



Pergamon

Futures 34 (2002) 15–31

FUTURES

www.elsevier.com/locate/futures

Jungle studies: the state of anthropology

John Hutnyk

*Department of Anthropology, Goldsmith's College, University of London, New Cross,
London SE14 6NW, UK*

Abstract

The anthropological project, tired and exhausted after years searching for 'methodological absolutism', remains mired in a spiral of self-doubt and self-indulgent 'crisis'. Anthropological teaching continues the very complicities that a self-critical reflexivity professed to avoid. Co-option and incorporation, even at the best of times. This essay asks just what would break the cycle of 'suicidal rejoicing' for an 'end of anthropology' that never comes, that continues to be taught anew, over and over? Nietzsche once suggested that what is falling down should be pushed. A reconfigured anthropology would be a different discipline, perhaps reinvesting the tasks of knowledge production with a purpose that was not wholly slave to the same interests of power. There is much to be cleared away. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

OK. Let's for starters assume there is a discipline called anthropology. Furthermore, let it be a wholly institutionally-based global system of knowledge about the peoples of the world, organised with researchers and research projects, teaching programmes and degree structures, publishing houses, theoretical schools (more than one, more than a succession of paradigms), methodological precepts, debates, tenure, career, course guides, reading lists, footnotes—and let this whole agglomeration be, if not the most important and central among the knowledges, at least not totally decimated and paralysed by anxiety and reflexive crisis or post-colonial/post-modern angst... Let us then invoke the proper names and crucial texts...

A truly critical form of thought should begin with a critique of the more or less unconscious economic and social bases of critical thought itself [1, p. 74].

E-mail address: john.hutnyk@gold.ac.uk (J. Hutnyk).

For God's sake, this has gone on and on for too long: There has clearly been a demand to shake up a discipline complacent in its work, even at its most critical. Intoning the big name liturgy of fieldwork, history or reflexivity won't do anymore. Uncompromising and even rude, this shake-up is demanded by students and younger researchers dissatisfied with the limits of what they have been taught, angry because of the slim prospects for rewarding employment, and militant in the face of a myopic vision on the part of the social-cultural institutions, and tenured inmates, who should be best placed to address world-wide conditions of increasing poverty, exploitation, destruction and despair. The predicament is not literary, methodological or mere 'crisis'. It is an ideological and systemic malaise.

While it is certain that anthropology has always been to some degree complexly bound up with service to the state, in the thrall of power and imperialism, and constrained to a peripheral relevance inadequate to its ambitions and scope—and it remains so—the place of instruction within the teaching factory also remains fairly orthodox. True there is, in the study of culture, now a considerable second-order literature making all sorts of evaluations of the interested products of social research in the last hundred plus years. But in pedagogical terms this seems somewhat tame if it means re-evaluation and 'crisis' always resume a business-as-usual countenance. In the predictable and conventional teaching of the discipline the complicity of 'research' with power is usually allocated space only after the 'core' history has been covered—general principles outlined, canonical texts summarised, various conjurings with the Nuer, structuralism, transaction, interpretation, and extensive methodological rule-setting about fieldwork, responsibility, authenticity and voice. Very often the curriculum now is driven by a variety of mixed funding considerations. This means it is ever more important to be vigilant about what constitutes, and who constitutes/how we constitute, the discipline at all levels. Undergraduate training that would bore most people is no better than a virulent criticism that would misrepresent the really existing circumstances in which knowledge enters the world.

Let us be under no illusion that the function of university instruction has changed, and that this—along with conditions of international commerce and globalising 'culture'—means anthropology too has changed. It is not innocent that development agencies and other international bodies increasingly seek out anthropology graduates for recruitment (though perhaps not in enough numbers to constitute a 'career path' for all). The dilemma can be illustrated at several levels and often anecdotally. The point would be to draw out the implications. For example: at PhD research student level, the more and more stringent demands upon students to have fully planned research proposals in place before enrolment, let alone before heading to the field. The predetermination is a consequence of bureaucratic pressures for completion within a best-practice monitored and efficient three or four years, a constraint which would mean the exclusion of most practising anthropologists if applied retrospectively. Many years ago Malcolm Crick drew attention to this issue in a survey essay on fieldwork discussions [2] but few substantial evaluations of the changed circumstances in the managerialist university, with its research assessment exercise and funding allocation driven protocols, have graced the major journals (despite being the main item of discussion, even dark mutterings, in conference and departmental

corridors).¹ This situation cannot be rectified with a new survey article modernising the Crick style for the contemporary corporatised period. Nor, obviously, would it be in anyone's interest to return to what Crick saw as alternating modes of useless advice or rule-bound irrelevance. It was 'sink or swim' for some—Evans-Pritchard was told to 'take quinine and keep off the women' [2, p. 22]—or 'tough rule talk' as a 'barricade to prevent rather than facilitate human communication' for others [2, p. 24]. At any rate it cannot be confidently said that anthropological training has been set down in any methodically useful way. It is, however, worth asking if some sort of 'structure' is what is required, if a formulaic bunch of (form-fed) hoops is the best way to train another generation of anthropologists? And should this be done at all in the university-as-teaching-factory in which we operate today? Old collegiate modes of apprenticeship certainly are inappropriate in a domain of productivity gains, bullet-point memoranda, and asset-accountancy and monitoring (tenure testing). But what is more adequate? What critical responses are best suited to the higher education system as we know it today? Given the trajectory we (who?) are on, might it not be proper to ask why we teach or train the way we do and how (if?) this dissemination of anthropology contributes to the world?

1. Fixing the curriculum

First of all there is a core code. Admittedly any 'contemporary' periodisation of anthropological research and disciplinarity could never be specified unproblematically, and leaps and strides in approaches and tasks could be proclaimed and launched from a variety of dates—post-Malinowski, post-war, post-Geertz, post-Clifford, post-early-for-Xmas? The discipline moves through history, and this is one that more or less reflects its times. What history? Though it may seem sometimes to hint at renewal, the anthropology most commonly anthologised in textbook and course guide is both mired in its tragic political past and tragically blind to the past in its present. There is, no doubt, much to learn from the temporal trajectory of this congealed domain of scholarship. Not least the ways disciplinary history writing has always catered for interests born of particular positions in particular conjunctures. Some obscured ancestors are remade anew—look at what Clifford made of Leenhardt, or of Leiris—recruited to do service for quite unexpected things [4]. Not just within the conventional bounds of the course outlines. Who imagined that Mauss might be renovated by Lévi-Strauss and later by Derrida to do service again as a critic of economism? It was always and often possible, but why then, why now? When might Lévi-Strauss be reanimated in possibly unforeseen ways (again)? When will Kathleen Gough's star burn once more? These are strategic formulations. Witness for example

¹ For one effort to start such a discussion, but which ends up advocating redefinition of quality and 'negotiation' with 'neo-liberal power' see Shore and Wright [3, p. 572]. I thank Cris for the corridor talk that provoked some of this present paper, as I also thank Steve Nugent for also reading a draft version. Vinay Lal's editorial commentary was crucial, as was early experience amongst anthropologists in Melbourne and Sydney, and later in Manchester and London. Strange cultures indeed.

the ways Adam Kuper's volume *Anthropology and Anthropologists* once set itself up as a challenge to the discipline as it then stood, and now comes to stand for the continuity of that same tradition—the rebel domesticated (albeit a somewhat self-declared and domesticity-prone rebel) [5]. Another example of course would be the revolutionary impact of a certain Malinowski, now become orthodox in the extreme. A weight round the neck of students, teachers and researchers, inexcusably responsible for too much reading of novels in tents.

Perhaps the tale is one of not so much paradigm shifts as paradigmatic routinisations. Some pasts disavowed, some renovated to suit new times. Suffice it to say that most will agree on only a few key names that would mark out at least the initial horizon for the convenience of study. Generalised ancestors: Marx, Weber, Freud, Durkheim. The rudiments of a shared language. Of course there would be other favourites and squabbles over this could keep us occupied till the end of the next millennium... In social anthropology 'proper' perhaps the key names are somewhat more readily agreed: Spencer, Morgan, Tylor, Frazor as the grandparents, with Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard and Leach as father figures. (Geertz as the mother's brother and Clifford as mother's brother's son—that all important relationship. The missing female kin would be Elsie Mason,² Edith Turner³ and of course Hildred Geertz, who also arrived, malarial and diffident, in the Balinese village, only to be disappeared in the subsequent cockfight tale.⁴ And of course there would be further qualifications, objections, parricides. What illustrious patrimony (all too male). Since them, some say, little has changed, although the reflexive 'turns', reinventions, experimentations and re-evaluations have reconfigured the social sciences and their methods. Fieldwork as it was, we now know, never was. As Crick and so many others have detailed, the mythos of fieldwork has rested upon considerable evasiveness about its actual conditions as compared to its idealised model. Malinowski didn't actually spend all that much continuous time in his tent, we don't know how well E-P managed his Nuer language lessons... etc. Since the 1960s, the modus operandi of fieldwork has been rethought (at least post-PhD), and not only because doing anthropology in the old way has become politically difficult in so-called post-colonial conditions. Rather than mourn the demise of intrepid explorer anthropology (or cower in reflexive isolation with pomo diffidence or with safe 'at home' projects), a new thinking is demanded. One possibility much discussed of late is multi-sited fieldwork (see [7]). Another that offers itself is the notion of collaborative projects—exemplified, if we reread the history of the discipline anew, in a kind of critical counter-anthropology. Rather than take the fieldwork monograph as gospel, the scene must be taken as multiply constituted—Barth with Asad on Swat might offer an early beginning, Uberoi with Hamilton and Kildea on Trobriands, Onka and Strathern, though all these are a kind of first stage collaboration. O'Hanlon and the Waghi might suggest a second stage, the recent series of interviews and

² Elsie Mason had a greater hand in the writing of Malinowski's books than was acknowledged.

³ Edith Turner accompanied Victor on fieldwork among the Ndembu and elsewhere.

⁴ The allusion here is to the opening sequence of thick description in Bali by old man Geertz in [6].

Essays called *Late Editions* edited by Marcus another,⁵ and in an unguarded moment I might suggest the *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* project as a third [8]. Perhaps it is a good thing that the forced teamwork of large grant applications reinforces—in a contrapuntal way—the coming together of multidimensional research teams. Where these kinds of projects attend to rearranging the constituency of both researchers and researched in mutuality, then collaborative writing, interpretation and debate generating a hydra-headed textuality, and leaving no monographic certainty secure, becomes plausible. More often of course the circuits and the arrangements remain stratified and hierarchical. However often couched in shape-changing rhetoric, much of the discussion of reconfiguration is window-dressing that replicates the same, leaving safe positions intact. There is far more work to be done to establish collaborative production as a marker of a methodological shift in the way that Malinowskian fieldwork was iconised as having deposed armchair anthropology in the 1920s (see [9]), but certainly the circulation of meanings and texts in a global anthropology no longer makes plausible the Captain's Log report from afar that was the paradigmatic guide for Malinowskian style.

In the last thirty years, at least in anthropology, the question of disciplinary formation has most famously been linked to what can be called the textual turn of the late 1970s and middle 1980s. The 'Writing Culture' debate launched in the USA (with more or less significant reverberations, and backlash, elsewhere), and perhaps the 'subaltern studies' mode of historiography which has percolated throughout much of South Asian anthropology, has joined politicised interpretation in several spheres, with feminist critiques, demanding attention to parts of social life, indeed whole domains, that had previously been considered uninteresting or unproblematic by the boys. Along the way there were several exemplary politically charged interventions (Said and Asad for some early examples that rocked anthropology, Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* for a more recent critique that has yet to be assimilated/accommodated—as it inevitably will be). There have been some 'critical' developments that are at least worthy of note (the journal *Critique of Anthropology*) and some important divergent asides ('dialogic anthropology' is one to be explored if you like talking, 'New Historicism' perhaps less interesting, internet and telematics, biological and environment—see Haraway—offers signs of expansion). All this indicates a massive expansion of scope for the discipline. There are more readers and more potential readers, and although the circuits and eddies of publication and distribution are by no means smooth (they are stratiated by power, race, geography, gender and class, through and through), and still remain largely confined to the (higher level) schoolyards and (closed) scholastic sects, there is reason to reflect. But on the whole as yet there has not been the sort of sustained intellectual examination of the coherence of a thing to be called 'anthropology' that effectively is called for in the self-proclaimed political, critical and divergent moments.

In examining anthropology's drive to 'understand', it must be considered that its 'other'—insofar as it is still concerned with the worn trope of otherness—was not

⁵ *Late Editions* is a yearly series edited by George Marcus and published by Chicago University Press.

homogenous, and conversely, neither has been ‘anthropology’. Given a fragmentation of unity, it is still clear that questions to be asked of the anthropological project remain serious: to what degree do the well-intentioned efforts at understanding, and even of critique, including self-reflexive critique, contribute to an anthropological discourse which underpins domination? How is the quest for understanding to be understood?—is it possible to separate this from other kinds of crusades? How, in specific detail, does this quest for understanding collude with administrative and dominating power? How does a textual tradition intersect with capitalist power?—detailed examples are needed here to legitimate the critique of anthropology as such. Is curiosity dangerous only to cats—how is it possible to convincingly show that seemingly innocent scholarly interests are part of the same project—to win hearts and minds—as bombs and strategic hamlets, or structural adjustment programmes and trade tariffs? To what degree has the reflexive turn in anthropology—what Ko Banerjea has called the white man’s new quest to redeem the discipline in the face of native critique [10]—been something that has seduced and co-opted comprador intellectuals from that constituency? Do ‘Dictionaries of Anthropology’ or of ‘World Diversity’ as sold in the big chain bookstore bargain bins, contribute in any way to erasing prejudice or impacting upon the international division of labour? Do first year introductory courses in anthropology (with lots of ethnographic films—wow!), as offered to students in a range of disciplines, produce the beginnings of understanding, or rather a pocket-book set of misrepresentations and half-baked exoticisms which later feed into policy documents or mission statements when said students trade their degrees for jobs in consultancy development, NGOs, policy advisory committees or cultural wings of Rotary Clubs. It is true that the demand for some kind of critical work still appears in a variety of forums, and becomes popularised even, for example, in teaching tools like ‘post-colonial studies readers’, which pride themselves on an anti-hegemonic role and from where I can quote against an outmoded anthropology: “the power to enter or examine other countries at will enables the production of a range of knowledges about other cultures. Such knowledge in turn enables (legitimizes, underwrites) the deployment of Western power in those other countries... even those discourses or modes of representation which are not formally or ideologically aligned with [colonialism] may be pulled in an Orientalist direction” [11]. As many would agree, the hope of making some form of amalgamated critique of anthropology a central part of the discipline is a fine one, very worthy, and this still sustains what some find to be the most promising social research around (well, anything but the return to orthodoxy that is too often embraced). Yet any project based upon this critical insight seems to run out of steam before it has an impact upon the disciplines as taught, as circulated in the marketplace and in their socio-economic ‘location’ within contemporary capitalist cultures. Almost as if, in the market of intellect, the best product to sell is a studied critic-ism, but this is a prophylactic which keeps its distance from the world. And ipso facto alibis the continuity of a junglist voyeurism, only now refracted through the glittering prism of self-assured humble reflexivity. Of course the period of reflexive introspection in the mid 1980s was unlikely to win anthropology any friends among those it turns its gaze upon, however salutary a moratorium on orthodox realist projects might have been.

What does reflexivity achieve? More gymnastic effects? And why is it that the politics of colonialism so rapidly dropped out of reflexivity? Why is political theory thought too difficult, too boring, too hard to teach? Against this, it might be the modest task of rethinking our intellectual histories that would begin by rethinking the institutional bases of critique and its socio-political role. If such is possible at all.

2. Fixing the rent

Sociologists and historians are paid to produce a scientific analysis of the functioning of the social world [1, p. 54].

Self-reflexive critique serves several ends, and correlates well with self-imposed accountabilities, even where these are strategic. Although it was always an issue even when Malinowski was setting up Institutes in Africa, or Rhodes and Livingstone's names were commemorated in what was then Rhodesia, increasingly social scientists are required to find and justify their employment. In this context, it should come as no surprise to see justifications of relevance and imperatives of necessity channel anthropology students into the apparatus of commerce in its internationalist and charitable forms. There was a time when institutionalisation provided a semblance of autonomy, but this can be shown to have been a fiction and the integration of the university into the apparatus of the State, and in the case of anthropology, with the Colonial power, has been debated and documented with mixed results.⁶ Any lingering illusion that academic work was not in a material and mental state of dependency upon economic power and market constraints has at least been dismantled by the expansion of corporate funding and 'endowment' of scholarship. In particular the 'show business' [1, p. 17] of sponsored professional conferences, chairs and research projects illuminates this connection. And there should be no doubt that careers talks, and visits from NGO or development agencies, are a part of the same great game.

Just what 'culture industry' work academics shall do should the corporate funders find it no longer convenient to indulge in the public relations exercise of sponsorship is not at all clear. But sponsorship leads to a dependency which has a neutralising effect upon criticism not solely a consequence of its always impending removal (becoming responsible for a 'programme' and its funding hardly suggests a libidinal charge for critical thought). Further, the imperative to fund cultural research is not always a necessary component of the viability of Capital. Thus it is unlikely that Government would again take up the burden of funding it so readily dropped if, as seems possible, although not yet likely, corporate productive necessity or PR fashions move away from sponsorship provision. Here the accepted responsibility of those employed as 'Professors' enjoying at least a semblance of institutionalised freedom

⁶ For an excellent survey of these issues see [12].

to speak against the State has faltered—and this includes those few ‘critics’ who still think they are radically separate from incorporation—in the face of sophisticated lobbying, persuasive, coercive and rhetorical techniques deployed by the various interests which manage the State. In the related ‘vocational’ industries, where technological development has more clearly marked relations with the dynamic of capitalist production the quietism is even more pronounced—the time of the public–intellectual scientist–critic of science seems long past, or has become mere anti-science fear (‘what terrors have we unleashed’ seems to be the main refrain). In circumstances where capitalist propaganda seems to have exhausted any innovative capacity it may have had (its last memorable turn of phrase was Gordon Gecko announcing that ‘Greed is good’ in the film *Wall Street*—though of course we recognise that all capitalist innovation is but alienated human creativity) and since academic salaries and work conditions have deteriorated relative to past circumstances, and nearly all students are forced into full-time work and part-time study to get by, surely even in the most opportunist calculations there is no longer any reason to continue to administer the disciplinary society?⁷

How sure am I that complicity rules? It might then be helpful to offer a sketch of how critics fit in here (the compartment of scientists? of ethnographers?): The widest possible context for a re-evaluation of the study of culture can be sketched in rough outline with the intention of understanding the moment at which the institutional deployment of cultural workers becomes a necessity (needed, possible, and even inevitable). If there is any reason to point to the emergence of the Writing Culture debate in the mid-1980s period and its coming into closer *political* focus now, it is the specific conditions of hybridizing capitalism and the emergent possibilities of naming the great changes underway. The ‘conjunctural’ moment is one characterised by the winding up of the Soviet experiment in the face of the Cold War, concomitant winding back of the welfare state, capitalist restructuring and the buy-off–sell-off of yet another round of industrial reconversion now transmuted manufacture into information and service. This unstable ensemble has its impacts across the entire spectrum of social and economic life. Here, new attempts to institute forms of working, of production, and of manufacture that renew profitability arise. Niche markets and just-in-time delivery take on ‘cultural’ modes in identity politics, essentialisms, anti-essentialism, celebrations of difference and a polymorphously perverse relativism that abandons any emancipatory project with the charge that trans-

⁷ What has been all the more shameful about the decline of conditions for university staff and the impoverishment of education—let alone the failure to expand education in equitable terms without dissuading those from socio-economically restricted sectors to enter the fray—is not that too few defended the achievements of the past—no-one should mourn for the moribund and hierarchical elitism of yore—but that in the contest over education and in a situation of change and disorder, those who should have fought for new possibilities chose only to put their heads down and protect themselves. This meant actively ignoring the encroachments of streamlining privatisation and corporatisation so as to secure their own patch—thus opening the door to a mediocre class of desk-jockeys adept at milking the grants process and its triplicate (six-plicate) peer review and disciplinary nepotism-fuelled credential system. Nothing new was possible here, and hierarchy was reaffirmed even as scholarship in the old style was curtailed, all the time still more dull, and for longer hours.

formatory and redistributive ideals are universalist utopias belonging to exhausted paradigms (i.e. the reds).

The contemporary ‘crisis in anthropology’ not accidentally then coincides with shifts in the imperialism which was its protective environment and which now is reconfigured by financial flows and flight capital dynamics incompatible with long term investment. Hence a decline in long dureé fieldwork and a trinketizing comparativism which elevates the incongruous detail to total social fact. Where older modes of production enabled and even required a certain kind of supplementary cultural commentary (missionary campaigns to soften the natives up for the work ethic would be the shorthand of this sentiment), requirements today tend towards more piecemeal interventions. Where remote peasant or tribal groups were considered ripe for recruitment into the expansionary productive empire (slavery, black-birding, bonded labour) the rhetoric of development and progress made promises it could never always keep. With a shift in economic systems it is no longer necessary to ‘develop’ all aspects of the ‘economy’ and indeed, sections of the population are now required to remain permanently in less ‘developed’ strata, not only for purposes of superexploitation and differential south–north exchange mechanisms, but also for the new productive economies of culture and exotica, the tourist appeal of third world reservations, natural habitats and ethnic museums (again these showcase slavery, black-birding, bonded-labour, and tourism, ethnicity and cultural difference). The reflexive criticism of post-colonial contemplation is well placed to observe and theorise such modes—could even be its ‘cultural logic’. The new empiricism of ‘post-exoticist’ anthropology picks up on incredible and amazing examples of hybridity to make the point that culture is never pure.⁸ This insight is itself amazing—especially where it does not entail any need for a systematic critique of capitalist transition and commodification. But is this search for the hybrid and mucky ‘complex’ real (as opposed to the invented ‘tradition’, staged now for tourists and anthropologists) not also a lament and nostalgia? Even as it celebrates mixity and uncertainty, it posits the fall from the pure as unspoken reference. Even if there never was a pure, the assertion that hybridity is ‘in’ is its affirmation in absentia. And a new functionalism prevails, just like the old one.

At the margins, with an unacknowledged or afterthoughtful admission that the centre is margin too (sometimes), this replicates obvious scenarios. The anthropologist fascinated with the other enacts a displacement of self or a mirror narcissism. No doubt the performance of hybridity functions too—the post-exoticist anthropologist and the post-tourist both love the not-as-well-staged sheer incongruity of it all. Kitsch is in—luminous felt 3D lithographs of the Taj Mahal make better souvenirs (more inauthentically authentic) than do conventional picture postcards. Similarly, anthropological interest in Kulka Khon’s combination of necktie and bird of paradise headdress (see [14]) is equally a fascination born of desired authenticity—and all the more real as the desire for authenticity is denied in favour of showing just what is in all its messy (real) complexity. Ultra, but flattening, empiricism. All incon-

⁸ I have discussed the cul-de-sac of hybridity as a theoretical interest for the social sciences in [13].

gruities become interchangeable. The marketplace replicated. Culture as industry sells difference made same. Far more disturbing than the trinketizing this entails is that it also leads to the displacement of analysis from academic work, in favour of crowd-pleasing, sales-driven exhibitionism. Here, more than an abdication from planning and a pessimism about the possibilities of doing anything in response to the dysfunctional effects of capitalism, complexity becomes a code word for proclaiming the current moment and the current complex ‘analysis’ as in some way more ‘advanced’. It is well known by now that so-called less-complex societies are not at all less complex—such designations, like the terminologies of the ‘primitive’ once used to alibi evangelical slaughter, are both patronising, historically inaccurate and ill informed (at least anthropology has taught us that). To posit complexity and hybridity as the current condition, and to cower/revel in the abyss of this advancement, is the most arrogant of ethnocentrism. Progress, civilisation, white supremacy and the like are smuggled in once again, examination of the conditions of knowledge production deferred. However, an old style anthropology-as-usual is also very much compatible with the commercial requirements of this mode.⁹

3. ‘Post-colonial anthropology’ as a cultural industry

Now more than ever the excuse of specificity and specialisation in anthropology appears as a conservative force, a way of side-stepping sharp political questions (and skipping off to the ‘remote’ safety of the library—or tent). Gledhill’s parodic glossed response deserves to be extended when he mimics an esoteric ethnography: “yes, of course neo-imperialist domination is important, but others can write about that side since I’m exploring this other neglected anthropological issue—but you can’t accuse me of not taking a critical position” [12, pp. 216–7]. Its exactly this possibility of ‘taking a critical position’ and still ignoring, even facilitating, neo-colonial domination that is at stake. This point should not be taken so much as a condemnation of esoterica as such—since even great uncle Lenin had his obsession for collecting beer mats—but as a marker of the critical side-step prevalent in even the most ‘sound’ anthropologies, it is something that can be generalised—to note that race and gender, class and imperial domination are also contexts for the study of myth, kinship, museum collections, rural sharecropping techniques, reindeer herding and canoe aesthetics is not far fetched. In an unguarded moment, we might even ask

⁹ It strikes me as amusing that few contest the criticism of anthropology except anthropologists, but it seems massive resources (at the least in terms of the well-paid time of well-resourced academics) are spent debating the project of cultural studies. When anthropology’s ‘star’ performers—Rabinow, Marcus, Clifford—seemed to spend much time debunking anthropology (mildly, critical of its textual tropes, but not much else) the ‘stars’ of cultural studies—Grossberg, Morris—continually rewrite paeans to how great cultural studies is, how it is assailed on all sides and how it must be preserved. Admittedly many of the criticisms made of cultural studies seem rather flimsy and come from the right, but is everything OK in CS land? Does its eurocentrism stand up to scrutiny? Does it exclude cultura processes in the ‘rest of the world’? Does its anxiety to protect its space disguise a deeper problematic?

what degree of neo-imperial crisis would be required to precipitate abandoning a study of esoterica in favour of active class struggle. This is not to call the 'neglected' anthropologies to their political tasks, but rather to point to another factor in the complex of choices, conditioning effects and protocols that discipline and co-opt under capitalism. This is also not to forget that a great deal of anthropological work is so heavily inscribed with highly important political questions that any avoidance of them today is less of an issue as is what kinds of positions are put forward. Astonishingly, there are anthropologists that will proclaim that the colonial legacy and anthropology's involvement in that project is past. Granted, the entire foundation of anthropology relied upon an ethnocentric centre/other type construction, backed up by imperial force which made sites safe for fieldwork and the exploration of these 'others', but today this pattern continues in efforts to 'translate' difference—however often glossed as an anti-ethnocentrism, mutually loving desire for knowledge of difference (desire for the other) and even anti-racism—it is clear that the political circumstances in which this project continues have not significantly changed. Yet, defenders of this kind of eclectic anthropology insist on the term 'post' colonial, and proclaim the ethnocentric project of knowing, documenting, observing and analysing 'otherness' (even as self-clarification) has been rendered obsolete in mutual communication. A double movement: anthropology was only tangentially complicit in colonialism, and now it recognises its past and is even more anti-ethnocentric now, open to otherness as it never was before. Brilliant. Stop and admire.

Even with the partisans of 'advocacy anthropology' there are forces—sometimes not so subtle—that ensure a privilege for reformist social democratic perspectives over more radical possibilities. These possibilities of course are rarely discussed. Alternatives to 'development' and 'progress'—so often now euphemisms for structural adjustment programmes and other expertise driven decision making—are rarely considered even within the work of the most well-meaning of indigenous rights, human rights, grass roots, small is beautiful, NGO orientations (if small was beautiful, explain New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Eiffel tower, the Millennium Project etc., etc. It seems small is beautiful only along with corresponding rustic costume, beads and feather headdress). Advocacy also so often slides into consultancy, and with it negotiated corporate styles of bureaucratic and legalistic process—and such forms are not necessarily open to even the grass roots self-determination goals of advocacy activists. Clearly there is room for debate, but what matters is also what one does with it.

Sometimes culture, especially in its cute, ethnic forms, can be marketed and developed by the practitioners themselves. Exotica plus. More often this occurs through the agency of brokers, who may sometimes be anthropologists, and sometimes to 'make a buck' in situations where any reasonable assessment of real world conditions would say, 'and why not? Get whatever you can'. There is nothing wrong with 'gettin paid' (Rakim) for cultural work. This, no more than anything else, however, does not escape the logics of the market. The institutionalisation of ethnicity can even be recruited to national economic contingencies—from export industries in music and cuisine, to more mediated forms such as cinema and even 'culture studies' as industry (the examples have already been seen: from picture books, Ama-

zonias, etc., through to anthropological expertise sold as export education or co-ordination of Impact Assessment Surveys). At individual levels again there is not much to be said against individual anthropologists, or whoever, trying to pay the rent (survival in the planetary supermarket), but as a wider condition in the context of the market, culture has to be understood as more than cooking books.¹⁰

Some people are doing very well. As cultural entrepreneurs, and their parasitic baggage carriers in the shape of culture research personnel, make entertainment for money (they hope) out of the endless display on the coffee tables and in the galleries of the bourgeoisie, very few people attend to other forms and styles of production that could speak to wider concerns. What would a cultural studies of anti-racism and media look like if it was not primarily concerned with assuaging guilt and feeling good about being anti-racist? (Do high profile statements by Government, or populist festivals and ‘demos’ in the metropolitan centre, have any significant impact on the fight against racism on the estates or in the precincts?). What would audience studies be if disarticulated from the requirements of the broadcasting networks and the advertising agencies? (Why should provision be geared to desire, if not for productivity and efficiency?). What would development research look like determined by concerns other than negotiated settlements favouring the corporate mining sector, agribusiness or logging franchises? What would university research in physics look like if geology wasn’t always about mineral extraction? What would social policy be in a post-welfare state without the new deal duplicity—co-option of the first-world workforce? And so on.¹¹ It used to be that the link between the university and the military–industrial complex gave some people pause for thought, today there is not even time for the pause: the slogan ‘This University is an Arm of the State’ falls on deaf ears, despite a few anthropology students at the University of London taking up the call to divest of the 300,000 shares their institution holds in GEC. A few exceptional dysfunctional hiccups aside, the education facility is a factory, processing product, and one where teachers are finally productive of surplus-value through education for export (where previously they only added value to other people’s labour). We (who?) are urged to seek more and more overseas fee-payers, not even disguised as access

¹⁰ This is itself one of the problems with the current intellectual-academic system. Individualism and isolation in an environment of commercial pressure and publicity demands, concurrent with a reward system for rapid publication, television appearance and the busy-ness/business effect means that scholarship is increasingly drawn into the amplified media circuits of performance. Televisual, internet-satellite and sound-bite academics are manufactured and marketed in ways that increasingly seem to take their cue from football (only the transfer fees are less), and not so many anthropologists have been the lead item on Sky Sports/CNN news round-up.

¹¹ The ‘first world workforce’ is not so much a geographical category but one that refers to those who sell their labour for wages (as opposed to those who are the reserve army of superexploited and unemployed living on the wrong side of this division of labour). The paid workers are certainly subjected to appropriations of their labour capacity by moneybags capitalists, but the deal is that they are offered, however minimal, concessions and bribes which enable those of this ‘first world’ to dine out (be served by, holiday among, sun themselves for two weeks a year) on the misery of the rest. That this is not often commented upon is why anthropology must address the co-constitution of, in another terminology, North and South.

anymore, and certainly never thought of in terms of foreign aid (as it once might have been). Together the skill of finding questions for answers already decided and the priorities and protocols of the commercial institution converge in a systematic ideo-terror machine. Pedagogical discussions seem out of date. Sharp conflicts unseemly (rocking the boat lets down the team) unless they are wholly geared as ‘rehearsals’ to equip flexibly trained minds for ready deployment within industry. International status and competitive advantage is the anvil against which all sacrifices are hammered home and of course critical minds can be recruited to that score. Even debate is debased in commercial opportunism. To describe the flattened out mode of thought favoured now, only the sarcasm of Nietzsche will suffice: “They have something of which they are very proud. They call it education. It distinguishes them from the goatherds” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).

4. What space for a critical anthropology curriculum?

Insofar as it is an invitation to negotiate, no-one is really all that interested in polite debates about real-world constraints and practicalities of hard-nosed and no-illusions research, getting your hands dirty in the push and pull of commerce, necessity of finding autonomous (meaning corporate) funding, and ‘development consultancies’ (that are allegedly more real than ‘headfuck theoretical’ anthropology). Sure, it is an undeniable concern that various financial, economic and commercial pressures are transforming the institutional spaces of education and research. Yet however fraught with difficulty, it is important to keep these issues alive rather than settle into the bureaucracy; to continue and extend the political critique of social research practice; to demand to know what ‘Indy’ is doing with the lost ark, ancient scrolls, Chief Johnson’s skull or churinga stones. A political critique of research practice would look at content and context, funding policies and work rationale, teaching and pedagogical pay-offs—career conceptions and quietisms in the face of restructuring, collegial support and petty rivalry, organised collective effort—research team, department, staff committee, union branch, student organisation, study group, publishing house (progressive or business, mixture of both), library lists, readership guides—not everyone need march willingly into the culture factory. Oh we are very proud. Credentialism, degree approvals, ritual and ceremony, nepotism, favouritism, agreeing to disagree...

‘Rule talk’ and training formulae covertly narrowed under the sign of rationalisation of curricula constitutes evidence of routinisation and decay. Credentialism, fixed and administered procedure, plodding predictability—what Adorno would have denounced in an admonition that ‘nothing should be moist’ [15, p. 116]. This corresponds with a piecemeal response to encroachments of managerialism and head-in-sand accommodation to the first indications of ‘crisis’. The idea of rule-talk as some sort of barricade does raise the issue of what sort of battle is being fought that requires such barricades. The paper ramparts are high indeed in the academic bureaucracy today. Where are the lines of demarcation, and who are the contenders? First up, it can be agreed that much of the paper storm that exists today in depart-

ments and higher committees—all the way up to funding allocations board of government—is about the making and preservation of position (usually positions which replicate middle-level managerialist styles). Careers defended by sheaves of reports, references, accountabilities, targets aimed for and met... etc. It barely matters if these targets etc are real or not—by sheer weight of material they have a preservative, capacity. Which committee today makes any decision without wading through wads of documentation? (and so it should be—an end to the feudal regimes). Yet another function of the paper barricade however is to divert the anxiety that comes from having no clear indicators with which to justify positions—another form of careerism here, the sneaking suspicion that the justifications of the past do not, and never did, stand up to scrutiny evokes a holding manoeuvre that buries any examination of the implications of this under the avalanche of procedure... Third, under cover of the new managerialism, a reconfiguration of the role of the university has been perpetrated—what was once an ideological apparatus in the service of the state, now becomes the domain of corporate apparatchiks interested more in financial statements and facilitation of commercial activity (whether it be the university as corporation, or providing free service to the corporate sector). This is of course only an exacerbation of a tendency that was always there...

5. More crisis what crisis

It will be readily agreed that for a long time there has been too much empty discussion of ‘the crisis’. We just love it. It keeps critics in the business. In sociology this has taken the form of the end of ideology, the post-modern turn and/or legitimisation breakdown blah blah blah. Very often it seems that the work of this discussion has been to destroy the place from which a politics about it can be formed. Enthusiasms peter out in verbose polemics. The last thirty years of anthropology has been a truly productive crisis in terms of provision of paper topics and coffee chats. Avoidance of scrutiny hidden in the arbitrariness of the sign appreciated as metaphor in itself (in the language of forensics, semiology and post-modernism interrogate signification and never make a booking that Danno doesn’t read). The version preferred in ethnographic cliquettes has been an anxiety about fieldwork and representing others, and this has been an obsession for so long now that the ‘others’ politically representing themselves have been actively working in other areas showing what needs to be done and few in the academy have noticed. The problem with anthropology is its insular history, its small heritage circuit, its exclusively academicist self-image (few ‘public intellectuals’, little public debate, plenty of colloquia), and its parochial (an inversion of its associated expansionary imperialism) defence of fieldwork as its real world stamping ground which masquerades as the privileged secret elixir of understanding. With this restrictive marker serving as mechanism of exclusion, no wonder some don’t notice how far the ground is shifting. There remains, in the established posts in established departments, an anthropological orthodoxy which still defends a distinct methodological presupposition about its attention to ‘what people actually say’, and claims this characteristic of its work as

unique justification for carrying on as usual. This justification disavows any need to address the political and philosophical objections and criticisms that have so often been raised—indeed, sometimes by anthropologists—and through twists and flips of ‘practicality’, a ‘return to core questions’ and a backlash blanket anti-theory reassertion, produces still more boring and uninspiring trash ethnography to dissuade students and everyone else from what might be interesting about the study of culture. Those having a ‘crisis of representation’ inside the departments and institutions of anthropology and culture studies have hardly budged since ‘the’ crisis set in (crisis, what crisis). Stasis is endemic. It was at the beginning of a long period of famine that Crick ended an article on knowledge creation within anthropology with the following words: “As academe dries up as an employment area for new graduates given the increasing financial pressures to which we are subject, clearly more and more of those we have taught will find themselves outside universities, dispersed through society; this dispersal makes our responsibility of knowing what we are about even greater” [2, p. 31]. That two parts of this prophecy came to pass—the jobs dried up, anthropology graduates went every which way, did not, however, mean anthropology as a discipline has become more sophisticated in its approaches or understanding of its role. The lurch into vocationalism, consultancy work, outreach and curriculum design for market share has not been adequately theorised, and because of this, the historical limitations of anthropology as a discipline remain a liability. A substantial part of any adequate critique of anthropology as a discipline would need to address the visibility and exclusions of the material apparatuses of publication, teaching etc., as a mode of maintaining one style of productivity over against others. Clearly “anthropology must indeed bear witness to its oppressions, its exterminations, its discriminations and its exploitations, its first concealments” [16]. The discriminations discussed here are much more than categorical distinctions and theoretical niceties, the concealment much more than a studied denial of an earlier role as colonialism’s co-dependent. The consequence far more urgent than tinkering with programme can solve.

6. Exclusions

The limits and limiting responses to demand for change explains why at a still wider level the function of the crisis of representation is difficult to dislodge since its long established role is in keeping another crisis, and a coherent discussion of this crisis, out of academic debate. The conferences, publications and university corridors that have been filled for so long with proclamations of annulment and endless rejoicing in the crisis of anthropology/social science, are also occupied with those triumphantly celebrating—with still more colloquia—the crisis of Marxism after the fall of Eastern Europe. Obsessed with almost clinical uneasiness and deferrals of myriad kinds, all work to ignore that very crisis which old bearded Karl would have us face. What is avoided in the staged or manufactured anxieties that serve to reinvigorate business-as-usual if not theory as crisis itself... To locate the writing of the history of culture study in recent debates about institutional power demands a

new appraisal of crisis management. The contexts are several—the conflict between cultural studies and anthropology; the market success of the term ‘post-colonial’ as opposed to its reference to betrayed nationalisms (its restricted and ironic use to refer to the comprador sell-out of independence); the stylised debates of academic authority versus the backlash reassertion of fieldwork and empirical method; the frenzied enthusiasm for transnational, telematic, multi-site encounters weighed up against plodding scholarship and historical depth that has seen it all before but is not moved; hybridity, diaspora, the body and sexuality or the old and still unsolved questions (but are these ‘questions’?) of race, class and gender; ‘lucid uncertainty’ and the politics of radical doubt versus political programmes and betrayed hope, hype and hypocrisy; more and more. The cliques of readership, promotion, censure, scene setting, guarantees, excuses and alibis that make up the relays and extensions of disciplines which are more than institutions. The proliferation of contexts, the ongoing tasks.

Instead of an exploration of the relevance of such considerations in the contemporary conjuncture we are offered hip new phraseologies and navel-vision contemplations on the status of metaphors abstracted from engagement. Even at its best the consideration of hybridity flounders on a germinological biology; the weave and shuttle carries the thread of old colonial crimes such as the amputation of weavers’ thumbs; and even dialectics carries the taint of communism-declared-corrupt and orthodox hall monitors that would execute strays and corrupt themselves with power. These are also crisis-mongering without purpose. Profits of doom, and pessimistic whipping boys. Are there, however, still reasons to be cheerful?

Surely, rather than work to erase memories of 1917, 1925, 1949, 1968, 1975, 1992, 1995, 1999 et al., and a century of heightened struggles,¹² the point still is to explore and fight for a redistributive justice that would manage to place surplus value at the disposal of all the people. Or rather, which would abolish the operations of surplus value extraction and the concomitant differential rates of exploitation etc., bound up within the various capitalist economies, in the racism and patriarchy that is their mode of operation, and in the institutional apparatus that enforces its laws and code. By now it is well known that the boys’ own insect collection approach to anthropology as the ‘study’ of peoples is inappropriate. That this has not yet meant an end to such jolly good fun adventurism does not excuse its continuation. A backlash against critique of anthropological authority seems to have reasserted the orthodoxies of fieldwork, or at least fashioned reflexive and/or confessional gimmicks to dress up the same old business anew. The ways we teach disciplinary pasts only confirms these routines and condemns them to repetition in the future. A disciplinary wide shift towards an anthropology oriented less to falsely reflexive modes of study

¹² In case the erasure of the dates in the rewritten schoolbooks has proceeded apace, the references are to the October Revolution; the General Strike; the victory of the PLA; the Sorbonne, Chicago, Algeria etc.; the liberation of Saigon/Ho Chi Minh City; the LA Uprising; Hot December and Seattle. No doubt there would be other favourites; other dates could be added, and some would dispute the signalled events or point to betrayals and failures soon afterwards—but so? There are several possible histories of the world.

(or touting of this ‘self-professed methodological absolutism’, in the terse phrase used by Ko Banerjea [10, p. 26]) is far less interesting than a move to committed activist resource provision in the interests of a co-operatively co-constituted trans-national literacy. It may not ever come to pass, but we might look for something like this as a possible anthropology that responds to clear and urgent demands for change, rather than one resting—in mild mannered crisis—with what we (who?) merely feel we can still achieve within a set of reified and self-imposed constraints. There *must*—an imperative not a complaint—be more to it than the continuation of the discipline we already have.

References

- [1] Bourdieu P. Free exchange, with Hand, Haacke. London: Polity Press; 1994/1995.
- [2] Crick M. Anthropological field research, meaning, creation and knowledge construction. In: Parkin D, editor. *Semantic anthropology*. London: Academic Press; 1982:15–37.
- [3] Shore C, Wright S. Audit culture and anthropology: neo-liberalism in British higher education. *J Roy Anthropol Inst* 1999;5:557–75.
- [4] Clifford J. *The predicament of culture: twentieth century ethnography, literature and art*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1998.
- [5] Kuper A. *Anthropology and anthropologists*. London: Routledge, 1983.
- [6] Geertz. *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- [7] Marcus G. Ethnography in/of the world system: the emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Ann Rev Anthropol* 1995;24:95–140.
- [8] Sharma S, Hutnyk J, Sharma A. *Dis-orienting rhythms: the politics of the new Asian dance music*. London: Zed Books, 1996.
- [9] Strathern M. Out of context: the persuasive fictions of anthropology. *Curr Anthropol* 1987;28:258.
- [10] Banerjea K. Ni-Ten-Ichi-Ryu: enter the world of the smart-stepper. In: Kaur R, Hutnyk J, editors. *Travel worlds: journeys in contemporary cultural politics*. London: Zed Books; 1999:14–28.
- [11] Williams P, Chrisman L. *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993.
- [12] Gledhill J. *Power and its disguises*. London: Pluto Press, 1994.
- [13] Hutnyk J. *Critique of exotica: music, politics and the culture industry*. London: Pluto Press, 2000.
- [14] Clifford J. *Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1997.
- [15] Adorno T. *Aesthetic theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- [16] Potter H. *Confessions in teleonomy: the moral practices of anthropology*. Unpublished Honours thesis, Goldsmiths College, 1999:52.