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Indian Social Science Review (ISSR) seeks to bring multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to bear upon the study of social, economic and political problems of contemporary concern. It is proposed to publish articles of a general nature as well as those focused on particular themes. There will be a book review section. While the journal is a biannual of the ICSSR, the views contained therein are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Council.

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In Pursuit of Anthropology

Mariza G.S. Peirano

This paper examines the results of the processes of cross-cultural communication (acculturation) that prevail in academic circles. It explores the possibility of pluralist expressions of the universalisms that constitute the foundations of cultural anthropology, in the context of the contemporary fragmentation of knowledge, and intrigued by the fact that the classics, even in the post-modern setting, remain essential. These broad questions are approached via two ethnographic entrances: first, by examining the classification procedures of certain American bookstores, and second, by focusing on two pairs of recent monographs authored by American and Indian scholars (Geertz and Madan, Das and Rabinow). The article concludes by proposing an agenda for the examination of anthropology with its dual face: at the same time one and many.

Despite their pretense, the declaredly egalitarian, yet to be routinized, cross-cultural dialogues are never in fact between equals, for the absence of a fully governing convention, of a mutually acceptable third, fosters hierarchy, a (silent) assertion of authority over an 'understanding' of, the position of the interlocutor. (Or its opposite.) There is little to mediate to attenuate the challenge each participant, coming, as it were, from somewhere else, poses to the other.

(Vincent Crapanzano 1991).

An alliance of multiple interests and perspectives is often a stronger political and social force than attempts to enforce a unitary movement.

(Michael M.J. Fischer 1994).

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Classics, Theoretical History and Anthropology in Context

The transnational communities of the social sciences should have a common ideology that fosters ideals of universality and cements social relations between scientists of various origins. It is within this sociological context that the classics are situated. The systematic reading of texts considered classics initiates students in a tradition that, in the case of anthropology, consists of the ethnographic corpus of certain key authors who brought the 'different other' to the awareness of the West. This different 'other' served not only as an existential mirror, but also prompted the refining of a theoretical corpus with universalist pretensions. The classics of a discipline are thus sociologically and theoretically indispensable creations through which its practitioners identify and reproduce themselves in diverse academic contexts. They make it possible to have a community of social scientists the existence of which gives the subject its relevance and continuity.

The centrality of the classics, however, does not imply that the social sciences should be transformed into the story of disciplines, nor does it turn anthropology into the history of anthropology. To the contrary, it requires the differentiation of internal and external proposals by the practitioners and students of the field. Although the historiography of anthropology generates even more data to be considered, theoretical histories are discourses internal to the practice of the discipline. They result from the theoretical reconstructions that accompany as well as illuminate new ethnographic data.

Theoretical histories situate works and authors; they establish lineages, not only of ethnographers but of questions, problems and theoretical issues that new generations inherit, respond to and pass on modified to their successors. Of course, this endorsement does not make classics eternal, or historic and disconnected from the context within which they were generated or appropriated. But beyond existing variations, the important sociological fact is that classics are essential for the continuity of a corpus of knowledge that, in certain circumstances, becomes disciplinary. The question of knowing who they are, where they are, or how they were incorporated, though important, is secondary to their fundamental existence.¹

This paper seeks to examine some questions concerning the expressions of anthropology in the contemporary context keeping the foregoing general considerations as points of reference. At a time when

the idea of the end of disciplines—feared by some, celebrated by others—is being disseminated, I seek to examine the results of the processes of acculturation that develop within the academic world, and which influence continuity and generate questions. I am interested in the possibility of pluralist universalisms, concerned with the very basis of anthropology—its foundations—vis-a-vis the fragmentation of knowledge, and intrigued by the fact that classics, even in the post-modern context, remain essential. I approach these broad questions by using two ethnographic entrances: first, a visit to American bookstores, where these questions can be answered, and second, by focusing on two pairs of recent monographs, written by authors of successive generations, in the United States and in India. I conclude with an agenda for the examination of anthropology and its dual nature.

North American Bookstores

During the past century, anthropology has had diverse legitimate 'centres'. I assume today the US plays a role socially equivalent to that of England during the first half of the century, or France in the golden moments of structuralism. In this context, a dialogue with North American anthropologists, or more precisely with the works and authors that gain visibility and professional authority, is inevitable for all of us.² But given their entry at a moment and in a milieu in which the idea of fragmentation has been transformed into a positive value, anthropology became the target of criticism and faces threats of dissolution as a discipline.

The predictions that anthropology is a mere 20th century phenomenon or, that it became a type of science that reproduces old models, are not confirmed by the activities in anthropology departments. Here, the existence of multiple tendencies continues to be one of the most notable characteristics of the training of new specialists and has not undergone a major change. Nonetheless, some modifications can be observed: first, the sciences which were considered to be close to anthropology have altered—instead of archaeology, biology, sociology or linguistics of the past decades, today they are increasingly those of history of science, literary criticism or philosophy. Second, an extra space is reserved in graduate pro-seminars for readings that familiarise the student with recent works in cultural studies. It may not be inappropriate to use the term magic to indicate the power and the danger

associated with these novelties first introduced in the 1970s by the history of consciousness programmes, in the 1980s by the cultural studies approach, and more recently, by the programmes of science, technology and society (STS). The polemics that are involved in these areas, even in the United States, do not impede these studies from being incorporated in the transmission of the discipline. But perhaps not to overstimulate the students, professors supervise the absorption of this literature by including it at the end of pro-seminars, after the classics have been read.

Universities reflect some of these changes, but their privileged ethnographic locus is not to be found in the departments or the vanguard programmes, but rather in the bookstores. In the US, academic bookstores are those special places—temples of a kind—that, existing between the search for knowledge and the power of the market, owe their survival to the spirit of circulation and reproduction that also motivates the academic world. Good bookstores have to keep a stock of traditional classical books, but must also exhibit novelties and anticipate new trends.

Today, browsing in a good academic bookstore in the US, immediately reveals that we are at the threshold of a new century. If the 19th century ended in 1914 in Europe (E. Weber 1976), in the US the present one's close has probably been anticipated for the whole of this decade. Some have already begun to celebrate its end, with dictionaries and encyclopaedias reviewing the past 100 years, but anthropology too is not far behind—as shown by the project *Late Editions* of annual reviews (see Marcus 1993). But if times have changed in bookstores, so also has space been restructured: the reorganisation of areas of knowledge has been accompanied by the spatial redistribution of the shelves. Anthropology, which had never occupied a prominent place, always upstaged by history, political science, economics and sociology, is now even further hidden, tucked away in corners. The first impression is that the books are out of place, having migrated to other areas. The path that took many anthropology books to the shelves of cultural and literary theory, and from there to those of philosophy and science, took less than a decade. In this process there were other surprises. Works by a single author can now be classified according to different categories: for example, Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* is to be found in the Asia-Pacific section, while his *German Ideology* is in that of philosophy. The so-called anti-disciplines (Marcus 1995) are indexed by the presence of the term studies (media studies, feminist studies, science and technology studies, cultural studies), and have become a sign of the vanguard.

Meanwhile, philosophy and science continue to share the greatest prestige, though today the term science simultaneously includes knowledge, beliefs and criticism (as well as ethnography, as we shall see).

In this fragmented context, political-geographic (or cultural) distinctions survive with increased vigour. In many cases, this type of definition is more important than classification by areas of knowledge: thus, with regard to some recent monographs, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* (by Lila Abu-Lughod) is to be found in 'Middle East', *Debating Muslims* (by Michael Fischer and Medhi Abedi), in 'Islamic Studies', and in Latin America, the highlight is *Death Without Weeping* (by Nancy Scheper-Hughes).³ Finally, for the occasional visitor, an even greater surprise: traditional disciplines have either disappeared or have been renamed. Linguistics, for example, is a non-existent category today because in the past few years, it has been transformed into cognitive science.

In this process of displacement and fragmentation, anthropology itself became within bookstores, a post-modern phenomenon,⁴ and it would not be an exaggeration to fear a Pyrrhic victory: today transformed by intellectual common sense (as it has happened with psychoanalysis a few decades ago), has anthropology not lost its social and cognitive specificity? This seems to be the crux of the current identity crisis of anthropology in the US.

Fortunately, anthropology was never limited to anthropologists and has appeared, in concept and practice, in diverse contexts, under the name of philosophy, sociology, folklore, history and literary criticism (as today under cultural studies). Sometimes it is a part of humanities, other times, that of social sciences. In India, anthropologists call themselves sociologists; in Brazil, anthropology grew out of sociology. However, in the process of selective absorption of intellectual fashions, we are and have been affected by the anxieties of the academic metropolises, whether in the present state of fragmentation, or before, when there were high hopes of defining the discipline. If this is so, faced with self-decreed dissolution on one hand, but cognisant of the relative continuity of ideologies and institutions on the other, the discussion over the end of anthropology can perhaps be better formulated through some questions: Where is anthropology? Where will it emerge? Perhaps only in a context which is sensitive to academic classifications, as the US generates so many opposing categories we see today: not only post (as in post-modern), but also multi (as in

multiculturalism), anti (as in anti-disciplinary) and pre (as in pre-scientific, pre-categorical, pre-psychological, pre-sociological).⁵ However, for our own peace of mind, though anthropology is suspect today, Clifford Geertz still considers himself an anthropologist—on what terms, we will see shortly.

Intermission: Anthropology at Home

For a long time anthropology has been defined by the exoticism of its subject matter and by the distance, both cultural and geographic, that separated the researcher from the researched group. The role of studying the social scientist's own society had been reserved for the other social sciences, such as sociology and political science (see Peirano 1998).

The situation has now changed. Throughout this century, the distance that separated the ethnologist from his/her group became increasingly less, with the inevitable questioning of the possessive pronoun (*my/yours*): from the Trobrianders to the Azande, and from there on to the Bororo by way of the Kwakiutl; in the 1960s the academic community discovered that it was the approach, and not the subject matter, that had unwittingly defined the anthropological endeavour. Levi-Strauss played an important role in this change of consciousness by establishing a horizontality to social beliefs and practices. From then on, the Durkheimian project dating back to the beginning of the century could be reaffirmed, by various means, until Geertz, in the 1980s, proclaimed, as if it were an original idea, 'we are all natives now', with the other being located across the seas or across the hall.⁶ After the long tradition in which anthropology's distinctive aspect was cultural and geographical distance, ethnography was brought home, in spite of admonitions from the older generation (see, for instance, Dumont 1986: 218). But the legitimacy of doing research at home required kinship studies as the test of validity, and, perhaps, it is no coincidence that Raymond Firth in England, and David Schneider in the United States, were pioneers in this task though with differing approaches (Firth 1956; Schneider 1968).

It is certainly true that anthropologists who were also natives, were since the beginning of the discipline, spared the search for radical alterity. Thus, in 1939, Malinowski gave his approval to Hsiao-Tung Fei to publish his monograph on Chinese peasants.

The book is not written by an outsider looking out for exotic impressions in a strange land; it contains observations carried by a

citizen upon his own people. It is the result of work done by a native among natives. If it be true that self-knowledge is the most difficult to gain, then undoubtedly an anthropology of one's own people is the most arduous, but also the most valuable achievements of a field-worker (Malinowski 1939: xix).⁷

If Malinowski surprises us with his bold posture, he was not alone. The approval that Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard gave to the study by M.N. Srinivas of the Coorgs of India suggested that a canon can be developed independent of common practices (see Radcliffe-Brown 1952). The ideal of overseas research, however, remained the goal to be reached, until many decades later, an innovation in the tradition began to question the need for external fieldwork (Beteille and Madan 1975; Srinivas 1966, 1979; Uberoi 1968). In 1982, however, Satish Saberwal courageously remarked that, for many, fieldwork in India could be seen as a soft experience, since it was mostly conducted within the language, caste and region of origin of the researcher (Saberwal 1982).

In the case of researchers from the ideologically 'central' traditions, who only recently came to accept the fact that they too were natives, the motives that led them to bring anthropology home are varied: for some, they are the inevitable conditions of the modern world, for others, they emerge from the desire to transform anthropology into 'cultural critique' (Jackson 1987; Marcus and Fischer 1986). It is in this context that we can return to cultural studies in order to suggest an affinity between the current 'anti-disciplinary arenas' (feminist studies, media studies, cyborg studies, etc.), and an anthropology done at home. When it comes home, anthropology in the US fragments into studies. In 1986, Marcus and Fischer anticipated this relationship.

Indeed, we believe that the modern formulation of cultural anthropology depends for its full realisation on just such a catching up of its lightly attended to critical function *at home* with the present lively transformation of its traditionally emphasised descriptive function abroad (Marcus and Fischer 1986:4, emphasis mine).

If the linguistic model served as an inspiration in the 1950s and 1960s, now literary criticism has become the new source of inspiration for anthropologists. After accepting its critical function, bombarding the borders of the disciplines and proposing a remapping of the areas of knowledge, these attitudes prompted the questioning of the validity of 'facts' and the authority of the anthropologist as an author. It is in this context that anthropology came to accept different alternative ways of writing: fieldnotes, biographies, interviews, science fiction,

novels, manifestoes, all constituting new styles of the broader genre of 'stories'.

Inevitably, this movement has been reflected in the wider academic world through a process of selective incorporation. Here, I would like to propose that, perhaps as an equivalent to the political aspect that the genre of stories achieved in places like the US, India and Brazil, the analysis of socially relevant events predominates. Events maintain that powerful social dimension previously reserved for social dramas and rituals by anthropologists; these are recreated in the text in an effort to capture the lived, lost or crucial moment that the narrator experienced (or which became significant). Furthermore, in the analysis of events, theoretical-intellectual and political-pragmatic objectives are fused; there is no guilt in being inspired by the classics (or, to the contrary, by post-modern influences), and universalism is mixed with 'committed' aspects that were always the hallmark of anthropology at home.

Of course, events are not discarded in the US—however, sometimes, they are fictional (see Stone 1995)—and telling stories is the choice of many Indian and Brazilian anthropologists (e.g., Ramos 1990 in Brazil). But the theoretical, interpretative and political dimensions of these alternatives must be confronted. A comparison between the two strategies can be sociologically illustrative of the broader subject matter of putting anthropology 'in context', but it also addresses the critical topic of how to perceive and present the 'tangible fact' that orients ethnography. I shall return to this point but, for the time being, I will move on to the second part of this exercise by analysing two pairs of books by American and Indian authors. These books were published during the last three years: for the first generation I chose *After the Fact* (Geertz 1995) and *Pathways* (Madan 1994); for the coming generation, *Critical Events* (Das 1995a) and *Making PCR* (Rabinow 1996).

Stories and Pathways

After the Fact by Clifford Geertz, and *Pathways* by T.N. Madan, are tangentially autobiographical books. Geertz has great visibility in the international arena; Madan, great prestige amongst those who are familiar with the ethnographic literature pertaining to India and religion. The parallel publication of both texts, in diverse contexts, is quite revealing.

Sensitive to textual form, both the authors show their contrasts in the beginning by the type of literary construction they adopt. For

Geertz, at a time when anthropology's intellectual milieu and moral basis have changed, the anthropologist must also change. Nowadays, one may rely on 'mini-narratives that include the authors' as a literary option. Following these new winds of change, *After the Fact* puts together accounts of a refined storyteller which, collected from a vast field, provide the grounding for the author to discuss pressing topics. In his well-known style, the titles of various chapters are composed of a single word, all in the plural. The sequence towns, countries, cultures, hegemonies, disciplines, modernities, is certainly not random (for example, the order towns/countries/cultures permeate the discipline; it is politically adequate that hegemonies precedes discipline, and that it all ends with modernities). By the same token, all bibliographic references are consolidated in notes that are not part of the body of the text, but are presented in the end as commentaries. The same style had been adopted in Geertz (1968). In this impeccable book, Geertz does not present a history or a biography, but a confusion of stories, a profusion of biographies.

From India, *Pathways* also speaks of changes in the world, in the disciplines, in cultures and in modernities, but Madan opts for an intellectual ethnography which has as its starting point different paths, and as a general strategy, the question of the entry of the social scientist into them. The perspective from which the anthropologist introduces himself into the world of social reflection and existing intellectual pathways is what concerns the author. 'Pathfinders', the first part of the book, is dedicated to the predecessors with whom Madan associated in different moments of his career and who had influenced his work. Here, the characters are of various origins and intellectual lineages: D.P. Mukerji, D.N. Majumdar and M.N. Srinivas from the Indian subcontinent; Louis Dumont, the 'outstanding pathfinder' who took over the legacy of Marcel Mauss; and North Americans, from Kroeber to Mckim Marriott today. 'In search of a path', the second part, is more personal and reflective: a series of essays about how fieldwork in one's own society allows for a bold examination of the relationship between anthropology and the historical process of rationalisation of the West; another essay illustrates the theoretical-comparative approach of 'mutual interpretation'; a third looks at anthropology as 'critical self-awareness'.⁸ The question of cultural pluralism is then addressed through three empirical and contrasting themes related to various groups and different moments in the history of India. The topics include a discussion of religious ideology and ethnic identity among the Hindus and Muslims in Kashmir, from the era of partition to the beginning of the most

recent violence; the change in social identity in Muslim Bengal before and after the founding of Bangladesh; and the differential reactions of India and Japan to Western influence.

In the mature writings of two scholars, who experienced the past decades from different perspectives, their visions of anthropology have been expressed. But, once again, it is interesting to search for the place where they are expressed. For Geertz, for example, the controversy concerning the notion of discipline is such that he recognises that anthropology was always poorly defined, offering more of a blurred image than a Foucauldian model. Yet the topic provokes him, causing him to ask if it is a scandal or a farce. At any rate, he is unable to say 'what anthropology is' (1995: 99), instead Geertz chooses to examine his academic career, placing emphasis on the institutions where he had studied, on the fieldwork he conducted in the furthest lands of the Islamic world, namely, Indonesia and Morocco, and on the world context of that moment—which provides a discrete examination of the role of the US in international politics. This journey—his days as a student at Harvard, then moving on to Chicago in the 1960s, and finally Princeton—reveals a trajectory that was tied to multidisciplinary experiments, though with links to anthropology departments. This trajectory, told through short stories and picturesque examples (though also some murky episodes, such as the 'Bellah Affair'), leads him finally to refute the idea of a discipline. Thus, if it is in professional life that the anthropologist can be found, this is achieved through indefiniteness.

The sequence of settings into which you are projected as you go if not forward at least onward, thoroughly uncertain of what awaits, does far more to shape the pattern of your work, to discipline it and give it form, than do theoretical arguments, methodological pronouncements, canonized texts. ... You move less between thoughts than between the occasions and predicaments that bring them to mind (Geertz 1995: 134).

Triloki Madan takes a different path. Though he also acknowledges moments and predicaments that he develops in the form of stories and fieldwork examples, Madan makes intellectual pathways the nucleus of his argument, and the position of the anthropologist the basis of his discussion. Suggesting the theme of disciplinarity, Madan acknowledges the sociological aspect of paths, but demonstrates that creativity and sociological constraints are not mutually exclusive. Since there are no

discoveries in anthropology as such but renovated efforts, these can only gain by the diverse locations of the researcher: the education of the anthropologist gives ample room to experience the contrast between the literature and the expectation of being surprised from different perspectives—which could as likely happen in India as somewhere else. A non-Western anthropologist, therefore, is not a pseudo-European by nature, i.e., someone who adopts the ways that would make one a European. Since the encounter between cultures occurs within the mind of the anthropologists, the principles of 'mutual interpretation', the project of 'critical self-awareness', or, still, 'an effort to see in the round which is otherwise flat', is more of a guide than the pursuit of pure otherness. Madan warns: 'An excessive emphasis on the otherness of those studied only results in their being made the objects of study rather than its subject' (Madan 1994: 159).

From Brazil, it is interesting to note that an important event in Madan's trajectory is only obliquely mentioned in his book. I refer to the role he played in moving the journal *Contributions to Indian Sociology* from Europe to India. This move took place when Louis Dumont ('Ecole des Hautes' Etudes), the European co-founder of the journal (along with David Pocock at Oxford) in 1957, decided to cease its publication 10 years later. Complex negotiations allowed for its rebirth in India, and Madan was the editor of this important journal during the following 25 years, from 1967 to 1992, thereby creating a privileged forum for discussion and debate. The pedagogic, theoretical and political roles played through the transmigration of *Contributions* from Europe to India are an important legacy in Madan's career that only surfaces in *Pathways* as a subtext.

In a similar fashion, an important subtext in *After the Fact* tells of the individual contribution made by Geertz to anthropology. Though fearful of the various disciplinary implications, in his individual trajectory he acknowledges the importance of being a US citizen ('There are lots of advantages in being the citizen of a superpower in less prominent places, but cultural invisibility is not among them'), as well as of his own notoriety ('in 1980, when, cited all over the place, my contributions were dissected, resisted, corrected, distorted, celebrated, decried, or built upon'). When the author admits that he has become a required reference, *After the Fact* ceases being the narrative of an individual career and becomes—whether the author wants it or not—a chapter in the history of anthropology. After demonstrating, by means of evidence from his own trajectory, that anthropology has always been

in transformation, Geertz is still surprised by the current changes: the query that anthropologists are subordinate to other specialists (in contrast to the old days when the ethnologist alone dominated the field); the even greater scrutiny of local anthropologists; and the significant increase in the number of specialists in the US. If previously it was an occupation limited to a few so as to be compared to a tribe, 'anthropology has become a sprawling consortium of dissimilar scholars held together largely by will and convenience' (1995: 133). In contrast, Madan contests not only the Western truths, but also those projects couched as native, spontaneous, autonomous or indigenous. For him, these latter terms distort the nature of anthropology and only serve to reinforce the opinion that the appearance of the 'native anthropologist' changes nothing.

The crucial question is not who is doing anthropology? But what kind of anthropology is being done? A mere change of the stage and the actors will not enable anthropology to be reborn. ... We need to produce a different kind of play under the direction of comprehensive theoretical frameworks, which admit meaning and purpose into our discourse, and which integrate the views from the inside with those from the outside (Madan 1994: 138–39).

Two books, two autobiographical assessments; individual stories in one, collective paths in the other. For Geertz, unique occasions do not form part of a discipline; if his biography is constructed of special moments, this is an indication of what occurs amongst specialists and it is possible to come to the conclusion that anthropology reflects 'a loose collection of intellectual careers'. Madan starts from the very conjunction of intellectual careers, sociologises the paths, immerses himself in the entanglement of several theoretical histories, and, while dispensing with a discussion of anthropology as a discipline, offers his book to readers who sympathise with the idea that 'no author is an island complete into himself; every scholar has predecessors, consociates, and successors'.

Events and Stories

In the coming decade, it is possible that assessments will reveal how the end of the century was characterised by the return of anthropology to its social point of origin. By then, research at home will replace the canonic ideal of a radical encounter with otherness. 'Indeed', remembers

Geertz today, 'an increasing number of us work on Western societies, and even our own, a move which simplifies some matters and complicates others' (1995: 132). The awareness that anthropology never completely left home perhaps can be made explicit: Africa was partially home for the British when they exported the idea of totality to the colonies,⁹ and that today a process of selective incorporation legitimises, in the world metropolises, specialists from the old anthropological research sites who exhibit a kind of knowledge formerly considered as native. A comparison between *Critical Events* by Veena Das and *Making PCR* by Paul Rabinow reveals how, while in India research continues to evaluate one's own society *and* also anthropology, in the United States politically committed research has science as its subject matter and anthropology becomes a residual category.

Critical Events puts together essays on a variety of themes and times: an intellectual debate within anthropology; events that occurred at the time of the partition of India, focusing on the sexual and reproductive violence to which women were subjected; discourse on cultural rights, control over memory, and the right of a community to demand heroic death from its members; the violence of Sikh militants; judicial and medical discourses on the victims of the industrial disaster at Bhopal. Das starts from a dual location: the essays identify critical moments in the history of contemporary India and these moments are then redescribed within the framework of anthropological knowledge. The expression 'in the history of contemporary India' sheds light on the idea of events as critical moments which, beginning with a strategy that intends to avoid giving a privileged status to locality, substitutes space for time, and, in the conjuncture, seeks to 'de-essentialise' India.

But the book also reconstructs India. In the course of the book, Das unites as 'Indian' the events that occurred between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs; criticises and re-evaluates accepted values of modernity (for example, human rights and the understanding of pain); offers contributions for a change in the Indian metanarrative of the nation state by questioning the model of the European nation state; and warns about the danger of unduly valuing the community as an organic and authentic unity—the community too has its means of oppression. Das' project also achieves other objectives: for instance, the author shows how various levels (local, national and global) can be simultaneously present in the life of a single individual, as is evident from the reality of the victims of political violence. The book also proposes the idea of an 'anthropology of pain' that, instead of consolidating the authority of the discipline, has as its objective rehabilitating and giving voice to victims of violence.¹⁰

In the process, the author clarifies her own vision of intellectual paths (to use the expression of T.N. Madan, her predecessor as editor of *Contributions to Indian Sociology*) and her journeys on them.

For Veena Das there are at least three kinds of dialogues within the ethnographic or sociological text of India: that with the Western traditions of scholarship in the discipline; with the Indian sociologist and anthropologist; and with the 'informant', whose voice is present either as information obtained in the field or as the written texts of the tradition (1995a: 26). These dialogues allow for a clearer understanding of the positioning of the author. In the first place, for Das the informant is a victim, to whom voice should be given.¹¹ Madan's concern to soften otherness finds its parallel here in the proposal to grant to the informant the status of first person (thus avoiding the third). Das substitutes the metaphor of the 'gaze', which has marked anthropology during this century, for that of 'voice', making the influence of the post-modern perspective explicit, and, by the same token, overcoming the reifying anthropological perspective of a particular 'vision'.

The way the book is put together reveals a dialogue with Indian colleagues, and, in this sense, the choice of dedicating it to M.N. Srinivas is extremely relevant. Veena Das rediscovers Srinivas' work in the context of a curious and unplanned alliance between the (so-called) subaltern historians and A.K. Saran, so that all of them, though with diverse approaches, are united in a critique of Louis Dumont. It is Dumont, in the end, who disturbs and causes the most pain to this anthropologist, revealing her vulnerability.

I reiterate my admiration for [Dumont's] remarkable abilities in bringing together a wide range of materials within a single theoretical frame, but my admiration for his achievements *cannot take away the pain* that an encounter with his formulations entails for an anthropologist who wishes to lay claims to both the resources of the anthropological tradition and the Indian tradition, both of which can act as global traditions or local traditions (Das 1995: 33, note 5, emphasis mine).

It would be simple, however, to think that Veena Das allies herself with Indians in opposition to Westerners: in addition to an involvement with many post-modernist concerns, it is in Wittgenstein that Das finds inspiration to understand the expression of pain, and, in Durkheim, the interlocutor to help her discern how the sharing of pain can become a witness to life.¹² Between the sources of Western anthropological

tradition on one side, and Indian sources of inspiration on the other, she establishes a triangulation with anthropologists 'from other peripheral places', and, from this particular location, indicates ways that could pluralise the narratives of the discipline and eliminate the dominant Eurocentrism. A multiplicity of intellectual paths results from this proposal, offering an opportunity to expand the existing dialogue between India and the West.

Changing location to the US, the situation is quite different. Taking *Making PCR: A Story of Biotechnology* by Paul Rabinow as an example, one does not find any disclosed interlocutors. If 10 years ago, so-called post-modern anthropologists were sociologically recognised through their mutual citation, Rabinow's new book indicates that an era of experiments has come into being. A consolidation of this tendency is revealed through this critical index: Rabinow does not cite his companion in intellectual adventure. The author presents to his colleagues an acknowledgement and an apology: the credits are at the end of the book, and include those friends and specialists working in the field of anthropology/history of science; the apology is for not citing their publications in the bibliography that follows. The reader is left to reconstruct, if possible, the debates that the author chooses not to reveal. Here, the *Pathways* have been erased. (At only one time is an intellectual lineage established, but the references do not include anthropologists; the reference to Levi-Strauss comes at the end of the book.)

I regret that it is inappropriate to include more explicit citations to the lively debates of these fields; keen and tolerant readers will find traces abound. I trust that my colleagues will realize that this book seeks a somewhat broader audience, including some who are far less tolerant of the technical language of science studies (1996: 175).¹³

In this text, Rabinow examines one of the great inventions of contemporary science: PCR (the Polymerase Chain Reaction) which expanded the capacity of identifying and manipulating genetic material on a previously unimaginable scale. The book includes an analysis of the transformation of the practices and potential of molecular biology, of the institutional context in which the invention occurred, and of the principal actors involved: scientists, technicians, and business people. With its provocative subtitle (*A Story of Biotechnology*), it is significant that the book has a classic structure.

The first two chapters present the ecology of the invention through an evaluation of the experimental and conceptual methodology that

led to biotechnology, plus an examination of Cetus Corporation during the 1980s—the context of the experiments. The (ever noble) third chapter focuses on the process that culminated in the invention, in which experimental milieu and concept were combined ('PCR: Experimental Milieu + the Concept'), while the last two chapters demonstrate that an idea has little value unless it leads to action. An attempt is made to tell of the development of the concept, the process that gave scientific visibility to PCR, the conflicts among the members of the team, and the negotiations with large corporations.

The major innovation in this sober tale is the ethnographic insertion of various interviews throughout the chapters. These conversations (which were reviewed by the interviewees prior to publication) provide a window to the world described by the anthropologist. An academic reader finds many familiar concerns: the evaluation of the disadvantages of the academic world vis-a-vis the industrial one; the means and criteria used to gain research grants; the rules of legitimisation and prestige in the industrial-scientific world; the need for public evaluation; the personalities, idiosyncrasies and personal lives of the scientists. Yet an important subtext is the sequence of the ethnographic construction, which moves from the ecology of science to concept, to experimental system, to the development of specific techniques, and back to the conceptual realm, and lands in the event. While revealing the continual motion of experimental science, the book reminds us of anthropological monographs, and also offers us the conditions for understanding social reproduction in the world of biotechnology.

This is a critical point. *Making PCR*, while presenting a text beginning with a story, reveals the inspiration it got from classical anthropology in the gerund of the title. The end is a kind of beginning—an event—with no article. Thus the book may be seen as the outcome of an experiment made in the US of today, at home, with science transformed into subject matter and the appropriation of the canonical tradition (though the solitude of the fieldworker here surfaces only in the genre of the text). Rabinow has brought out the hallmark of biotechnology: its potential to get away from nature, and to construct artificial conditions in which specific variables can be manipulated. For the anthropologist, brought up with the duality of culture and nature, it comes as a puzzle to confront a situation in which such kind of knowledge as biotechnology 'forms the basis for remaking nature according to our norms' (1996: 20).

I was often intrigued by, but sceptical of, the claims of miraculous knowledge made possible by new technologies supposedly ushering in

a new era in the understanding of life and unrivalled prospects for the improvement of health. The weekly *New York Times* science pages rarely failed to announce that every new discovery or technical advance 'could well lead to a cure for cancer or AIDS' (Rabinow 1996: 2).

Here it is science, with its magical promises, that enlivens the interest of the researcher. In the process of bringing anthropology back home, the ethnography of science becomes a critique of post-modernity, thus fulfilling the Durkheimian project, yet affirming the choice as political. In the process, Rabinow also reinforces other canonic aspects of anthropology: that, even at home, the ethnographer needs to learn another language (in his case, that of molecular biology), during a long period of socialisation, and to face 'the problem of who has the authority and responsibility to represent experience and knowledge' (1996: 17).

In this context, it is curious that the book does not cite the monograph on high energy physics that Traweek (1988) published in the US.¹⁴ Opting for a particular dialogue with a distant classic, the book opens and closes with a discussion of Max Weber's 'Science as vocation': the movement of getting distance at/from home perhaps requires the legitimisation that Weber gives to the project, with the bonus of the special character bestowed on the US.¹⁵ The way Levi-Strauss makes his appearance is also unique: not only because he is the only anthropologist cited, but also because it is in *bricolage* and the *mouvement* incident that the story of biotechnology is transformed, in the last pages of the book, into an event. Rabinow shows how, in biotechnology, a movement exists which allows concepts to produce new phenomena through new contextualisations, thereby generating new inventions. By neglecting the fact that the same process occurs in anthropology, here, in this book, there is an anthropologist, but, like Geertz's *After the Fact*, this is not necessarily anthropology. (It is revealing, though not surprising, that in American bookstores Rabinow's book is not to be found in anthropology or cultural studies, but on the shelves of the science section.)

'Ce Qui est Donne' (That Which is Given)

A 'book of the year', an invention of 'science', events that are history, a story that can be seen as an event—these are the varied ways in which anthropology has emerged in different places in the contemporary

world. Sometimes, arranged in intellectual paths, at other times, presenting biographical mini-narratives that do not acknowledge disciplinary lineages. Thus, how is one to situate oneself amongst the various options for theoretical-ethnographic construction?

In this exercise, in which the publication of four books became events in themselves, the delimiting of the narrative and the crucial ethnographic moment were, as always, central problems: Veena Das discovered critical moments by questioning totalitarian views and assumed the role of a listener more than an observer; Paul Rabinow told the story of a scientific invention, but included interviews which turned the protagonists into co-authors of the narrative. The events discussed by Das are Indian: they are socially critical in the history of the sub-continent, and the author inserts intellectual paths that include multiple interlocutors—Europeans, Indians, Brazilians. Rabinow's story of biotechnology does not offer evidence of the lineages of which he is a part, but deals with an event of global consequences. The author dispenses with a dialogue with colleagues, choosing as his principal interlocutors classical authors who, in the context of a book that avoids disciplinary definitions, maintain the privilege of distance in time and space.

The story repeats itself, though not in the same way: Geertz could do without predecessors in the name of a unique biographical trajectory, while Madan defined them in order to indicate his own search; Geertz moved through institutions and fieldwork with a mobility that, in symbolic terms, embraced the world, while Madan defined his location as India but included a lineage that had no boundaries. For the political/geographic world of Geertz, Madan countered with a world made of intellectual paths. Rabinow encountered his event in universal science, Das defined her plural events socially and historically in India; Rabinow wanted to know more about the social processes that hide behind great scientific discoveries, Das was more interested in the limits of suffering of the victims of collective life, including the sufferings which result from great discoveries.

Whether from India or the US, of one generation or another, all four authors produced narratives that are important to the international community of specialists. One reason for this is because they placed themselves within certain theoretical histories: in favour or against, accepting or denying them, with links or autonomously; theoretical histories were always present. If Veena Das showed her uneasiness in relation to Louis Dumont, Paul Rabinow, even while avoiding lineages,

found 'the savage mind' of Claude Levi-Strauss in a large industrial corporation. And if her political commitment brought Das to analyse critical events from a multcentred perspective, that of Rabinow brought him to tell a story of science in which he included himself as the narrator. Das opted for Durkheim, Rabinow chose Weber.

For the anthropologist, produced by and fed on fieldwork, the articulation of experiences in which she or he is a participant, or which are rediscovered as document or memory (of diverse natures, milieux, scopes and dominions), needs not only a textual anchor, but also a cognitive or psychic one that encompasses the experiences. The significance that the appropriation of the 'ephemeral moment' or the 'revealing incident' has in the experiences of the discipline is illustrated by the exemplary cases that brought Marcel Mauss, upon analysing the *kula* and the *potlatch*, to express his concerns as follows:

Historians believe and justly resent the fact that sociologists make too many abstractions and separate unduly the various elements of society. We should follow their precepts and observe what is given. The tangible fact is Rome or Athens or the average Frenchman or the Melanesian of some island, and not prayer or law as such (1967: 78).

Thus, data are constructed, facts are made. It is Geertz himself who recalls the etymology *factum, factus, facere* (1995: 62). Yet the ethnographic fact mixes time and space. Whether seen as events retold in the text (Das), or as textual stories (Rabinow), what is really at stake is the choice of the best angle for constructing 'that which is given' — *ce qui est donne*. Whatever the options—modern or post-modern—theoretical-political implications are always at stake, whether acknowledged or not.¹⁶ Stories for some, events and paths for others, these alternatives reinforce the presence of a theoretical and political insertion of the authors, in a realm of what can be alluded to as 'the politics of theory'.

Weber acknowledged, as did Mauss, the need for delimiting and resolving problems as against the tendency of producing 'dilettantism adorned with philosophy' (1965: 220). For Weber, just as with anthropologists today, it was by tackling problems generated by facts, and not just through epistemological and methodological reflections, that a science progressed. (This is but one more of the many points of discussion that flow from the preceding comparisons and which, while fascinating, can only be mentioned here.)

Back to American Bookstores

Today, when a reader looks for anthropology books only on the shelves of this specific discipline in American bookstores, she or he is limited to a normal science style. In this section are found the books considered to be classics, and, among the recent publications, only those which maintain a stable definition of anthropology. Thus, one will generally find books by canonic authors, such as Malinowski, Boas, Mead, Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe-Brown, and Levi-Strauss; recent essays on consecrated topics (such as ritual, religion, ethnography); monographs on indigenous societies, irrespective of their theoretical orientation; and not-so-recent books by celebrated authors who are widely recognised as anthropologists (examples range from Mary Douglas to Jack Goody and include Clifford Geertz).

In terms of the books examined here, where is contemporary anthropology? With respect to many new publications, it has migrated to the area of studies. And, also, to philosophy, cognitive science or, purely science, this being the case of Paul Rabinow. But new books can also be found in specialised sections of geographic areas that, in dividing up the world (Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Middle East, etc.), encompass a certain political cosmology. These varied places where anthropological production finds a home, corroborating the multi-sited nature of the discipline in the US, poses a central question: the exoticism of anthropology. Today, in pretending to disclaim this association, much of the anthropologically inspired studies are no longer anthropology: though anthropologists exist, the discipline has lost its validation. Yet, it is precisely in this process that, paradoxically, exoticism becomes its structuring principle.

A visit to bookstores confirms that the discipline remains so tied to exoticism (despite efforts to the contrary by anthropologists) that not even the intellectual market is able to achieve a relativistic perspective. The path seems to follow this direction: since anthropology is (still ever) the study of the exotic other, in the 1990s this approach is no longer politically acceptable the result is that the focus is back on us, that is, to nearby otherness. But for academic bookstores in the US, at this moment these studies are no longer anthropology; the books are transformed into cultural studies, feminist studies, area studies. The result is predictable: if anthropology was the study of the exotic other—and we must distance ourselves from exoticism by denying the fact that the new studies are anthropological—it remains definitively associated

with exoticism. In this process, the force of the essentialist (and hence, ahistorical) vision reveals itself: either anthropology is a discipline, i.e., matter, which is always the same, or it disappears.

It would be simplistic, though, to maintain the notion of a hegemonic and isolated American intellectual milieu that establishes the categories into which the rest of the world must fit. A significant fact must be mentioned in this context: the massive presence of non-Western authors in the intellectual and academic world of the US today. The four books analysed present a clear example of this change, and though T.N. Madan and Veena Das are not readily found in American bookstores,¹⁷ what is left of anthropology needs to admit into its ranks authors who are natives—including for them a role in the crusade against exoticising the discipline.

I borrow the idea of intensification from Louis Dumont. In order to elucidate the hybrid character of modern acculturations, Dumont (1994) shows how transplanted notions become intensified when compared with their place of origin, whether in peripheral tendencies or in their hegemonic and dominant configuration. With regard to the books in question, this mechanism occurs through slippages of meaning: for instance, even with the subtitle 'An anthropological perspective on contemporary India', *Critical Events* cannot be accepted as anthropology; a (native) anthropologist who studies her own society is not an anthropologist, but a sociologist. For having a double alterity (in this case, India and anthropology), the book slides to sociology—not a very favourable placement, at this moment when the disciplines are being questioned.¹⁸

Here in Brazil, as much as in India, the books *After the Fact*, *Pathways*, *Critical Events* and *Making PCR* would be identified as anthropology, just as Geertz, Madan, Das and Rabinow are recognised as anthropologists. In these contexts, the disciplinary pulverisation that today marks the area of the human sciences in the US does not occur. In India and Brazil, I believe, internal mechanisms of acculturation domesticated—well before it occurred in the United States—otherness at home. One could think that, surrounded in the centre, anthropology thrives in certain margins, or, if it does not thrive, at least it offers a positive, critical and constructive approach. If the modern world has been constituted by processes of acculturation, this is one of its ironic aspects.

The place of origin of authors is another situation related to exoticism. Here, the specific fact to point out is that, coming from diverse areas

and often written from divergent theoretical orientations, many contemporary books by foreign authors are put together in the United States under the cultural studies label. Being well-defined in their places of origin, subaltern studies, literary criticism, and even anthropology, when they take root in the US, lose their distinctive characteristics. Once again, the generic designation of cultural studies reveals a current tendency to fragment intellectual fields only to later reunite them as analogous, thereby eliminating their historical particularities in the name of a shared post-modernity.¹⁹ Today, as always, the old question of otherness, both in bookstores and elsewhere, does not have an adequate (re)solution.

An Agenda for Reflection

The new hybrid representations generated by the encounter of the so-called non-modern societies with the dominant European civilisation constituted, during this century, diverse species of synthesis, more or less radical, from two perspectives: on the one hand, the ideas and values of autochthonous and holistic inspiration; on the other, the ideas and values stemming from the modern individualist configuration. These encounters generate permanent and precise processes of acculturation and intensification: the more modern civilisation is spread throughout the world, the more its configuration is modified by the incorporation of hybrid products, making it more powerful, and, at the same time, modifying it through the permanent mix of distinct values (Dumont 1994).

A similar phenomenon befalls social scientists who have at least a double and solidary identification: on the one hand they are members of a transnational community that shares certain values, codes, expectations, rituals, and, equally important, classics, from which they derive a universal character; on the other hand, they are political individuals whose socialisation/social identity is tied to a specific nationality—be it Indian, Brazilian, Australian or French—revealing particular traits. In some cases, these are combined with a civilisational identity (as in the South Asian case); in others, hegemony is the encompassing value (as in the American, for example). From Max Weber to Norbert Elias, the links and relative autonomy vis-a-vis the national idea have been questioned and evaluated (Elias 1971; Weber 1946). Just as with other phenomena, these are questions that should be approached

from a comparative perspective. I conclude by delineating certain dimensions that were present in the cases examined, which can serve as the basis for an agenda for reflection.

The comparison between diverse trends in anthropology is a serious and urgent project. Seized by the ideals of objectivity and universalism (which are in fact parochial), by subjective notions of knowledge which result in indigent relativisms, and by militant declarations which shelter shallow political commitments, communication between anthropologists needs a broad agreement (in the epigraph by Vincent Crapanzano, 'a fully governing convention') and, at the same time, the political force that flows from the alliance of multiple interests and perspectives (as in Michael Fischer's). In this context, it is worth remembering how, in the books examined, whether from the US or India, the recognition of certain classics was simultaneously reaffirmed with the privileged status given to fieldwork. This process indicates that, in anthropology, the idea of theory as a (Peircean) third can dispense with a stable and well-defined conceptual base, attributing this function to predecessors, and, as a consequence, to ethnography, and both, predecessors and ethnography, allowing for the history of anthropology to be transformed into a multiplicity of theoretical histories. Thus, it is the acceptance of theoretical histories that finally makes it feasible to have the pretensions of an egalitarian dialogue among anthropologists of different origins and orientations (we all have the same monographs in our private libraries; field anecdotes are socially shared; similar ethnographical stories are used as productive metaphors).

But one must go further, and differences as much as similarities must be confronted. Despite the fact that anthropologists are culture-bound and themselves part of larger communities, some basic claims must be considered: (a) that academic knowledge is relatively autonomous from its immediate contexts of production, and may thus prompt desirable levels of communication; (b) that comparison, rather than superficial homogenisation, may sustain hopes for more truly pluralist universalisms; (c) if forms of anthropology emerge under different labels in specific contexts, neighbouring disciplines must be considered, be they models or rivals, heirs or predecessors; and (d) finally, that local (which often are 'national') intellectual traditions, where current practices of anthropology are embedded, must be pondered over. This includes, of course, previous lendings and borrowings as well as earlier political commitments.

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Notes

1. See Alexander 1987 for a comparison of the role of the classics in the natural and in the human sciences.
2. As pointed out by Barth, 'American cultural anthropology today dominates the international scene, both in mass and quality, and is largely trend-setting for what we all try to do' (1996: 1).
3. See Sigaud 1995 on the reception of Scheper-Hughes' book in Brazil.
4. Marcus (1995) refers to the type of ethnography in which the objects of study are discontinuous when analysed from the perspective of the world system.
5. The notions of pre-scientific and pre-categorical orientations are derived from Lacan 1981; that of pre-psychological from Crapanzano 1992; that of pre-sociological from Latour 1987.
6. Geertz 1983. But in 1968 Schneider had already made a similar association: 'This is a society and culture that we know well. We speak the language fluently, we know the customs, and we have observed the natives in their daily lives. Indeed, we are the native' (1968: vi).
7. T.N. Madan (1994: 156) mentions the two occasions in which Malinowski wrote forewords for books authored by his former students, Jomo Kenyatta and Hsiao-Tung Fei, and cites the passage to point out Malinowski's defensive attitude.
8. See also Madan 1982, for a collection of essays presented to Louis Dumont; Madan 1987, for a series of interpretations of Hindu culture; and Madan 1992 for an edited volume of essays on religion in India.
9. The point of view that British anthropologists left England unquestioned was proposed by Anderson (1968), in the context of the spectacular development of anthropology vis-a-vis sociology in that country.
10. Tambiah (1996) distinguishes between three approaches to collective violence: the anthropology of the collective aspect of violence; the anthropology of migration processes; and the anthropology of pain. Within this general framework, Das (1995a) belongs to the third type.
11. See also Das (1995b). Contrast the place of the victims with the oppressed in the Indian and the Brazilian cases (Peirano 1981, 1991, 1992).
12. For Wittgenstein, the expression 'I am in pain' does not describe a mental state, it is a complaint; from Durkheim, Veena Das takes up the discussion on piacular rites.
13. See Rabinow 1992 for his reactions to Brazilian colleagues after his visit to the country.
14. Traweek is the first on the list of Rabinow's acknowledgements, yet her book is not cited. Traweek, who also opted for a classic monographic construction to deal with

- accelerators and physicists, years later showed she was disappointed because readers did not perceive her book as an 'ironic' counterpoint to Evans-Pritchard (Traweek 1992: 436).
15. Taken from 'Science as vocation', the epigraph is as follows: 'Permit me to take you once more to America, because there one can often observe such matters in their most massive and original shape'.
 16. See Ahmad (1993: 175): 'Our texts that appear to be (sometimes even claim to be) products of what was once called "theoretical practice" are saturated with what we are, our times are, our world is so that the best of our theories need to be examined in terms of their irreducible situatedness.'
 17. After this essay had been written I did find, rather surprisingly, copies of T.N. Madan's latest book (1997) in the sociology section of a Cambridge (Mass.) bookstore. It may be noted here though, that Madan himself describes his book as a contribution to 'cultural sociology', which, one can safely presume, is a synonym for anthropology.
 18. Brazilian literature receives similar treatment: Candido 1975, on literature and society, was classified as sociology; however, Viveiros de Castro 1992, on the cosmology of the Arawete' Indians, may be found on the shelf of anthropology.
 19. This phenomenon is similar to Ahmad's view on the term 'postcolonialism': It is only when the Angel of History casts its glance back at Asian and African societies from its location in Europe and North America, or when it flies across the skies of the world on the wings of post-modern travel and telecommunication, that those societies look like so many variants of a post-colonial sameness (1995: 28).

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