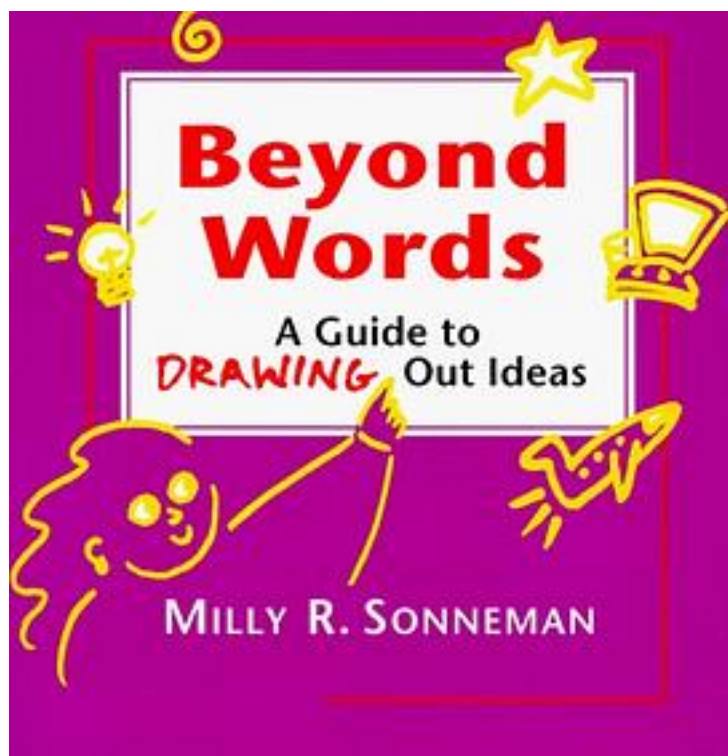


Beyond Words



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Even within anthropology, a discipline that strives to overcome misrepresentations of peoples and cultures, colonialist depictions of the so-called Dark Continent run deep. The grand narratives, tribal tropes, distorted images, and "natural" histories that forged the foundations of discourse about Africa remain firmly entrenched. In "Beyond Words", Andrew Apter explores how anthropology can come to terms with the "colonial library" and begin to develop an ethnographic practice that transcends the politics of Africa's imperial past. The way out of the colonial library, Apter argues, is by listening to critical discourses in Africa that reframe the social and political contexts in

which they are embedded. Apter develops a model of critical agency, focusing on a variety of language genres in Africa situated in rituals that transform socio-political relations by self-consciously deploying the power of language itself. To break the cycle of Western illusions in discursive constructions of Africa, he shows, we must listen to African voices in ways that are culturally and locally informed. In doing so, Apter brings forth what promises to be a powerful and influential theory in contemporary anthropology.

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