), which renders a refracted gaze designed to be read as a sign of vanity. Male finery and self-display become salient markers, it is Melanesian males rather than females who dress in this exotic fashion. Thus, the idealized search for exotic male cultural practice reaffirms white male dominance through effeminizing the Melanesian Other.

The voyeuristic coverage of death and blood, which seems obligatory and obsessive, is eroticized and is arguably homoerotic. There is a nearness of Melanesians to the violence and fearsomeness of death in 'Uneasy stares' (Kirk 1972:376-7) that dwells on the "grim, heavily armed warriors [who] are members of a raiding party intent on taking heads," and on the "Grisly relic" (Kirk 1973:374) trophy of the head-hunter. The sinister, frightening quality of the Melanesian cultural environment is accentuated in "Fear of ghosts" (Kirk 1972:378), depicting a man sleeping with his head on a skull pillow identified as "grisly relics of ancestors as well as of victims ... to ward off spirits of the dead." Male initiation focuses on bloodletting in "Tight-lipped with pain" (Kirk 1973:358-9), and human blood is used to attach a drumskin to its base in "Human blood binds lizard skin to jungle drums" (Kirk 1972:406-7). Feelings of danger are enhanced through references to "Music of the soul" (Kirk 1973:380-1) and the "ghostly pipping of a sacred bamboo flute" in "Haunting and mysterious" (Gillison and Gillison 1977:144-5). The decorated male presented in *National Geographic* is effeminized, infantilized, and eroticized.

## SEXUALIZATION

The Melanesian Other is further effeminized through the imagery of naked Black women in *National Geographic*. By purveying the nude Other, the magazine developed Western ideas about race, gender, and sexuality with the marked subcategorization in each case being Black, female, and unrepressed (Lutz and Collins 1993:115). The magazine's gaze interprets this volatile trio in the context of National Geographic's scientific mission in the pursuit of truth to forestall any sexual attraction or eroticism being attributed to their photographs, but of course they are erotic and exploitative (Abramson 1987:141). Supposedly, the breast merely represents the struggle against prudery (Bryan 1987:89) and the realistic picture of how the Melanesian Other lives. Considerations of race, gender and sexuality are not factors influencing the ways in which White women's breasts are exposed. The art of photography exists behind the veneer of a scientific agenda. The foundation of *National Geographic's* project of beauty and truth is based on racial and gender subordination, "in this context, one must first be black and female to do this kind of symbolic labor" (Lutz and Collins 1993:116).

## Motherhood and Domesticity

In trafficking in photographs of black Melanesian women for an overwhelmingly white readership, *National Geographic* is clearly linking narrative threads of gender and race (Lutz and Collins 1993:166). The Melanesian women in *National Geographic* also tell a story about civilizing colonialism. In the civilizing role of colonialism, women contributed through their nuclear families, healthily clad bodies and the practical arts of refined living and devotion to God (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). The imperialist gaze calls for a transformation of Melanesian motherhood and domesticity. Crude, dirty huts, as in “Men’s houses built in the centers of muddy, fenced compounds” (Gillison and Gillison 1983:150-1), should be altered into neatly bounded residences as a precondition for private property and refinement. The work of Melanesian men should be recast as farming while women should be brought indoors to the domestic domain, and families should start producing for the market to learn the worth of time and money (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). Melanesian life is represented as moral and social chaos. In violation of the bourgeois ideal of domesticity, Melanesian marriages are represented as bonds between groups, such as “Loving comfort but not kinship” (Theroux and Essick 1992:136), which depicts matrilineality through a Trobriand father’s mothering embrace of a son not of his matriclan. Melanesian mothers routinely hold babies (see “Tiny rider clings monkey-like,” Kirk 1972:404) and baby objects (see “Everyday life,” Steinmetz 1996:40) in ways to which the Western viewer is unaccustomed. As the reader’s gaze focuses on the ‘Child of the Sepik’ (Kirk 1973:354-5) and on another Melanesian child in ‘Gift to keep the peace’ (Kirk 1972:401), they become proof of the lack of boundaries between persons, their property, and their productive practices in Melanesia. According to Jean and John Comaroff (1992, 271), the civilizing colonialist gaze seeks:

“to domesticate the breeding grounds of savagery.... Marriage was to be a sacred union between consenting, loving, and faithful individuals; the nuclear household was to be the basis of the family estate; male and female were to be associated, complementarily, with the ‘public’ and the ‘private,’ production and reproduction.”

## Sensuality

The naked Black woman is epitomized through mother-child photographs, nicknamed “tits and tots” by *National Geographic* (Meltzer 1978). Breasts in Western culture have been normalized as young, large, round, and not sagging (Young 1990:191), and more than anything else the *National Geographic* nude is a set of breasts, which over the years have been increasingly objectified (Lutz and Collins 1993:175). The racial distribution of female nudity in standard tit and tot images like ‘Women wear ‘modesty aprons’’ (O’Neill and Steinmetz 1996:14) conforms to Western fantasies about Black women’s sexuality (Lutz and Collins 1993:172). Whether the Black Melanesian woman is presented as art and aestheticized or as science and dissected, she is portrayed as exuberant and excessive in her sexuality. There emerges from the anthology of breasts a sort of half-aesthetic concept: the Melanesian bosom as the property of *National Geographic*. The Melanesian bosom expresses an obvious invitation all along the trajectory from sender to addressee (see Alloula 1986).

Stylistic changes in the depiction of the female nude in the magazine relate to changes in commercial photography of women. Africanism (black) and Orientalism (brown) evidenced both intrigue and danger attributed to the Other (Clifford 1988). As a result of displaying their bodies for close examination, erotic qualities and sexual license are ascribed to Melanesian women. The naked Melanesian women in “Tiny rider clings monkey-like” (Kirk 1972:404) represents the nude presented as ethnographic fact. Only with the growing tolerance of aesthetic photos in the West has the nude become a more sexualized object.

Naked Melanesian women are often shown without children. In the prenuptial rite 'Preparing their own performance' Gimi women are "weaving sensually," while in "Flower covered dancers" Gimi women enact "portrayals of rivers, wild taro, bandicoots-fast-moving or abundant things of the forest floor that symbolize the fertility of primordial women" ((Gillison and Gillison 1977:135, 1983:148-9). Framing Asmat women in the arms of men in 'Feigning the sleep of the newborn' (Kirk 1972:390-1) portrays their sexual availability in fertility rites. The nude female Melanesian teenager erotically spread over two pages in alluring light and blurred background in 'Face of the future' (Leydet and Austen 1982:170-1) is aestheticized as soft porn.

The addition of a woman to a photograph can sexualize her as a commodity. Women in the practice of exogamy in "Mock gloom marks an Asmat wedding" (Kirk 1972:396), and in bride price negotiations in "Five pigs and a hundred dollars" (Gillison and Gillison, 1977:138-9) are dramatically led away by the groom's uncle. Depictions of Melanesian exogamy and bride price reinforce that women have traditionally been seen as objects to be possessed and owned as adornments to the lives of men (Pollock 1987). The Trobriand "Women of Kaileuna Island" (Theroux and Essick 1992:116-7) who "bathe in a paradise so unspoiled and sensuous that it could have flowed from the brush of Gauguin" are sexualized as a tourist commodity. The phantasmagoric presentation of nude Melanesian women is for the consumption of Western White readers back home. The immoderate sexuality and the uncontained body of the savage Black female poses a tangible threat to Western male viability in Melanesia (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). In *The Colonial Harem*, Alloula shows that when women became public "what they show of their anatomy "eroticized" by the "art" of the photographer is offered in direct invitation (1986:118). They offer their body to view as body-to-be-possessed, to be assailed with the 'heavy desire' characteristic of pornography." It is an eroticized, effeminizing gaze that reestablishes existing power relations in the imperialist scheme.

### LOCATION PAST TO LOCATION PRESENT

The savage innocence and beauty of Melanesians, as naturalized "primitives" without culture, is regularly represented in the *National Geographic* photographs. The Melanesian Other idealized as masculine and savage or as feminine and sensual stems from the magazine's gaze, which in turn is broadly linked to themes in Western cultural history (Lutz and Collins 1993:95). Idealization of the Melanesian Other, like appreciation of taxidermy and nature photographs, allows for detemporalization and for fear for the loss of middle-class wealth to be allayed (Haraway 1984/5). The noble savage is idealized to assuage threats of chaos and to minimize Western connectedness to the Melanesian (Lutz and Collins 1993:95). The noble savage as fetish serves to undermine the nobility's claim to a special status, but extends the status only to the bourgeoisie, not to Melanesians or lower classes at home (White 1978). Melanesian becomes "a metaphorical mirror held up between savagery and civility, past and present, bourgeois ideology and its opposites at home and abroad" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:289). Stories of natural abundance, sensuality and orderly social change, however, eventually give way to a radically changing narrative of a postcolonial world that is increasingly degraded and dangerous.

### Modernization on the Periphery

Melanesians were depicted subserviently attending to White explorers in National Geographic photography until the 1970s when images like 'A pack train treks across wasteland trails in the Kubors' (Gilliard 1953:429) became too disturbing because of the ever present possibility of rebellion and anger (Lutz and Collins 1993:159). White travellers largely disappeared from the photographs and Melanesian space became racially tranquil. Since the 1970s, *National Geographic* coverage of the Other has been proportioned 28% to black people, 60% to brown people, and 12% to White people, with those of color most likely to

be portrayed at work and those with white skin at rest (Lutz and Collins 1993:161). This counterpoises superstition/ritual with science/technology and darker skin/exotic clothes with lighter skin/Western clothes along evolutionary lines. Photographs of the Melanesian Other are organized into a story about cultural evolution couched in normative discourse of modernization and development. The White reader remains able to interpret through standards of racial prejudice that the Black Melanesian Other was without wealth and technologically backward until Westernization provided the characteristics of civilized peoples.

Most Western media vacillate between angelic and demonic representation of the Other (Taussig 1987). *National Geographic* caters to an imagined middle-class world in the West without extreme wealth, poverty, violence, or illness by only infrequently presenting the Other as poor, ill, and hungry (Lutz and Collins 1993:105). In looking for and finding perfection, *National Geographic* is motivated by a classic humanism to clean up the Other to not be overly different (Lutz and Collins 1993:96). From the premodern world of exotic difference to the world of Western modernity is a story of stasis. In photographs contrasting the premodern with the modern, the commodity stands for the future. In 'Seven years independence' in postcolonial Melanesia "an umbrella replaces a banana leaf for shelter" (Gordon and Austen 1982:142). The commodity as contrasting representation is to be seen simply as stasis with the objects of modernity just being add ons. Dynamism, change, and agency are apportioned to the Western center, while Melanesians are just responding to the onslaught of modernization on the periphery.

The posture and stance of the posed portrait is a staple of almost all articles on the exoticized Other in *National Geographic*, and it humanizes and allows for scrutinizing the person and depicting character. The caption accompanying the Melanesian Tari man smiling from his backyard petrol station in "Almost 160 kilometres from the nearest competitor" indicates that "he himself owns no car. Such contrasts abound in this land where some communities still talk by drums" (Leydet and Austen 1982:151). Here the pose is semiotically standardized, with cars signaling technological modernity (Appadurai 1997). The pose and the backdrop have the radical potential to reconfigure social relationships. Backdrops locate the subject in the discourse of modernity as a visual fact expressed in clothes, machines, bodily comportment, and bodily accessories (Appadurai 1997). While these stories of modernity humanize, they constantly threaten to be absorbed into the taxonomic outcome of glossing over the Melanesian as an exoticized type rather than as an individual (see Geary 1988:50). The coming of modernity relates to what Rosaldo (1989) calls imperialist nostalgia for the passing of what we ourselves have destroyed.

Modernity is chronicled in contrasts between the Western capitalist economy and the Melanesian precapitalist economy. Cargo cultists in Melanesia in "Messiah of money" (Kirk 1973:362) believe wealth comes from magic shown in "Playing the dishes" (Kirk 1973:363), which "make money" by pouring coins back and forth between bowls. A high-ranking PNG government official 'shouldering stalks of bananas greets relatives during a food-exchange ceremony honoring recently deceased elders of his native fishing village 28 kilometres from Port Moresby' in "Success stories" (Leydet and Austen 1982:158). In "Death of a clan member" where "perhaps a third of the men in this region prefer Western dress" the "PNG Courts encourage pig and cash exchanges in hopes of ending cycles of revenge killings" (Leydet and Austen 1982:169). In 'Neighbors lend a helping hand' in the Trobriands "yams symbolize power and wealth...in how much one can afford to give away" (Theroux and Essick 1992:126). In the postcolonial setting of premodern gift-logic efflorescing with the coming of modernity, the photographic backdrop becomes an "experiment with modernity" (Appadurai 1997).

Feminization of modernity is told through two different stories about the work of Melanesian women. Social evolutionary theory "saw women in non-Western societies as oppressed and servile creatures, beasts of burden, chattels who could be bought and sold, eventually to be liberated by "civilization" or "progress," thus attaining the enviable position of women in Western society" (Etienne and Leacock 1980:1). Western ideological understanding of women's work has

changed since W.W.II from husband's helpmate to self-realization and independence (Chafe 1983). Since W.W.II the middle class in the West has been subjected to intense sociocultural pressures idealizing motherhood and the family. After the late 1950s there was gradual erosion in acceptance of the mother-child bond (Ehrenreich and English 1978). The ambivalent message in this social field is presented in two types of contrasting images in *National Geographic*.

The premodern husband's helpmate work of Melanesian women in 'Bonanza of copper and gold' (Leydet and Austen 1982:162) is gendered with vulnerability, primitivity, superstition and the constraints of tradition. The world of husband's helpmate becomes a feminine repository of timeless family values and living in authentic harmony with nature. These women continue to be valued for their natural life, unruined by progress that weakens the vitality of their reproductive organs (Ehrenreich and English 1978). The Melanesian woman as husband's helpmate questions progress in gender roles by acting as the repository for the lost femininity of liberated Western women (see Lutz and Collins 1993:184).

Modern self-realization and independence in women's work is conveyed in "PNG's first woman lawyer, Meg Taylor" (Leydet and Austen 1982:156-7), which is gendered with strength, civilization, rationality, and freedom (see Lutz and Collins 1993:180). In lobbying for prison reform and testing her skill in the sport of polocrosse, Meg Taylor demonstrates the feminization of modernization and statebuilding through work and play (see Kabbani 1986), even though women in successful work continue to threaten many men (Traube 1989).

### Dispossession

It is the cultural landscapes of the Melanesians that are shown to be victims of modernity in *National Geographic*. Gold mining represents the greatest assault of modernity. Marx found the fetishism of gold was characteristic of the most highly advanced system of exchange, that of capitalism, and he explicated the logic of this absurd fetishism and the vicious practices it justified (White 1978:185). The Freeport mine in the western part of New Guinea is envisioned as a 'A mountain laid bare' (O'Neill and Steinmetz 1996:21-2), whereas the Bougainville mine in the eastern half of the island is represented as a 'Bonanza of copper and gold' (Leydet and Austen 1982:162-3). According to O'Neill and Steinmetz (1996) the Freeport "mining giant has met fierce opposition from tribal groups who claim tailings have caused the flooding of their lands." For Melanesians shown on Bougainville "mine expansion has twice relocated their village" (Leydet and Austen 1982). Oil and gas exploration is depicted in "This is the most remote spot I've ever worked in," featuring "a Huli tribesman, atop a barrel of aviation fuel, [who] hiked to a site at 9,000 feet and, with some 60 others, cleared space for a helicopter to land" (Hapgood and Steinmetz 1989:247). Gold and oil of the Melanesian Other moves from savagery to industrial society. The resource as commodity is taken possession of by removing it from the context of place and people in Melanesia and placing it into the history of Western commerce, transporting it from the backward past location to the present of capitalist society (see Fabian 1983).

In the most recent *National Geographic* story, "Irian Jaya's people of the trees" (Steinmetz 1996), what is quintessentially Melanesian is identified as living with the rainforest. In 'Tightroping on roots', Melanesians are represented as "People of the Trees" (Steinmetz 1996:42-3). The representation of nature as a spiritual domain for curing the ills of civilisation has a long association with wilderness conservation and environmentalism (Nash 1982). Green consciousness has spread beyond Western activists, and indigenous culture attached to "homeland" is starting to be sentimentalized rather than denigrated in the West. Melanesian uses of land and resources are becoming idealized as non-destructive and caring in contrast to rapacious development aggression.

### COLONIAL PENETRATING GAZE

Commenting on colonial and postcolonial landscape views, Pratt (1982) finds

that the exotic scene for the viewer is encoded as male enterprises. Exoticized Melanesian landscapes and seascapes are construed as feminine and the colonized landscape is likewise symbolically feminine (Schaffer 1988). The feminine colonial frontier landscape of the Melanesian Other is exoticized and worth taking; the masculine colonizing force seeks the appropriation of the landscape. Being Melanesian is about sharing, ancestors, and forces of landscape and nature, which as Thomas (1994:30) suggests “offers a spiritual palliative to our overheated, overconsuming, unnatural, postindustrial world.” The trope of the romantic palliative co-existing with modernization is celebrated as the authentic identity of the Melanesian Other in *National Geographic*.

Representations and discourses of the Melanesian Other in *National Geographic* are interpreted in the context of imperialism as this discourse envelops and reinforces the dominant discourses of power. The general colonial gaze informs the presentation of the naturalized, exoticized, and sexualized Melanesian Other. It is a male, penetrating gaze, and all objects of the gaze are effeminized and infantilized. The phantasmagoric presentation of scenes from colonized Melanesia in *National Geographic* is for consumption of Western imperialists back home. The eroticized, and arguably homoerotic, effeminizing gaze in *National Geographic* reestablishes existing power relations in the imperialist scheme.

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**Table 1. Representation of Melanesians in *National Geographic* over the past 30 years.**

AUTHOR & PHOTOGRAPHER	Sex	YEAR	ARTICLE	PHOTOS
Kirk	M/M	1972	Head-hunters in Today's World: The Asmat of New Guinea	27
Kirk	M/M	1973	Change Ripples New Guinea's Sepik River	20
Gillison & Gillison	F/M	1977	Fertility Rites and Sorcery in a New Guinea village	18
Gordon & Austen	M/M	1982	Nation in the Making: Papua New Guinea	6
Leydet & Austen	F/M	1982	Journey Through Time: Papua New Guinea	19
Gillison & Gillison	F/M	1983	Living Theater in New Guinea's Highlands	14
Hapgood & Steinmetz	M/M	1989	The Quest for Oil	6
Theroux & Essick	M/M	1992	Under the spell of the Trobriand Islands	15
O'Neill & Steinmetz	M/M M/M	1996	Irian Jaya: Indonesia's Wild Side	12
Steinmetz	M/M	1996	Irian Jaya's People of the Trees	9
	7M/3F, 10M/0F			146



**Response to David Hyndman’s “Dominant Discourses of Power Relations and the Melanesian Other: Interpreting the Eroticized, Effeminizing Gaze in National Geographic”**

David Hyndman’s article “Dominant Discourses of Power Relations and the Melanesian Other: Interpreting the Eroticized, Effeminizing Gaze in National Geographic” brings to the fore some interesting aspects of the subject. It discusses major theoretical positions on the question of “representation” and applies them to the photographic representation of the Melanesians in the well-known nature magazine National Geographic in the last three decades. David Hyndman focuses his analytical attention on the “representers” and not the “represented,” hence the clarity and coherence in the arguments.

This article, however, raises certain larger issues, to which the discussion could be connected to reach an understanding or insight into the processes of photographic representation, which are based on claims of empirical evidence. In the following, I will identify some of these, though more in the form of questions than answers.

National Geographic’s mode of representation is colonial – and that is based on the history of the organization as well as that of the disciplines of anthropology and ethnology. Their emergence in the colonial context of the nineteenth century is well known. In that context the term “colonial” refers both to particular socio-political and ideological systems. In our present context of the twenty-first century, however, this term needs to be explored in greater depth. Does it convey continuity without change? Or, does it refer to something different, yet similar, to its predecessor? I would support the latter hypothesis and argue that the term “colonial” has increased in complexity in the twentieth century. The contemporary “colonial” is in continuity with the nineteenth century “colonial,” but concerns the geopolitics of today’s power relations. The nineteenth-century perspective had real socio-political implications, and the socio-political implications of contemporary perspectives need to be identified. In my opinion, Hyndman’s clarity in perspective – that he is discussing the representers of the Melanesian and not the represented Melanesian – delimits the article’s tight focus. However, this focus could also be fixed on the contemporary socio-political implications of National Geographic’s representations. That the colonial gaze of National Geographic effeminizes the Melanesian applies also to the nineteenth-century colonial representation of colonized people. It is the implications that define change and continuity. If the “colonial” gaze of the nineteenth century sanctioned the colonial states, then what does the effeminizing gaze of twentieth century sanction? If effeminizing the colonized gave a sociobiological dimension and often legitimacy to colonial rule, then feminizing the so-called “post-colonial” non-European or the people of the so-called “developing countries” gives a socio-biological dimension to contemporary international relations and trade. The representer is not only the photographer and/or the anthropologist, but the organization behind and around them – the National Geographic – and the power-blocks to which it belongs.

Two inter-linked aspects to the above are the electronic transmission of the National Geographic – the National Geographic Television Channel – and contemporary environmental consciousness. National Geographic as an organization has modernized, even though it retains its colonial gaze. It reaches more people through the power of the moving image and is more capable of communicating its worldview than it was in the nineteenth century. The second inter-connected aspect is that of contemporary discourse on the environment. From concern for the natural environment to the objectification of nature as “environmentfriendly” products and as eco-ethnic-tourism, the representation of nature and the natural is a socio-political phenomenon. The exotic, natural worlds feed two of the biggest industries – the media and tourism, often combining both. Yet, a cursory match-making would show that in many cases these exotic and natural locales and people happen to be the same as those represented and objectified by the nineteenth-century gaze – the worlds that were then categorized as “colonized” and today as “developing.” This inter-connection exists in the gaze of National Geographic in all its historical complexity. Thus the “eroticized,

effeminizing gaze in National Geographic” as identified by David Hyndman is the neo-colonial gaze. It represents the Melanesian “other” in older and new-but-similar terms through old and completely-new ways.

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**Response to David Hyndman’s “Dominant Discourses of Power Relations and the Melanesian Other: Interpreting the Eroticized, Effeminizing Gaze in National Geographic.”**

David Hyndman’s article is a succinct analysis of just one set of representations that can be abstracted from the pages of *National Geographic* and sorted according to many categories, but other regions come easily to mind. An exercise such as this induces a train of reflections on the frames of perception by which those in dominant situations in the First World Nations “know” the peoples of the globe. They thereby barely sense their position of privilege as anything other than natural.

*National Geographic* occupies a unique position in the magazine market, with its social cachet as the ground staking publication of a well-endowed scientific foundation. Given its massive circulation and the standards it developed for the juxtaposition of text and photograph for the whole field of popular scientific publication, it can safely be said that this type of media object is an educational and ideological tool for “setting” visual perception on a grand scale. With *National Geographic’s* continued development of film features and media programs, it expands the scope of its editorial frame to the realm of sound and the voice overlay. The photographs of the magazine in particular are common resource materials in institutional classrooms, especially with the development of age-graded versions of the codes of information. Ultimately, it is as if the First-World citizen was endowed with twelve gifts before she/he became cognizant, and thus has never existed without their powerful effects. One day the individual might be unlucky enough to prick a finger on a spindle of reality, should she/he actually venture into the pictured world and be assaulted by the smell and texture of the bodily space. The development of photography, or what Pierre Bourdieu has called the “Middle Brow Art,” as a spatial practice and as a perceptual apparatus of the bourgeoisie, and its expansion into the transnational information fields of advertisement and tourism, is thus one direction that Hyndman’s paper suggests for analysis. Transnational developmental agencies seeking financial supporters and regional and national tourist bureaus vying for the jaded eye of the First World culture hawk have perforce adopted the standards of voyeur-traveler established in *National Geographic*. But the adventure of the tourist is one into a contended space of interaction, where safety is an affect of class. The breach of constructed safety barriers is experienced as violence and penetration on sensual levels arranged in a hierarchy that privileges vision. Now, via the splice of the camera, the extension of vision, the virtual, rates as the only safe experience.

A major concern for Native American Studies has been to destabilize the seamless authority of scientific knowledge, the acceptable categories of evidence in discussions of truth, and indeed the whole constructed nature of the ideological system of scientific belief. Photographs have long had an essential truth-value that has been carefully nurtured, both for making use of and creating the primacy of vision. Seeing is believing. In tandem with captions that suggest the type of metaphoric transformation that might take place through use of such words as “contrast” and “exchange,” a powerful series of operations is effected within the body of the reader. At the end of the very long telescope that views the indigenous as other, as “good to think” (a la Lévi-Straus) but intractable in reality, very real issues of land rights, territorial control of resources and economic viability are at stake.

One fertile area for exploration described in Hyndman’s article is the linked eroticized image of the female and the effeminized image of the male, and their

conflation with symbolic values for the land to be discovered and absorbed into the capitalist sphere. A number of cases come to mind in the Native hemispheres of the Americas. For highland Maya groups, for example, there is the photographic conflation of women dressed in *traje* (traditional dress), flowers and the mountain landscape in National Geographic and other culture/travel magazines, numerous tourist brochures, and on postcards. In a Western frame the metaphors of nature and culture are freely transposed in a fertile ground of popular psychology as "what it is that might be plucked" and the evanescence of the moment. But beyond the first level, such images specifically play on some registers of *National Geographic's* format that were not mentioned in the Melanesian case. The indigenous person is framed not just in a landscape that avoids all that is ugly, but also the photograph is juxtaposed to and serialized within and across issues of the magazine with photographs of the monumental but eroded achievements of the "Ancient Maya." The idea of the Indigenous as once cultured, once productive on a monumental scale by organized surplus labor (and therefore imminently civilizable as laborer in the field of capitalist modernity) is played against the encoding of ancient knowledge woven through the *costumbre* or practices of the Maya today. All is presented to the gaze and camera of the traveler-reader. Thus knowledge of the land and its commodifiable riches becomes the perceptual domain of the investigator. The spatial separation of the magazine creates the plane on which the extraction of value and knowledge takes place. While Hyndman identifies the resources as the desired commodities to be transported from the backward past location to the present of modern capitalist society, I would suggest it is the knowledge held by the people and its pertinence to resource development that is detached and alienated in such a series of overlays against past achievements.

Hyndman's development of the Melanesian world as male through the investigation of cultural portraiture can be refracted through other fields where the female and land are displayed and the male backgrounded for significant ideological and practical reasons. It is in the more remote villages of highland Guatemala, or amongst the aged or those in subservient positions in resort hotels, or for ritual occasions and for photographs that the men don their carefully stored *traje*. This responds to several strands of reasonable existence. It is one legacy of a genocidal civil war, when it was necessary to not be identified as being from one's hometown. Secondly, there was a reaction to being seen as feminized in the context of migrant labor. Thus traditional dress becomes a marker by absence in the process of alienation and ethnic differentiation in the development of labor resources. The presence of women in photographs as the symbol of the country then takes on significant symbolic levels beyond women as nature and man as culture, where woman wears in her costume the marker of the indigenous space in their land. Just as women have to do business when the men are gone, so too they do a certain kind of work of presence here in a photograph. The rural village inhabited by woman while men travel from their homelands on transnational labor circuits is also being marked by absence. Such a vacating of identity and presence by males can be read from the series of photographs over the decades as recording a response to the forces of globalizing identity, making that very process seem inexorable and natural.

As is made clear in this article, the analysis of *National Geographic* as ideological practice and of the work that it does in the modern psyche, is a job that is pertinent to a first world struggle to see the world clearly, with as few of the effects of the gaze as possible. This is the work in a transnational context. But the translation of such a study back into the context of national politics yields further insights. The tension between native populations and national administrations geared to international development grows more complex with the presence of the camera in regions under dispute. Furthermore there is the need for the happy smiling natives of the adventure romance on the tourist-dollar interface. Finally, the excursions of First-World citizens into the pictured story raise the issues of resentment and safety when resources are being exported on the class and national interface. The natives are aware of the commodification of presence in a photograph: "Un photo; una quetzal," "A penny for a photo," cry

the children to the passing tourists. But given a chance, after long decades of exposure to the glossy paper of magazines and the culture of the family photograph, the local family and community delight in the capture of reflection on the shiny surface for their own records and, in the end, for their own agendas. The capture of the world media for fifteen minutes of fame is the necessary lifeblood of the uprising that has learnt the very lessons of which they were previously the subject and the object. The viability of photo transmission over the Internet further extends the range and influence of the contender for the reflecting gaze. But the very real tension of the image presented and the contended space that creates and devolves from it are issues that Hyndman's article draws to our attention.

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Keywords: Disciplinarity, Ethnography, International relations, Methodology. After situating how ethnography is utilised in IR and the specific disciplinary challenges that arise from this usage, three vignettes of recent accounts of how ethnography is interpreted and deployed in the field will be explored, namely, practice-focused research, autoethnography and multi-sited studies. While this is by no means an exhaustive list, these types of vignettes are useful in examining the ways in which IR engages with ethnography and in highlighting some commonalities with methodological debates in other academic fields. National intellectual traditions are multiple, and there is less of a tendency for one approach to dominate at any time or in any institution. As with the European project itself, different perspectives and expectations must live together in greater or lesser harmony. To press the analogy further, we can identify three broad attitudes to difference. They often remained bound by national assumptions and experiences; even political and social data tend to come in national sets. The result is a certain "methodological nationalism", which takes two forms. One is a tendency to generalize from one's own country, often presented as the harbinger of modernity and the model for the future.