

WORKS AND LIVES:**The Anthropologist as Author***by Clifford Geertz*

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The author takes a well travelled path, but succeeds in making a useful contribution to anthropology. Essentially his text comprises a series of case studies; Claude Levi-Strauss, Edward Evans-Pritchard, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Ruth Benedict. Geertz deals with each of these authors differently, not only because they *are* different, but because he pursues rather different issues by means of them. He analyzes Levi Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* as a multi-layered text constructed of different genres of writing, one superimposed upon the other.

Evans-Pritchard is studied in terms of the rhetorical techniques he employed in characterizing African society. He is seen as a self-conscious member of an imperial ruling class, in the "God is an Englishman" tradition. This may not be wholly fair. But Geertz feels that E-P approached ethnography with a confidence characteristic of the British empire ruling class of his day. By contrast, Malinowski is the "participant-observer," and is discussed in terms of the construction of the ethnographer's *persona* within the text. Finally, Geertz analyzes the way in which Benedict's famous works – *Patterns of Culture* and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* – were devised by the author as media for advancing her own personal criticisms of American culture.

As he says, "The ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously has less to do with either a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has with their capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly 'been there.' And that, persuading us that this offstage miracle has occurred, is where the writing comes in." Geertz also makes a useful contribution by reviewing the pressures under which anthropologists work in a postcolonial, postpositivist world.