Cococting the “Other” in Afghanistan
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Abstract
The validity, truth and truth value of the text and context of Euro-American, especially postmodern Anglo-American, ethnographies of Afghanistan, is rarely interrogated. A systematic scrutiny of these ethnographies reveals how prolonged blind acceptance of faulty, distorted, misinterpreted, and cooked-up information buttressed by the authority of claimed “fieldwork” reproduced itself in widely circulated packages of pseudo-knowledge about the peoples and cultures of that country. Various degrees and forms of this recycling tradition are available in virtually all postmodern Anglo-American ethnographies of Afghanistan. Some instances of this reproducing tradition of pseudo-knowledge have been interrogated elsewhere. This essay offers a culturally informed scrutiny of a concocted “Pashtun couple” stored in photographs tucked in a postmodern Anglo-American ethnography of Afghanistan.

Modern anthropological ethnography had been widely proclaimed by its guild leaders as a bastion of truth housing truthful packages of knowledge about the cultural and social realities of its Other objects. Starting in the middle of the twentieth century and gaining momentum through the four decades of the Cold War (the postcolonial era) anthropology experienced a rapid decline of its modern tradition and the “reinvention” of its disciplinary identity through reflexivity (the “reflective turn” or “critical anthropology”) during the late 1960s and 1970s. Viewed broadly, the reflexive turn insisted on bursting open the gates of the bastion of positivist anthropology in order to expose the real flesh and blood of the built-in subjectivities of the theories and methods of the so called “Science of Man”. Reflexive anthropology argued for the acknowledgement and exposure of the cultural biases of Western ethnographers and the hitherto tabooed critique of the hierarchical and exploitative structure of the relationship between the Western ethnographer and the ethnographized (native/primitive/savage) Other. A major objective of reflexivity was to unveil the historical complicity of anthropology in European colonialism and the continued collaboration of the disciple with the Euro-American imperial domination of the other. The feminist consciousness of the reflexive turn underscored the historical domination of women by men in the construction of anthropological theories and practices in all locations of the ethnographer-ethnographized relations of power and domination.

In early 1980s reflexivity merged with the postmodern literary twist in anthropology converting “scientistic” ethnographic epistemology [1] into an art gallery in which how to paint the other object became more important than its empirical cultural and social realities. Ethnography moved from empirically verifiable fieldwork experience to imaginary texts punctuated with poetic prose that frequently overlapped with literary fiction. Empirical verifiability of fieldwork data and accountability for fieldwork experience became moot issues. The combined political and academic force [effect] of reflexivity and postmodernism produced the “crisis of representation” in which “ethnographic authority” shifted from [objectivity to subjectivity] the empirical contents of ethnography is extremely rare, and, tellingly, almost always confined to cases where an ostensibly anthropological text has won a wide public audience—Coming of Age in Samoa, The Mountain People, the teachings of Don Juan, Shabono. Such questioning seems as much a product of the patrolling of disciplinary boundaries as of anything high-minded” [1] italics in the original. The cases noted here became the subjects of major “anthropological scandals”

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Received: September 17, 2014; Accepted January 30, 2015; Published February 12, 2015

Citation: M. Jamil Hanifi (2015) Cococting the “Other” in Afghanistan. Anthropol 2: 139. doi:10.4172/2332-0915.1000139

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Marcel Griaule’s ethnographic imaginings about the Dogon, the controversial writings about the Tasaday [6] and other [not so widely circulated] cases that qualify for “scandal” could be added to Spencer’s list [7,8]. These scandals [and others that have remained unexposed to public view] and the fear of becoming involved in scandals of their own have strengthened the anthropologists’ resolve to refrain from questioning and scrutinizing the validity and truth value of claims about “being there” doing fieldwork, interacting with “informants”, and gathering “data” at the location of the Other. Moving the authority of ethnography from objective fieldwork to subjective writing and privileging the ethnographic writer with the right to invoke and manipulate the strategies and tactics of “confidentiality” for protecting the “privacy” and “safety” of the real “Other” are at the heart of the construction of this taboo and the institutional reluctance of anthropologists to insist on truth, truth value and the empirical validity of information from which ethnographic knowledge is constructed.

Real or potential scandals that are of interest only to areal [regional e.g. Central Asia] or country [e.g. Afghanistan] specialists are often kept isolated by “the small circle of scholars who know each other’s work well” [9]. Canfield was referring to the authors of Anglo-American postmodern ethnographics of Afghanistan produced during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. So protective and supportive of each other are the authors of this endogamous genre of ethnographies of Afghanistan that when I once raised questions about the integrity of one of its products [10] I received a harsh scolding and a threat from one of its authors [9]. Withstanding the threat and in its defiance, this essay interrogates the validity of a specific ethnographic sliver claiming to be the “Other” in Afghanistan. As mentioned above, polemical engagement of ethnography is strongly frowned upon in Western anthropology. In reviewing a book by Ernest Gellner, Paul Rabinow [quoting Michel Foucault] angrily asks “has anyone ever seen a new idea come out of a polemic?” [994: 998]. This essay answers a firm “yes” to Rabinow’s taunting question and proceeds to offer a polemical essay that implicitly contains “new ideas” for the ethnography of Afghanistan and ethical standards for the guild of Western anthropologists in general. It is beyond the scope of this article to develop these ideas into a comprehensive discussion of new ethical standards for the production of anthropological ethnography.

In “Gender for the 99 percent” [AT 29[5]: 13-16, 2013] Nancy Lindisfarne, a well known British “feminist” and Jonathan Neale, a British “anti-capitalist activist” provide a critique of neoliberalism and an alternative proposal for emphasis on the “elite control” of ideologies and practices of inequality at the intersection of class and gender hierarchies with focus on the United States. Situated in the article, an ethnographic vacuum and without any cultural context, are five photographs. It consist of three pictures under the title “A married couple ask to have their picture taken” in a pre-modern and pre-industrial nomadic black canvas tent under the title “a Pashtun couple” sitting with their faces turned towards each other. The photographs have been re-cycled in their original stacked format with the same person at the back and a different person in the foreground. This essay answers a firm “yes” to Rabinow’s taunting question and proceeds to offer a polemical essay that implicitly contains “new ideas” for the ethnography of Afghanistan and ethical standards for the guild of Western anthropologists in general. It is beyond the scope of this article to develop these ideas into a comprehensive discussion of new ethical standards for the production of anthropological ethnography.

I first noticed these three photographs more than two decades ago under the title “A married couple ask to have their picture taken” in a widely circulated 1991 book titled Bartered Brides: Politics, gender and marriage in an Afghan tribal society [13] authored by Nancy Tapper. I wonder if the title of this book and its narratives about negotiations that precede and accompany arranged marriages is inspired by or has any ideological, symbolic, literary, or ethnographic relationship to the popular Czech opera “The Bartered Bride”, a story about “true love prevails over the combined efforts of ambitious parents and a scheming marriage broker” [Wikipedia]. The English language version of this 19th century opera has been regularly staged in London and New York during recent decades. To my knowledge Nancy Tapper’s Bartered Brides is the most popular and widely reviewed book about the purported domination of women by men in Afghanistan. Vended with the authority of anthropological “fieldwork” and “research” in Afghanistan by its author, the book has received rave reviews in academic journals in most of which it is acclaimed as a highly authoritative ethnographic work about marriage and women’s life in Afghanistan.

One reader considers it “the essential book for understanding gender in Afghan society” [14]. It is quite likely that the feminist tint in the title and narratives of Bartered Brides has exerted considerable influence over the policies and practices of current Euro-American military occupation of Afghanistan. The propaganda leading to this imperial venture was heavily driven by Western feminist rhetoric arguing for the liberation of Afghan women from domination by men and the yoke of dreaded “Muslim fundamentalists”. With its liberal feminist ideological orientation, the book has become one of the “bibles” of Euro-American imperial civil and military policies and practices aimed at the “liberation” of Afghan women and the promotion of a Western model of “human rights” in Afghanistan.

Ever since I first encountered these photographs during 1991 I have been curious and puzzled about the Western European-looking face of the man in the photographs and the glaring contradictions radiating from the interactive bodies of this “Pashtun couple” sitting intimately side by side, flirting and frolicking in public view inside a pre-modern and pre-industrial nomadic black canvas tent in Afghanistan. These images of a “Pashtun couple” have never been linked to any written text or situated in an empirically verifiable spatial or temporal ethnographic location. For reasons that have to do with Western academic conventions of refrain from critically engaging the empirical validity of Western ethnographic claims about the Other and the politics and standards of Euro-American ethnographies of Afghanistan, these [and eight other] photographs in Nancy Tapper’s 1991 book have not generated any critical analysis or commentary in anthropological discourse. Given this and because of the stark contrast between the contents of the three photographs of a “Pashtun couple” and the cultural, social, and physical realities of Afghanistan I had concluded that the placement of these pictures in Nancy Tapper’s 1991 tome may have been a postmodern experiment. The thought of a gaffe or a “printing error” had also crossed my mind. Nevertheless, over the years, I continued to be curious and puzzled about the flirting and frolicking “Pashtun couple” inside a pre-industrial nomadic black canvas tent in Afghanistan. In addition, until recently, I was unaware of the demographic survey conducted jointly by Nancy Tapper and Jonathan Neale [15] among the tent dwelling nomads in the outskirts of Kabul during the early 1970s. Nor had I seen any co-authored writings by these two individuals. Now, twenty three years later, these three photographs have been re-cycled in their original stacked format.
with a revised title in a co-authored article by Lindisfarne and Neale [15]. This time the photographs are individually marked as the work of Nancy Lindisfarne [11]. Like the 1991 publication, the photographs in AT 29 [5] are published without a cultural and historical context.

During 2013 Nancy Lindisfarne and Jonathan Neale co-authored two essays [11,15]. The 2013a essay is grounded in the more comprehensive 2013b article. To my knowledge these are Lindisfarne’s and Neale’s first co-authored published writings. In the [11] essay they discuss the results of their joint fieldwork in the outskirts of Kabul during the early 1970s. My earlier curiosity and the appearance of these two co-authored articles [11,15] in one of which the three photographs reappear together with my recent first encounter with the images of Jonathan Neil’s face prompts me, as a cultural product of Afghanistan—a “native” Pashtun—in a way, the “Other” in Lindisfarne and Neale’s writings about Afghanistan—and an anthropologist with ethnographic “fieldwork” experience in the country to undertake this necessarily polemical scrutiny of the representations of a “married…Pashtun couple”. The exercise generates a forceful “yes” on behalf of the “Other” in these photographs in response to Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Yes, the imaginary Western feminist modernity concocted by Nancy Lindisfarne [Tapper] and Jonathan Neale inside a nomadic black canvas tent is out of place in pre-industrial Afghanistan. A brief historical backdrop for the presence of Nancy Tapper [Lindisfarne] and Jonathan Neale in Afghanistan and a general ethnographic overview of nomadic camps around urban areas in the country are provided as the framework for speaking to the contents of these photographs.

Both authors claim to have travelled and conducted “fieldwork” among Pashtun pastoral nomads in Afghanistan. During the “early 1970s” Nancy Lindisfarne conducted fieldwork among people [she] knew best—“rural Pashtuns like those who later supported the Taliban” [16]. Jonathan Neil “did two years of fieldwork as an anthropologist from 1971 to 1973, and the people [he] knew best were poor pastoralists who had lost their flocks and now” [17] “peddled yoghurt in the city” [2008a: 218—i.e., it was raw or soft cheese—khom panaer [Pashtu], panaer-e khom [Farsi]—they peddled, not yoghurt]. These peddlers were “proud of their nomad and Pashtun heritage” [Neale 2008a: 219]. During her travels in Afghanistan Nancy Tapper [Lindisfarne] visited Kabul for various lengths of time during 1968, 1970, 1971, and 1972. Foreign scholars were required to visit Kabul in order to obtain official government permission and bureaucratic and cultural facilitation for their research projects. The process required several weeks of residence in the city. While conducting research, Neale lived in a “rented house” [16] somewhere in Kabul during “summer 1972” [18]. Nancy Tapper acknowledges her presence in Kabul during the summer months of 1971 and 1972 but I cannot find information about the specific time and location of her residency in the city.

Nancy Lindisfarne [Tapper] and Jonathan Neale claim to have conducted a joint demographic survey in nomadic camps somewhere in the “outskirts of Kabul” [18] during the summer months of early 1970s. Based on this survey they conclude that “[i]n the several villages we knew well, perhaps one out of 50 households was rich enough to protect women and men from heavy labouring work by hiring servants and sharecroppers” [Lindisfarne and Neale 2013b: 18]. Although no specific information about the location and economy (pastoral, agricultural or mixed?) of these “households” is provided, Neale’s reference [2008a: 218] to “yoghurt peddlers in the city” living in a “camp by the animal market on the edge of town”, and reference to his visit to the “TB sanatorium in Kabul” [18] and “TB hospital” [17] with the nomads confirms their research site to be located in nomadic camps in an area adjacent to nukhas [local reference for the animal market in Kabul], south of Khaer Khana pass, and northeast of ‘Ali Abad—site of Kabul University and the TB sanatorium—the only such facility in Afghanistan.

The joint “fieldwork” of Lindisfarne and Neale in Afghanistan was focused on inter-gender relations of power, especially those surrounding and embedded in marriage among Pashtun pastoral nomads. On the basis of their fieldwork they have individually produced an extensive volume of ethnographic and political texts about Afghanistan. Neale narrates the results of his research in several compact essays [17-20]. His “forthcoming book, Poverty and Sexual Politics in Afghanistan” [20] is yet to be published. Lindisfarne’s findings and generalizations about relations of power surrounding marriage among Pashtuns are narrated in her 1979 doctoral thesis [“Marriage and social organization among Durrani Pashtuns in northern Afghanistan”] converted to the 1991 Bartered Brides: Politics, gender and marriage in an Afghan tribal society and several subsidiary journal articles and book chapters. The ideological orientation and the substance of the published writings of Lindisfarne and Neale on the subject of inter-gender relations among Pashtun nomads in Afghanistan are strikingly similar. Both authors [especially Lindisfarne] rely heavily on quantitative and metric data in support of their basically similar understanding and conclusions about marriage and gender inequality among Pashtun pastoral nomads in Afghanistan. In reviewing Nancy Tapper’s 1991 book, a prominent Western woman ethnographer of Pashtun women observes that it “reads like a grammar of rules, a myriad of general cultural facts charted onto tables and figures” [6]—much like what a demographic survey might generate.

During the fieldwork of Nancy Lindisfarne [Tapper] and Jonathan Neale in Afghanistan, the rural outskirts of towns and cities of the country were dotted with clusters of nomadic camps and agricultural villages. Adjacent to and mixed with these camps and villages were settlements of a variety of tent-dwelling peripatetic and itinerant communities, locally called “Jat” [gypsy]. The Jat communities “subsisted primarily from the sale of more or less specialized goods and services to villagers, townspeople and sometimes pastoral nomads” [21]. One such service was prostitution. In these settings it was not uncommon to find individuals, households or other social networks engaged in pimping and prostitution [21-24]. Asta Olesen provides photographs of a “camp of itinerant prostitutes north of Pul-i Khumri” [25], a city in northern Afghanistan. Although concentrated in gypsy communities, pimping and prostitution were also available in some non-gypsy households. Nancy Tapper [1991: 238] notes the presence of “male and female prostitutes” in the “camps of gypsies” as well as other ethnic groups where she claims to have conducted research. She has published the English translation of a tape-recorded local account [recorder, narrator, language, site and time of recording not specified] of pimping, prostitution and extramarital sex among the pastoral nomads in the area where she claims to have conducted research [26].

In discussing marriage, Neale states that among the poor nomads he studied near Kabul “the bride price for a pretty young woman remained as high as among rich nomads because a family’s vending income was now enhanced by a wife attracting customers by flirting with truck drivers and other men on the street” [17]. For the women of the camps studied by Neale, “[t]here are infinite opportunities for flirting at the well, or for rumours that a woman was flirting at the well. There are opportunities for the landlord’s son to look boldly at peasant girls as they work in the fields, opportunities for lewd remarks on city streets” [19]. Elsewhere he states: “….men often have affairs with other
The manual focuses on the social and cultural aspects of the Pashtun nomadic life in the area near Kabul. It discusses the roles of women in the nomadic community, the economic activities, and the relationships between different social groups. The author uses personal anecdotes and interviews to provide a vivid picture of the Pashtun way of life. The text is enriched with quotes from interviews and observations, which add a personal touch to the narrative.

The Pashtun culture is characterized by its unique social structure, where men are the dominant figures in daily life, but women play crucial roles in family, community, and economic activities. The manual highlights the importance of women's contributions to the community, often overlooked in traditional accounts.

The manual also delves into the economic activities of the Pashtun nomads, focusing on their trade and barter system. It describes the role of middlemen in the trade and the transactions that take place in the local markets.

The author provides insights into the Pashtun nomadic culture through the lens of personal experiences and observations. The manual is a valuable resource for those interested in understanding the Pashtun nomadic way of life and the cultural dynamics of the region.
The rings on the fingers of the “Pashtun couple” in these photographs contradict the rules and customs for wearing jewelry on the hands of men and women in Afghanistan. Specifically, the ring on the right little [pinky] finger of the man in these photographs blatantly contradict rules of jewelry on hands in Afghanistan. In the popular and elite cultures of Afghanistan, one will not find a woman wearing rings on her right index finger and on her left thumb and index finger. For ethnographic illustrations of these customs and rules for wearing rings on fingers in Afghanistan, see the profusely illustrated ethnographies produced by the Danish Nomad Research project in Afghanistan [22,25,28,29] and representations of Afghan men and women in numerous other ethnographic and popular sources which cannot be listed in this limited space.

The man and woman in these photographs are bare footed. A woman in Afghanistan exposing her uncovered feet to public view is violating several important rules for the proper presentation of self. These rules are grounded in various Islamic protocols and local culture. Except for some locations in its modern urban population, married woman in Afghanistan part their hair in the middle of the front part of the head. The woman in these photographs has bangs hanging over her forehead. She is an unmarried woman. For ethnographic illustrations of this rule see especially Ferdinand [28]. This symbolic marker of status is also noted in a colonial historical source [30].

A modicum of informed familiarity with the proxemics [31] of the popular culture of Afghanistan—that is the local “common sense” [32]—renders implausible the overall disposition, demeanor, and the interaction in space of the “married…Pashtun couple” captured in these photographs. Borrowing from Michael Herzfeld, a reflexive interaction by the producers of these photographs with “the locally dominant version of common sense [or] local hegemony” [32], would make them “feel foolish”. The articulation of “intimate distance” [31] by the man and woman in these photographs bluntly violate standards for social interaction between an Afghan man and a woman [married or unmarried] in public view. The relaxed and confident disposition of the man, his closed-mouth smile and open mouth laughter, directed at the woman, are forms of the presentation of self that are unavailable in the popular culture of Afghanistan. The smooth and smoothly shaved face of the man in these photographs is out of place in Afghanistan, especially in rural Afghanistan.

The erotic touching, flirting, frolicking, and aggressive demeanor of the woman in two of these photographs—wide open mouth exposing all her teeth, raised knees [risking exposure of her crotch], her left arm stretched out and wrapped around the neck of the man, and tightly holding his right hand pressing it over her right shoulder with her right hand are profound contradictions of public inter-gender tactile interaction in Afghanistan. The woman’s left hand resting near the crotch of the man and the man’s right hand gripping the left thigh of the woman are forms of tactile behavior [especially in public view] that are starkly out of place in Afghanistan and the surrounding regions and even in Euro-America. The right hand of the man gripping the right shoulder of the woman, in a hugging posture, contradicts conventions of inter-gender tactile behavior in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan [and the surrounding culture areas] these forms of interactive tactility between a man and a woman in public view produce the symbolic effect of pollution and “dirt as a matter of out of place” [33]. This defiling symbolic effect of touch would be exacerbated if the “Pashtun couple” is unmarried, if the woman is having her menstrual cycle, and if the body of the participants is not ritually clean. The hysterical laughter on the face of this “Pashtun” woman in public view would be locally judged as an indicator of moral corruption, insanity or madness.

The articulation of the staring eyes on the face of the man [bottom photograph in the stack] is out of place in Afghanistan. A local onlooker would find strange, abnormal, and alarming, the radical shift [apparently in the span of a few seconds] in the woman’s disposition from hysterical laughter [in the top photograph] to a scolded, subdued, and pacified demeanor in the bottom photograph. The inter-gender proxemics contained in these photographs produce the social effect of dishonor and shame on the “Pashtun couple” individually and collectively on them and on the larger kinship and other social groups to which they belong. In the photograph on the top of the stack, the man appears to be intoxicated. Local common sense would assign this facial configuration to a charsi or bangi, a person who is drugged with marijuana or opium.

It is beyond the scope of this article to produce a somatological analysis of the morphology of the two faces in these three photographs. I am not an expert in the study of the human face but am familiar with some of the academic literature dealing with the effect of aging on the morphology of the human face [34]. Familiarity with the physical anthropology of Afghanistan [35] [including facial photographs of 97 men by Louis Dupreel], thousands of photographs of faces in ethnographic and popular literature, and knowledge about the physiognomy of the population of Afghanistan and Euro-America, produces a convincing argument in support of situating the face of the man in these photographs in Western European population. The man’s face also offers a stark contrast to the face of a Pashtun man photographed by Nancy Tapper in Afghanistan during the early 1970s and published, not in her 1991 book, but in three editions of a popular textbook about the cultural anthropology of the Middle East and Central Asia [36-38].

Who is this liberated and feminized couple facing Nancy Tapper’s camera in these photographs inside a nomadic black canvas tent near Kabul? Given the numerous cultural and physical contradictions outlined above, the man and woman in these photographs [11] are not a “married…Pashtun couple” in Afghanistan. There are several moving and still photographs of Jonathan Neale, including his full face, available on the internet. [See Jonathan Neale, “Stop Global Warming: Change the World”, Counterfire.org, September 18, 2009]. To my view, without doubt, the man in the photographs [11] is Jonathan Neale. The morphology of his face—overall shape, cheeks, mouth, nose, eyes, eyebrows, forehead, ears, skin color, eye color [and how these parts are configured]—bears a stark likeness to the face of the man in Nancy Lindisfarne’s photographs taken in Kabul during the early 1970s. We have European “imperial eyes” at both ends of Nancy Lindisfarne’s camera lens.

If the two tattoo-like marks—one on the forehead and one on the chin—of the woman in these photographs and the jewelry affixed to her right nostril are removed, the physical format of her face would be quite “normal” in a European Caucasian population. The woman maybe Jonathan Neale’s wife. But given the apparent permanency of these marking on her face and the ethnographic notes by Jonathan Neale referred to in this essay, it is plausible to assume that the woman sitting next to the man in these photographs is “Pkhé”, Shin Gul’s future wife, who at one time had shared intimate personal information about her future husband with Jonathan Neale. Pkhe, a member of a poor nomadic household, had experience in posing for the camera so that her photograph could be used by her pimp to find customers for her
sexual services in exchange for needed resources. As the prospective wife of Shin Gul, a poor Pashtun nomad, Pkhē was well served by participating in these flirting and frolicking proxeomics so that when she got married, her husband’s family’s “vending income….would be enhanced by a wife attracting customers by flirting with truck drivers and other men on the street” [14]. Pkhē’s erotic tactile interactions with Jonathan Neale reflect their declared intimacy and may have been meant as “a poke in the eye” of Shin Gul [her fiancé] whom she had once dismissed as “poor and gauche”. Being poor, it is unlikely that Pkhē’s wardrobe included the national dress of Afghanistan and the expensive rings placed on her fingers. Somehow, she must have been induced to put these upper class cultural artifacts on her body and be photographed while participating in flirting and frolicking proxeomics with a powerful outsider in exchange for some material reward. But Pkhē had no idea her picture would be converted to ethnographic and political capital and vended as the wife of Jonathan Neale, a Kafer, impersonating a “Pashtun” man. The image of Pkhē, the girl engaged to Shin Gul, stored in these photographs bears a strong resemblance to the face of “an engaged girl” printed on the cover of the paperback edition of Nancy Tapper’s 1991 Bartered Brides.

The photographs of Pkhē and the Anglo-American ethnographer flirting with her inside a nomadic black canvas tent near Kabul capture an instance of hegemonic intervention in which the cultural and physical identities of the Other in Afghanistan are imperially imposed and marketed as the copy-righted private property of Nancy Lindisfarne [Tapper]. The energy for speaking to this violent imperial imposition of Western feminist pseudomodernity on pre-industrial Muslim Afghanistan by a pair of Anglo-American ethnographers is drawn from the emergent academic, political and moral consciousness in which “Other-fucking in its vulgar forms is drawing to a close” [Sanjek 1999: 41] in anthropology including, hopefully, the anthropology of Afghanistan. Whether the concocting of a “Pashtun couple” by Nancy Lindusfare [Tapper] and Jonathan Neale qualifies as a “scandal” is not for this writer to decide. The academic and ethical objectives of this essay are to stimulate a renewed anthropological discourse about the professional and ethical requirements for a link between the audience of ethnographic texts and the true cultural, political, and social location[s] of the empirically verifiable information from which knowledge about the Other is constructed in these texts. To my knowledge, in the only critical review of Nancy Tapper’s popular Bartered Brides, Benedicte Grima [6] may have been thinking about the need for such a link when she wrote: “More disturbing is the lack of mention of informants. It seems that a work dealing with gender would at least specify whether the voice behind quoted statements and opinions is male or female….the book’s greatest shortcoming is the lack of any feminine voice”. The cooked up photographs of a “Pashtun couple” by Nancy Lindisfarne [Tapper] is an example of a disturbing imaginary ethnography in which the border between the observer and observed is violently removed by the power of the pen and camera of the Anglo-American ethnographer.

References