behind a title—*The Gnostic Scriptures*—which leads one to expect a fair and impartial survey of *all* Gnostic sources, one which allows the texts to speak for themselves, when it is in fact pushing a rather narrow view of early Christian gnosticism based upon an equally circumscribed purview of source materials.

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### A DIALOGICAL REVIEW


I had barely read beyond the Introduction when I knew I was in trouble. With the review, I mean. This was not my book. "I began," says Clifford,

> to see such questions as symptoms of a pervasive postcolonial crisis of ethnographic authority. While the crisis has been felt most strongly by formerly hegemonic Western discourses, the questions it raises are of global significance. Who has the authority to speak for a group's identity or authenticity? (8)

The question of who has the authority to speak for a group's identity or authenticity is only problematic for someone who looks at knowledge as something "owned" and appropriatable. *That* is symptomatic of the colonial mentality.

Ultimately my topic is a pervasive condition of off-centredness in a world of distinct meaning systems, a state of being in culture while looking at culture, a form of personal and collective self-fashioning. This predicament. . . .(9)

Why is "off-centredness" a predicament? It is only so for someone in a hegemonic state. That too is symptomatic of the colonial mentality.

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My general aim is to displace any transcendental regime of authenticity, to argue that all authoritative collections, whether made in the name of art or science, are historically contingent and subject to local reappropriation. (10)

My own aim is to re-create a transcendent regime of authenticity beyond the realm of local appropriation and through which the local assumes its shape.

I share this suspicion of "the symmetry of redemption." Questionable acts of purification are involved in any attainment of a promised land, return to "original" sources, or gathering up of a true tradition. (12)

I am a radical-in-the-classical-sense-of-the-word anthropologist concerned to strip away the layers of misrepresentation to uncover the roots.

By the time I reached page 38 my exasperation had reached its limits:

Interpretation, based on a philological model of textual "reading," has emerged as a sophisticated alternative to the now apparently naive claims for experiential authority. (38)

Clifford goes on to suggest that we look at culture as an assemblage of texts to be interpreted. Well, that's what he does. It's not what I do. Clifford is an authority on ethnographic authorities. I'm a participating anthropologist. If that's what he wants to do, fine, but don't make a virtue—certainly not a discipline—out of it. Those who read only books, only books know.

This, for me, was capped off with a return to my first-mentioned objection: "In his provocative discussion of this issue," says Clifford, Iolan Lewis (1973) even calls anthropology a form of "plagiarism." (45) Who is actually the author of the field notes? This is something, we are told sombly, that "deserves systematic study." Come on. If anthropology is plagiarism so is journalism, novel writing, T.V. news. The issue is whether anything is being removed that is still not there after its removal. Obviously it is not. The issue is whether the ethnographer has a better understanding of his/her sources than the sources do of themselves. Obviously this is rare. The issue is an issue because it is a contemporary American issue: the current obsession with "intellectual property" in the wake of the information revolution.