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Contaminating Genres: Reflections on Ethnography, Literature & Psychoanalysis

Summary:

Inspired by the work of anthropologists Michael Fischer and Waud Kracke, the author argues that modern-day ethnography and its representational strategies can be enriched by knowledge of a literary genre of transnational importance: namely, of fiction that deploys psychoanalysis as a means of revisiting and assessing crucial moments in the history of a culture or country. In this study of five novels from countries as diverse as Italy, Argentina, Spain, England and the United States, dis/located understandings of the unconscious (Bollas, Lacan) are explored and offered as potential ethnographic tools, in ways that are compatible with anthropology's own critique of the Western 'Ôego' or self.