

‘I’ve got you under my skin’ – The ethnographer’s dream re-analyzed

Michael Warner

ABSTRACT –

In a brief but deeply illuminating exploration of ‘the nature of anthropological understanding’ Clifford Geertz (1976) brought into view the potent problems that attach to the ethnographic method and its accompanying instinct. He posed the question, What happens to understanding if empathy disappears? In this paper I set out to address this and the related questions that emerge in the context of this prospective vicariousness of both the ethnographer and the subject when *both* reside ‘in between wor(l)ds’.

The broader research project informed by this paper involves a cognitive-linguistic ethnography of the manipulative aspects of political rhetoric and public discourse that are brought into general circulation with the so-called ‘War on Terror’. However, despite the interdisciplinary methodology employed in that broader study, and the fact that, strictly speaking, it does not employ conventional ethnographic methods, this paper marks the attempt to show how this minuet of the ethnographer and the anthropological subject is coupled with – indeed, inextricably linked to – the ideological register of post 9-11 discourses of in/security and the diverse ways in which it pervades everyday life.