

# The Colonization Of Anthropology

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The history of anthropology is one of both challenging and affirming boundaries. As a new science, anthropology challenged nineteenth-century models of rational, positivist and empiricist thought. The notion that the study of society and culture was a valid and credible enterprise, that is to say compatible with scientific modes of enquiry and not *merely* humanist speculation, came with supporting the scientific paradigms *de jour* of diffusionist and evolutionist theories.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, as a 'new' science anthropology had to prove its pragmatic and disciplinary worth as an effective research tool through the promotion and assistance of colonial rule; a relationship that further enabled the survival of anthropology as a distinct discipline.<sup>2</sup> The founding of anthropology was based on a break from the bounds of what was traditionally considered science in order to establish itself as a separate discipline, a 'social' science of culture and human relationships, but in so doing, it entered the bonds of assisting the state, and by extension, colonial rule.

However, I suggest that today it is the discipline of anthropology that is being 'colonized' both internally and externally. Its borders are under pressure from more positivist and quantifiable sciences, political and business interests, and the relative economic viability or cost effectiveness of other social sciences. Concurrently from inside the anthropological fold, internal boundaries are being erected through a reluctance to be innovative, the endless internal questioning of the discipline's validity and credibility, and conservatism. Study in the *field* and of the *other* are the hallmarks of ethnographic research, and both are constantly changing along with the environment of academia. Anthropology as a discipline must rise to the challenges that are posed by globalization, immigration, and the reality that ethnographic studies can be competently carried out by researchers who need not consider themselves to be anthropologists. In my view, the discipline must play upon its strengths, those being the duration of time spent in the field and its relationship with the humanities, and downplay its links with business, government bureaucracy and science, if a slow decline into obsolescence, provided in large part by the rise in popularity of interdisciplinary studies, is to be avoided.

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<sup>1</sup> See Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School* (London: Routledge, 1973(1983)); George W. Stocking Jr, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987 for more details.

<sup>2</sup> See Donald Lopez, *Curators Of The Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) .

The work of early anthropologists, unlike the works of missionaries, merchants, or the colonial officers that preceded and continued alongside it, was consciously separated - along with its progeny, ethnography - as a social scientific discipline with goals and methods distinct from others. The most notable of these methodological markers was, and remains, fieldwork. However, the field of the anthropologist was different from that of the missionary, merchant, or colonial officer. To the early anthropologist, much like the rest, the field was a foreign place. It was distant, topographically, culturally and often linguistically, from the researcher's home culture and society. But, unlike these other occupations, the purpose of extracting data from informants in the field for the anthropologist, in theory at least, was to compare groups or societies.<sup>3</sup> The duration of time spent in the field was generally shorter than that of the missionary or colonial official because the purpose of their stay was to extract information and theorize from outside of the field, not to remain in the field in order to oversee government, business, or religious interests. In fact, remaining in the field beyond the time deemed necessary had, and has, a negative stigma within many anthropological circles, and certainly within university administrative and funding bodies.<sup>4</sup> In theory, anthropologists did not have a vested interest in a particular society, nor in a particular political or economic agenda. The purpose of ethnographic research was to understand what made the behaviours and thoughts of human beings distinct or similar from other human beings and to share such findings within an academic (and increasingly scientifically biased) arena.

Anthropologists were keen to develop anthropology as a bounded profession, a profession distinct from other avenues of research. Separate from other disciplines and business and/or political actors, it was to be the study of the other by renegade academics proclaiming themselves as other. And indeed, anthropology separated and bounded itself further into Social ('British') and Cultural ('American') Anthropologies. The common thread was that both relied upon *long-term* ethnographic fieldwork.<sup>5</sup> Malinowski (the father of Social Anthropology), is said to have discovered long-term

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<sup>3</sup> Comparison and contrast of human groups was the key purpose of early anthropology. How these comparisons from the 'field' could then be used towards more political ends, such as perpetuating effective colonial rule or supporting racialist evolutionary theory on the one hand, or cultural preservation and political co-operation on the other, are uses of anthropological research not always under the control of the anthropologist.

<sup>4</sup> Anthropology students are now all warned of the possibility of 'going native', of not finishing a degree within the allotted three years, or of having funding cut due to an extended stay abroad. Three years in the UK: one for coursework, one for fieldwork, and one spent writing/teaching. In Canada and the US, the expectation is five years: one or two for coursework, two in the field, and one to two for writing/teaching /publishing. The reality is that it often takes longer.

<sup>5</sup> It is true that armchair social anthropologists such as Radcliff-Brown did little fieldwork and in large part relied upon the fieldwork of others such as colonial officials to engage in their macro-theorizing. My point here is that long-term ethnographic fieldwork was a cornerstone in such research irrespective of who carried it out. Also see R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warns *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004).

ethnographic methodology because, while he was laying low as a German national (Polish) affiliated with a British university in the so-called British South Pacific, he could not 're'-cross the political and geographic borders he had crossed before World War One began. His discovery of ethnographic methodology had much to do with the fact that he had little choice but to stay put. Franz Boas (the father of Cultural Anthropology), a German Jew, crossed national borders, and the borders of political and racial prejudice, to arrive in New York and establish American Anthropology based on research in Canada's Northwest. Throughout the twentieth-century anthropologists, overwhelmingly those from the 'first' world, have crossed and continue to cross national, colonial, and political boundaries to carry out ethnographic fieldwork and to 'spread the gospel' of the anthropological discipline as teachers, and through example, as researchers.

World War Two was a watershed era for anthropology. Having been used by the state, certainly in the United States, as a research tool to uncover the social and cultural fabric of the enemy,<sup>6</sup> and having earlier gained wider pop-cultural acceptance through the works of anthropologists like Margaret Mead, post-World War Two anthropology enjoyed a wider acceptance as a credible and valid form of research. It successfully etched its niche and erected its disciplinary borders within the social sciences, ethnography being the key marker.

As far as the crossing of cultural, political, and social boundaries is concerned, at least in the north-south and west-east directions, anthropology has always been premised upon such movements and the time spent in the 'host' culture. It is true that contemporary anthropologists can be found researching their own cultures. Such locations are often selected due to the financial or personal constraints that are required for distant long-term research. Put with a more positive slant, it can be supported by arguing for the increasing diversity found within one's own environment, but the focus of such research usually remains on specific, and often minority, groups within which the researcher is not a permanent participant.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the field and the other still remain key markers for anthropological research even if carried out at home. Engagement with the field and the other over a relatively long, but eventually terminable, period of time thus provides easily demarcated

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<sup>6</sup> Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum And The Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1946) is perhaps the best-known example of this government sponsored research.

<sup>7</sup> Some trends that may have led to the rise of anthropology focused on the researchers own culture include: rising tuition costs at home universities, the rising cost of living in host communities that are increasingly 'developing' or 'developed' (for example, the buying power of the researcher's Pound Sterling or US dollar is much lower in the Thailand, Mexico, or Japan of today than it was thirty years ago), the aging of graduate students, who often have to work to pay rising costs, leads to students having families or obligations that lessen the possibility to leave home for long-term fieldwork, and the increasing ethic, lifestyle, and cultural diversity of contemporary 'developed' societies (for example the UK).

boundaries for what is, or is not, anthropology from its inception up to today. Moreover, these bounds have always been considered as a rite of passage for an anthropology student to become an anthropologist. And, like the war stories of aging veterans, today's baby boomer senior anthropologists often wax nostalgic about the trials and triumphs of where and how they cut their fieldwork teeth. Where, when, and how the boundary of non-anthropologist to anthropologist is crossed is part of the romance, part of the lore, part of the personality and sharing of craft, that makes anthropology interesting and meaningful, and it seems unlikely to change in the thirty years hence for this current generation of anthropologists.

Quinine tablets ingested and Tilley hat in hand, the anthropologist strode amongst the natives, living *as they did*, seeing *as they did*, and maybe even wholeheartedly believing in the romantic idea of the fieldworker uncovering what the natives are unaware of themselves. Physically and culturally attempting to cross borders, and fighting for a place between sociology and psychology (the other 'new kids on the block'), the precarious but self-assured discipline of anthropology carried along happily dispatching researchers into foreign lands to later return and write-up what the 'natives think'. This continued until the mid-1970s, when critics from within the ethnographic fold, such as Paul Rabinow, began to seriously question the credibility and validity of anthropological epistemology and the chasm between native and newcomer.<sup>8</sup>

The crisis of representation that followed in the early 1980s dealt another blow, lethal some have claimed, to the validity and credibility of not just the doing of anthropology, but to the writing of it as well.<sup>9</sup> Some deemed anthropology, owing to its history and its often non-reflexive present, as neo-colonialist and 'fatally subjective'. And, far from being resolved, decades later the fallout from these critiques still haunts the validity and credibility of the anthropological process as these debates continue to be played out.<sup>10</sup>

At the risk of oversimplifying, one could view the boundaries of the dispute as the 'humanists' versus the 'scientists', a rather ironic dispute in a discipline incongruously self-proclaimed a social science. The anthropological adherent

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Rabinow, *Reflections of Fieldwork in Morocco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> The classic text is James Clifford and George Marcus eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethno-graphy* (Berkeley: University of California, 1986). More recently, and perhaps more damning, Vassos Argyrou, *Anthropology And The Will To Meaning: A Postcolonial Critique* (London: Pluto Press, 2002). Takami Kuwayama, *Native Anthropology: The Japanese Challenge To Western Academic Hegemony* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2004). For a more restorative effort see Clifford Geertz, *Works And Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> I am not undermining Edward Said and the importance of *Orientalism*, which outlines the links between scholarship, imagination, and colonialism. If anything, I am underscoring its continual effects within Anthropological discourse. Indeed, there exists, in work such as Kuwayama (*op cit*) a burgeoning 'crisis of interpretation'.

must somehow teeter between the subjective and the objective. They must negotiate the boundary between the empirical and positivist nature of their research and the emotional and personal elements inherent in ethnography. In this debate, people seldom agree on where the balance of scope or focus should lie. But, at the same time, and outside of anthropology's internal squabbling, there exists a move against the sort of nineteenth-century thinking of bounded disciplines, or indeed of scientific versus humanist. There is a simultaneous backlash against the idea of science progressing towards a universal truth and philosophical notions of absolute relativism. There is a growing distaste for the idea of bounded and exclusive disciplines, or so it might seem.

'Interdisciplinary studies' has become an academic buzzword in the third millennium. Official academic documents often outline a commitment to interdisciplinary approaches.<sup>11</sup> In the broader academic community the desire to conduct research and study through interdisciplinary approaches would seem to exist by virtue of the fact that the publication you are reading exists and the aforementioned documents is surely situated within official documents with an eye to its allure.<sup>12</sup> However, I contend that such support may be in terms of lip service alone.

By way of an example, take anthropology (and sociology) at SOAS.<sup>13</sup> More often than not (and becoming ever more often than not) to pursue a graduate degree one needs, as a preceding requirement, a degree in the same discipline. Thus, although it is deemed fine for an anthropologist to study, incorporate ideas, and ruminate on themes from religious studies, history, economics, literature and so on, without having a background in these areas, one wishing to enter the anthropological coven from the outside passes more careful

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the SOAS graduate student prospectus. On the SOAS website, under the rubric of Special Purpose Centres, it states: "...[we] combine disciplinary and regional perspectives and are at the cutting edge of research...", with an accompanying photo of a religious studies scholar and an art and archeology scholar seemingly eagerly engaged in dialogue. In my Department of Anthropology and Sociology it is interesting to note that the undergraduate prospectus outlines that the disciplines of anthropology and sociology are brought together "...avoiding any arbitrary distinction that may be implied by one form or the other..." Yet, in reading the post-graduate prospectus no graduate degrees in sociology are offered. Although I use SOAS as my main example, similar exhalations of interdisciplinary research can be found on the University of Toronto website (<http://www.scar.utoronto.ca/~advert/new/history.html>) the Kyoto University website (<http://www.zinbun.kyoto-u.ac.jp/institute/e-info.html>) and a internal search of Harvard University's home page reveals 876 matches for the words 'interdisciplinary research'. SOAS does not stand out or alone.

<sup>12</sup> A quick perusal of the above-mentioned University websites will underscore the prevalence of 'interdisciplinary' used to attract students.

<sup>13</sup> Throughout this paper SOAS is used as an example, not because SOAS is particularly exemplary in positive or negative terms, but because the publication you are reading is published at SOAS and I am a student in that institution in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. I presume the reader is engaged in university life in some way and can draw comparisons and contrasts about other universities and departments.

scrutiny. It is conceivable that a student with a background in Buddhist studies, hoping to focus on the anthropology of religion, might not be accepted on the basis that they lack a background in anthropology 'proper'.<sup>14</sup> However I suggest that this conservative and exclusivist stance does little to protect disciplinary boundaries within the social sciences and this is especially true of anthropology in the contemporary climate of academia.

Anthropology, a vanguard for change historically, has become reluctant to innovate and be open-minded. Its validity and credibility being forever internally questioned, anthropology and perhaps other social sciences are in danger of being subsumed by the more positivist sciences or corporatism. The focus on immediate and quantifiable results, that are applicable to specific situations, often sets the boundaries for research questions while the broader philosophical and theoretical issues are sidelined or footnoted.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps in concert with this trend, anthropology seems eager to sell itself to the hegemonic logic of business or government interests by allowing these agents, outside of anthropology, to define its disciplinary borders and research agenda.<sup>16</sup>

In short, I fear that the focus on the *anthro* in anthropology - that is, the attempt to grapple with humanity and express results in emotive terms, that is, with creativity and openness to fault and conflicting opinions - is quickly eroding under the pressure to manage, predict, and control situations and subjects. The 'colonizer' is being colonized from both the inside and the outside. The *business* of interdisciplinary has, certainly in the case of the anthropology, become *enterdisciplinary* as 'more for less' has become the contemporary battle cry of social science departments pressured by the growing need to find finances, particularly from the private economy, due to the failings in the public system of education.

Yet, however unfortunate these fiscal trends might be, in my view the appropriate response for anthropology departments is not to repel people with

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<sup>14</sup> This is a recent trend at SOAS and not limited to my example of anthropology. Indeed, SOAS has been, in the past, quite liberal in allowing 'outsiders' in. My MA was in religious studies and I was allowed to pursue doctoral studies in anthropology perhaps owing to the shared regional focus of Japan. If I understand correctly, this has changed and now one must have a previous degree in anthropology before being considered for acceptance into the department. In Canada, my native country, this disciplinary exclusivity is commonplace and, in my view and experience, retrenches departments into issuing evermore stiff regulations on students while promoting hostile competition for resources between students and departments which progressively become geared towards 'corporate' interests to fund programs.

<sup>15</sup> I am specifically thinking of 'Development Studies' in this respect.

<sup>16</sup> This perhaps includes the other social sciences as well. Regulations for the ESRC and AHRB or any 'publicly owned' funding body that sets out in it's agenda what sort of research is 'favourable', or awards funding on a basis beyond academic merit or need, setting the arbitrary fieldwork term of one year only as a requirement for funding, social science research being funded by private companies, social science chairs or awards offered by political parties or think tanks...

other research skills but instead welcome them and coordinate research relationships between departments. In part this is because when compared to the economic efficiency and scientific verifiability of other disciplines anthropology fairs poorly even within the social sciences. For example, economics or political science researchers tend to be less dependant upon, although not necessarily independent from, anecdotal evidence, personal observation, and conversational claims of truth in the writing up of their findings. Anthropology takes a comparatively long time to produce, its findings are often difficult to verify quantitatively, and the results are in large part due to the abilities and even personality of the researcher in a specific time and place. Anthropology is a risky business and it is risky for business. But historically anthropology has been different from other social sciences in that it was, and is, based on an embodied engagement with the field over an extended time. Its strength lies in the focus on long-term engagement with people, time, place, and sustained personal relationships.

The problem facing anthropology today is not that other social science disciplines do what they do better than anthropology but that anthropology is hampered the most in doing what it does best. This is due, externally at least, to its forced reliance upon funding from business and the ubiquitous positivist research paradigm all researchers are ensnared in. The fact that there are more required classes for anthropologists while there is less time allowed in the field. The fact that, for all postsecondary students, certainly in the UK and North America, demands for tuition are increasing but less economic support is offered for students, staff and research. The fact that there is less time availed to spend writing and researching but a more competitive job market for graduates. And, the fact that immediate and cheap quantifiable results are becoming the *defacto* demarcation of successful and unsuccessful research, all run counter to the benefits of anthropological research. And, as quality gives way to quantity, education suffers and innovative research becomes ever more marginal.

This is not an attack on quantitative research, for it is my assumption that most researchers, anthropologists or not, would claim that their research, if methodologically sound and ethically pursued, is both valid and credible.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, I suspect most ethnographers view their work as such. Other modes of research or representation are not inherently more or less credible or valid than ethnography. There is no agreed upon continuum for ranking poetry, puppetry, engineering, economics, medicine and philosophy as the most to the

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<sup>17</sup> I am partial to Lincoln and Guba's ideal, or better put ideal, of trustworthiness (that is credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) as a useful concept in assessing ethnography (Lincoln and Guba in 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research' in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks Calif: Sage, 1994). I suspect any community where native anthropologists are empowered, will have to come to terms with what always witty Wolcott has coined "the native going anthropologist". Harry Wolcott, *Ethnography: A Way of Seeing* (Walnut Creek, California: Alta Mira Press, 1999).

least universally valid, or of greater and lesser credibility. Each has its own purpose, logic, and assumptions.

As noted in the opening of this article, researchers who use ethnographic methods need not call themselves anthropologists. Sociologists, economists, psychologists, historians, writers, journalists and a host of others are capable of producing ethnographic data, and although some might have more of an aptitude than others I contend that it is taught, practiced, and learned. Like statistics or painting, it requires certain skills but it is not some form of occult magic. The method through which anthropology proclaimed its distinct status, is no longer, if it ever was that is, distinctly anthropological. Which begs the question, why be an anthropologist? Why set up this 'boundary' that, at first glance, seems so blatantly artificial?

Clearly, 'anthropologist' as a vocation, is not the easiest route to take in life, the constant movement, the learning of new languages, the endless assault of external, internal and self-critique, the bombardment of jargon deployed to make anthropology distinct from other disciplines and *vice versa*. Moreover, one's personal relationships and financial status are often strained because of the time and costs required for long-term fieldwork. These issues are compounded by the dwindling sources of funding available to the "soft" sciences as business schools and more positivist sciences 'colonize' universities. In the current climate of academia job security would be a poor reason to start an anthropological career. So, before the question *how to do, write, or judge ethnography* is posed, why not ask *why do ethnography* first? If researching the other in the field does not define the anthropologist then what is the utility of calling oneself an anthropologist? I suspect the reasons are wide ranging an intermeshing of the personal, practical, and political, but if reflexively considered they underscore how any given ethnographer, approaches her or his craft, selects their topic, and defends their own methodologies and theoretical predilections as credible or valid in opposition to others.

As noted above, anthropology is the study of humanity by humans, and as such, it is riddled with misconceptions, delusions, confusions, contradictions, and an inexhaustible list of other human frailties. Reality is constructed and ethnography, was, is, and will always be flawed in representing it. While there may be 'a reality' - it exists in some amorphous sense. It remains elusive and ever changing - it is unable to be pinned and staked by language - and moreover, it can never be free from the filter of self and other imposed contexts and perceptions. The Yogacara Buddhist notion of *trisvabhava* (three aspects of reality or three-in-one reality) sounds strikingly similar to the non-dualistic "Analytic Realism" espoused by Altheide and Johnston and akin to Hammersley's less rigorous "Subtle Realism", both of whom are key players in the game of questioning themselves and deriding their anthropological



cohorts.<sup>18</sup> But of course, the idea that reality is not as it seems or that it is impossible to represent with language is hardly new ground for religion, philosophy, or social science. Moreover, it seems a somewhat pointless query for anthropologists to devote careers to, given that subjectivity, objectivity, and the nature of reality have been at the center of human thought since writing began. The value of yet another mediocre text reflecting, or more often reacting, on the limitations and constraints of the ethnographic process is questionable. Human contact is the strength, weakness and wonder of ethnography. It directs us toward life's most important questions even if it never answers them.

But to be meaningful, anthropology is dependent upon contact and connections across borders that are often difficult to navigate within a short span of time. It requires institutional cooperation in the form of home and host universities with semester systems and bureaucratic apparatus that need not be the same, it requires language learning in order to attempt to bridge linguistic boundaries, and it requires participant observation which implies - from Malinowski, to Geertz, and beyond - being *there* and not *here* at least long enough to try and understand something new. Anthropology's importance lies within the cultural, if you wish, or the social, if you like, analysis of human interactions that are observed, and sometimes implied, across physical, linguistic and cultural borders over time. But the final boundaries that must be traversed by the anthropologist are those of the self, subject, and audience.

Observed, or even implied, meanings do not 'speak for themselves'. They *must* be interpreted and they are *always* constructed in order to be rendered meaningful to a given audience. This means that the anthropological researcher is inextricably a direct actor in the research process - s/he sees, notes, theorises, and writes, but is also part of the action in a tangible, participatory, hands-on way in an environment that is not easily controlled. This, in large degree, is unlike the research of other social sciences whereby the research environment can be regulated, clear boundaries between self and subject erected, and human interactions made routine such as laboratory work, compiling surveys, or archival research.

While ethnography has much to say about what it is to be an everyday human *being* in everyday contexts across spatial, social, economic, and linguistic borders, in order for the ethnographer to be credible and to produce valid statements, s/he should be ever mindful that, before the violence of

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Hammersly, *What's Wrong With Ethnography?* (London: Routledge, 1992), D. Altheide and D. Johnsons in N. Denzin and Y Lincoln eds., *Collecting And Interpreting Qualitative Research*. (London: Sage, 1998), H. Wolcott's *Ethnography: A Way Of Seeing* (1999). For a readable account of *Trisvabhava* see Paul Williams *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*. (London: Routledge, 1989). and for less readable but more in-depth reading consult Gajin Nagao *Madhyamika and Yogacara: A Study of Mahayana Philosophies* ed. coll. Trans. Leslie Kawamura (Albany New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

language takes hold, the process of ethnographic probing must pass through the filter of the ethnographer's own perceptions and ideas and the ideas and perceptions that they perceive the other to have.<sup>19</sup> The other, of course, has their own proverbial blinders on, their own agenda as to why or how they are informing you either overtly or covertly. The analysis, often from notes jotted and salvaged from completely uncontrollable situations, must then be worked out from within the frame of everyday life's trials and triumphs for both researcher and informants. Of course after this, to be valid and credible, it must be conveyed to an audience as text, yet another boundary to be navigated. Perceptions must be transferred without the researcher/writer being present to answer questions, debate findings, devoid of tone, emphasis, and more often than not, and certainly in the case of thesis writing, delivered in a highly conservative and contrived forum and form. So it goes. Yes, anyone can interview, survey, watch, record, reflect, review, reevaluate, and 'triangulate' methods - 'hexabulate' if you can - but ethnography is, by nature, a messy, time-consuming business. However, it is valid and credible only if the time is spent and the personality, anecdotes, misunderstandings, exaggerated stories, jokes, and self-doubt of the researchers and informants alike are communicated as honestly and clearly as the researcher is able.

Clearly, there is much to say about the problems of doing of ethnography. Indeed, noting that Hammersly references himself in his own bibliography no fewer than 24 times, it prompts one to ask, as his book title suggests, "What Is Wrong With Ethnography?"<sup>20</sup> Perhaps it is neurotic ethnographers in the wake of the long past ship of postmodernism? I am in not slighting Hammersly for a text written in 1992, a time when indeed the social sciences were in crisis and postmodern theory was relatively novel and without guidebooks geared for a pop-culture consumer. His arguments are clear and, aside from 'subtle realism', sound and often convincing. But as Wolcott argued eight years later, "there are those interested primarily in the doing of ethnography and others who seem to devote their energies worrying it to death."<sup>21</sup>

The incessant navel gazing and critique from within is troubling. It is understandable that there is constant reflexive questioning in a 'science' of humanity. But I fear a large part of this is trying to make the 'messy' 'clean'. Scientific conventions and quantification are particularly helpful in this regard. It sounds more officious to say '32 per cent' than to say 'sometimes' - although they can effectively mean the same thing. Indeed sometimes may well be more 'clean' due to the constant flux of the world - there can be a constant sometimes in dealing with people over time - but very few constant 32 per cent's come to mind.

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<sup>19</sup> If there is 'an other' - beyond ethnographic imagination - is a whole problematic issue beyond this discussion.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

From my lowly status as neophyte anthropologist, I would find it much more constructive and helpful if senior anthropologists, those with extensive experience in the field and academic (and in this sense also political) credibility, spent less time bickering amongst themselves while erecting disciplinary ramparts (with few outside caring or listening - or caring to listen anymore) and instead rallied to the aid of less experienced anthropologists. This could be accomplished by critiquing the commodification of education and by not acquiescing to the ever shortening stints of fieldwork imposed upon anthropology students. Really it was in the field, *and it is always pointed out the duration of time there*, where the ultimate validity and credibility of ethnography lay. Perhaps, behind closed doors, it happens. I like to think of the wily 'vets' of anthropology shouting, while shaking their fists at Mc educators, 'this far and no further'. But if it happens, as students, we never hear it. What we often hear is that the ever expanding workload, dwindling resources, never ending queues for this or that, and ever decreasing time allowances are 'just the way it is', a claim ringing rather hollow knowing the years spent in the field - often fully funded - by those who now say it.

Without question, doctoral fieldwork is the foundation period of a fully-fledged anthropologist. It is the last remaining rampart of anthropology's boundary from other social sciences. Imposing a limit of one year of fieldwork not only limits the questions that can be asked, but undermines the unique nature of the anthropological project. Sure, ethnography can be done by anyone - but not everyone is able or willing to spend the time or make the sacrifices required by 'being in the field' over the *longue durée*. Ethnography is as embodied a research process as can be found. This *defacto* requires the body to be *there*, engaging with 'others' in the 'field', does it not? Less time spent in the field correlates (this is not to say determines) with less credibility.

Prolonged fieldwork with the self as the primary research tool is the essence of the anthropological method. Reduce the time in the field to assuage critique from those in the 'business' of education or attempt to remove the self, in a quest for an impossible 'scientific' objectivity, destroys all that anthropology is. In my view anthropology is like a trade school, it is rooted in hands-on practical embodied learning. Would Malinowski be as respected, or at least as famous, if he spent two months in the field? Would his conclusions have been the same? Would they be as valid or credible?

There are new boundaries emerging in anthropology. One is the ever-increasing boundary between the educational experiences and opportunities of senior and junior anthropologists. This is not an easy situation for senior anthropologists to face but it is a dire one. It is time and the freedom to use it, more than money, that is at issue here. Good anthropology spends time. There are often, although not always, ways to make money in the field. In ethnography time spent with and amongst other people is where meaning is found. It relies on the face-to-face everyday exchanges between a community

and someone willing to forgo life in their native place. It requires the researcher to not only observe, but also to participate in the affairs of the informants and to communicate fears, hopes and hates of those people. Without this human contact and the relatively long time it takes to foster it, anthropology is without purpose.

Finally, it is not only the doing of ethnography and the writing of ethnography that accounts for its credibility and validity. There is yet another boundary to traverse. The reading of anthropology requires a 'leap of faith' in a Kierkegaardian sense. The reader must have faith in the goals and the process of ethnography and must question if they believe in the methods and honesty of the researcher. As mentioned, the researcher must endeavor to be forthright with their presumptions, assumptions, limitations, and methods in presenting their study - often attempted by placing her or himself in the text - but the reader must engage in what philosopher Donald Davidson calls 'a presumption of sincerity'.<sup>22</sup> In short, the reader must presume the author has a point and is sincere in her or his desire to get this point across. This is a boundary for both reader and writer to negotiate; a meeting point where a mutual desire to understand the other - perhaps even each other - must be realized. Personality, style, integrity, and honesty are hard to quantify but central to the ethnographic project. Ethnography demands trust without certainty.

By way of a metaphor, hopefully not too inappropriate, anthropological praxis can be compared to the purpose behind a Zen koan. There is a meditative and interpretive effort made in earnest to grasp at an underlying reality. It can be an immediate realization or it can take a lifetime of effort. This perception is then communicated as clearly as possible and is judged by the audience, not so much as right or wrong, but more along the lines of being on a path to understanding what makes up 'the truth'. There are few Zen adherents who claim to be enlightened but many who might claim their understanding of life is bettered through faith and practice.

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<sup>22</sup> Donald Davidson, *Inquiries Into Truth And Interpretation*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).