

Department of Sociology  
Lund University

# **BETWEEN SCIENCE AND LIFE**

The fieldwork experience and Malinowski's *Diary*

Author: Marta Kolankiewicz  
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Supervisor: Jan Olof Nilsson

## Summary

Between science and life

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The subject of my essay is personal experience of anthropologists during fieldwork carried out in another culture. It is presented through two cases: the first is Bronisław Malinowski's journey to Mailu and the Trobriand Islands and the second Kirsten Hastrup's experience in Iceland. The method I have used is biographical. My basic material is Malinowski's *Diary* (both the parts published in English in the sixties and the whole text published in Polish in 2001). I have used the text to analyze his experience of interacting with people from another culture, but also to show how it influenced contemporary anthropology. This I have done by comparing Malinowski's and Hastrup's experiences from their fieldwork. I have tried to present this experience not only as a cultural phenomenon, changing in phase with discourses of the time, but also as the part of anthropological work which highlights crucial dilemmas of epistemology and ethics of the social sciences. The choice of the subject was to a large extent motivated by the present interests in qualitative methodology within the Cultural Studies and sociology. Recent postcolonial theories have played an important role in some parts of my essay.

Keywords:

Malinowski, Hastrup, diary, fieldwork, 'exotic', 'other', anthropology, epistemology

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## **Introduction**

The western experience of travelling to an outside place has taken various forms, having different motivations and objectives. Explorers, conquistadors, missionaries, traders, colonizers, businessmen, politicians, adventurers, tourists – all of them decided to leave their homes for shorter or longer time and make a journey to a distant land in search of different things; some looking for riches, others wanting to save souls and promulgate their religion; some trying to discover new lands and new possibilities, others eager for adventure and change. Among them there are also anthropologists – scientists who study man and culture, and who – in seeking to define, describe and understand their essence – have fixed their eyes on the ‘exotic’ world.

In this thesis, I am going to focus on the western anthropologist’s experience of ‘being there’, i.e. of travelling to, contacting with and somehow entering into another culture. This experience is really unique, considering its very specific purpose. In order to collect the necessary data for the research these scientists must travel to a different world. Meeting and interacting with members of an ‘exotic’ culture is quite complex: on the one hand, the study of man requires maximum proximity and, if not identification, than at least enormous empathy, on the other hand scientists must ensure a certain distance from the object to be able to carry out their work. This situation constitutes quite a dilemma: how to reach the heart of a culture and, at the same time, remain objective. In addition, the object of the study is man, i.e., in a way, anthropologists must stand in front of another human being, as if in front of a mirror, to analyse the condition that they too share – man as a cultural or social being. This makes the situation even more complicated. It means that it is not a meeting between ideologically and culturally transparent scientists with the object of their study, but a meeting of differently culturally shaped people. Anthropologists are to some extent determined by their culture and all they do, including their anthropological study, belongs to the tradition they grew up in. These dilemmas are intrinsic to anthropological methodology and theory, and they have a lot to do with the complex situation of the human sciences in general. In the case of anthropological travel there is one more ambiguity: the interaction itself constitutes a complex situation for western anthropologists: isolated from their own social and cultural environment, they are thrown into an alien one, where they have to interact. An anthropological journey is then not only a scientific expedition; it is an experience in itself.

I will try to analyse this experience as a cultural phenomenon. I will use stories of two anthropologists who made their journeys in two different moments of the twentieth century. The first one, and the one who is going to be a central figure of this thesis, is Bronisław Malinowski, the author and main character of *A Diary in the strict sense of the term*. The second anthropologist is Kirsten Hastrup. Her anthropological experience became a theme of a theatrical play. As source material I will use her various anthropological texts, as well as her analysis of the work with the Odin Theatre.

Malinowski's *Diary* is going to be the basic object of the analysis. Its importance is of a double character. First of all, the *Diary* constitutes an exceptional document, in which we find a unique record of Malinowski's travel to Mailu and the Trobriand Islands in the period from 1914 to 1918, where he conducted his famous studies. Secondly, the *Diary* is important as a text which, when published five decades after being written – two decades after its author's death – shattered the world of anthropology, provoking scandals, but also leading to a meaningful shift in the shape of this area and to its important auto-reflection. I will focus especially on two parts of the *Diary* that were published in English translation in 1967 – those concerning Malinowski's stay in Mailu and in the Trobriand Islands. All the notebooks, written in Polish, were published for the first time in 2002 in Krakow. I will use the other parts in some points of my analysis, where they can be helpful to clear up some aspects of the notebooks that interest me. In general, though, I will not concentrate on them, since they do not directly relate to Malinowski's experience as an anthropologist.<sup>1</sup>

The text may be treated as a historical or biographical document. As such, it is able to tell us something about a certain time and certain events. But it is, at the same time, a text that played an important role in the history of a science: anthropology. That does not mean, of course, that it is a scientific text; it is not at all. It can not even be considered a text that describes the anthropologist's methodology. We find in it few direct theoretical or methodological comments, so eagerly expected by many critics and academics. Nevertheless, the *Diary* had a big influence on science and it is therefore important from a scientific point of view. In this way the text exists on two different levels: one related to life experience and the other to the history of science.

This makes its analysis complex. It will always touch both domains. The text can be read as a document of an experience and can constitute material for a sociological and historical study of it. But, at the same time, it will always deal with the history of human sciences in the twentieth century. And because of this, it has to be read in the context of the epoch with consciousness that somehow it is inscribed in the discourse<sup>2</sup> of the time. That

makes it possible to understand why the experience of two anthropologists took distinct forms in different moments.

In my thesis I will use the biographical method. This does not mean that I will try to write Malinowski's or Hastrup's biographies, but, merely, that the material I use has a biographical character, i.e. it refers to their subjective perspective and, as such, could be called 'human documents'<sup>3</sup>. Their point of view will be an indispensable starting-point in the construction of the analysis (Włodarek & Ziółkowski 1990). Using human documents can illustrate the intersection of the life history of men with the history of their society, which makes them a useful tool for history. But they also give rise to the possibility of the phenomenology of experience. The texts brought into play in the presentation of the two anthropologists differ in one important way: the *Diary* has an intimate character and was not designed for a publication, Hastrup's texts, both the scientific dissertations and the more personal ones, are still intended to be read by an academic audience and to contribute to the anthropological tradition. The two sources have, though, many tangential points. The most important is a reference to the anthropological experience of travelling to another culture. The fact that this experience comes to us – the readers – in two different forms, has its reasons, which I will try to show.

The biographical method – which takes as its object an individual and his or her experience – is known in sociology from the work of Chicago School. Thomas and Znaniecki, in their book *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, introduced to sociology the analysis of personal documents and insisted that a theory should be built on them. Znaniecki's concept of 'humanistic coefficient' attributed to the reconsideration of the subjective perspective of the object of the study. And, although during many years qualitative study with biographical inclination had been pushed to the background, it has regained, to a large extent, popularity in the last decades (Plummer no date).

The main methodological problem consists here in whether it is possible to say something about a culture or a society analysing the actions of the individuals that form them. That is, if I take the *Diary* written by Bronisław Malinowski in the second decade of the twentieth century, am I allowed to talk only about this particular case or can I extract ideas about the European culture of that time from it? Does this text teach me something about the cultural phenomenon that it is concerned with, and its shape? In brief, am I allowed to construct any generalization or theory based on it?

The methodological problem I have to deal with touches in fact one of the basic questions of sociology and social sciences in general. We meet here with the issue of agency

and structure. Society and history are made by individual actions and, simultaneously, the actions of individuals are shaped by social norms and determined by historical context. These two sides: the individual and the social or cultural, cannot be clearly divided. There is no sharp frontier between them. Each society and each culture is created by the individual in a defined historical moment. On the other hand, each individual action constitutes, in a way, a reflection of a pattern that exists in the society, is formed by its norms and interdictions and built of the social material (Abrams 1982: xiii).

Dichotomy agency-structure has been the focus of attention of contemporary sociologists. Anthony Giddens tried to deal with this problem by introducing the 'structuration' theory. He does not want to see society as an independent reality that constrains the individual, defining its way of conduct. The opposition: individual-society is reconceptualised as a duality (Giddens 1984, Szacki 2002: 886).

Similarly, Pierre Bourdieu tries to find a way to avoid the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism. His concept of 'habitus' suggests that the individual's dispositions are a social product, but it saves the image of the individual as an active subject, whose life practice is something more than use of social norms or rules (Bourdieu 1984, Szacki 2002: 894).

The transfer of weight from an abstract structure to individual action seems to me to favour the kind of empirical analysis that seeks to elaborate theoretical conclusions from the study of an individual experience. In that case, it might be possible to discover the social structure or the character of a culture from the individual action. It must, though, be done carefully. That is why I will take two different cases and try to contrast them. It may be easier to see what is typical for a certain culture in a certain moment in history if we capture two similar individual experiences in two different points of time. If we compare the experience of an anthropologist during his field studies in the beginning of the twentieth century with a similar one from the end of the century, we might have a better chance to see what has changed and in what way. We can try to read, from both of them, something relevant about the cultures they were formed in. The first step will be to capture what is characteristic and distinct in these two cases. It is important to observe in what way the first one influenced its successors, i.e. what kind of impact Malinowski's personal experience of fieldwork, revealed to the world by the *Diary*, had on later anthropologists. It will be therefore easier to identify changes that occurred in this field during the twentieth century. What is most important though is that the comparison of these cases may make it possible to discover what the two experiences have in common. The second step would be to leave apart the differences. That

will give us an opportunity to extract the essence of anthropological experience, encouraging discussion of it on a more theoretical level. By discovering threads linking Malinowski and Hastrup in their journeys to another culture and in their 'being there', we might get to the dilemmas present at the heart of anthropology.

The biographical method seems here even more justified, since my study will refer to an individual experience. That, I hope, explains the choice of sources upon which this thesis is based.

Analysing the personal experience of scientists during fieldwork can have quite an importance for cultural studies. Considering the central position of qualitative method in this discipline, we should admit that those who subscribe to it might meet with similar dilemmas to those anthropologists do. And, even if we agree that the meaning of the word 'fieldwork' has today changed slightly being often applied to studies which deal with our own societies and do not require travelling to 'exotic' places, there is still a strong element of strictly anthropological participant observation. Not only are methodological techniques the same but, more importantly, anthropological perspective has been applied to the new field. Making the object 'exotic', i.e. studying even the most familiar reality as if it were alien and unusual, is the main tactic of today's qualitative research. That is why analysis of some of the dilemmas related to the fieldwork experience might, I hope, contribute to the methodological discussion within the cultural studies.

## Chapter I

### **Malinowski's Diary and the Project of Self-perfection**

Bronisław Malinowski was twice present in the history of anthropology and of social sciences in general. The first occasion, during his life<sup>4</sup>: he developed functional theory<sup>5</sup>, which gave the foundations for modern anthropology. But his contribution was even more important in relation to methodological questions. Fieldwork research became the distinguishing feature and most significant achievement of Malinowski's school.<sup>6</sup> It transformed scientists shut away in libraries and museums, into explorers who had to travel and literally enter another culture. It tore them from books and threw them into life – an alteration, which not only gave birth to modern anthropology, but also had a very strong effect on the life of this group of scientists, shaping their experience and confronting them with a new kind of challenge.

The second time, Malinowski appeared in a quite different way: twenty years after his death, with the publication of the *Diary*. His name was then well known. Although his theory had been criticized, nobody could deny the contribution he made to the creation of modern anthropology and especially its method. He had been in a certain way mythologized and surrounded with a personality cult by his pupils. By being a master, descendent of gentry, of weak health, and by having made his archetypal journey and contributed to a revolution in the field of anthropology – he was given the status of a prophet and this messianic image was partly built by him (Kuper 1978).

The publication of some parts of his intimate diary ruined this myth. After Malinowski's death one of his pupils, Felix Gross, discovered the notebooks among his master's and friend's papers. He sent them to the second wife of the anthropologist. Valetta Malinowski did not show them to the public till 1967. In this year, the notes made on Mailu and the Trobriand Islands, translated by Norbert Guterman, were published under the title *A Diary in the strict sense of the term*. In the introduction Valetta Malinowski explains her choice of fragments by the fact that the notes made during the months spent on anthropological research were certainly the most interesting for any reader who knew Malinowski from his works. She took away the most private fragments or those impossible to decipher. She also tried to justify the publication of such personal writings which had not

been intended for other people's eyes. She believed they could be treated as an important document of anthropological work.

Another introduction was written by Malinowski's pupil – Raymond Firth – who called the *Diary* “a footnote to anthropological history” (Firth 1989: XVIII). Firth seemed to try to justify the shocking parts of the text and the violent language, by explaining the character of the notes. In his opinion, one should not look for methodological or theoretical issues in the *Diary*, but treat it as “a human document written by a man who wished to leave himself with no falsity of illusion about his own character” (Firth 1989: XVIII), as an aide-mémoire, and as an expression of Malinowski's personality through day-to-day commentary on events. He believed that the author must be given understanding if not compassion. This kind of justifying attitude seemed to have two reasons. On the one hand, it was a result of a kind of embarrassment and bad-conscience due to the publication of the master's private notes. The character of the *Diary* only strengthened the feeling of immorality of making it public. The text left no doubts about the fact that the only reader intended by the author was himself. Not only Malinowski wrote it explicitly, but also on each page he gave proof to it by making comments on the most intimate aspects of his daily life. On the other hand, Firth knew too well what a storm the publication would stir up among the opponents and pupils of the anthropologist. And, indeed, it was difficult for anybody to remain indifferent when faced with its content. The only solution to the loyal pupil of the master was to write an introduction in which he asked the reader to look first at himself before judging Malinowski, and underlined the value of the author's sincerity.

\* \* \*

From the beginning, a cloud brooded over the *Diary*. Reading somebody's intimate notes created a sensation of invasion into his privacy and was thus considered immoral. The main dilemma for those who decided to translate and publish it was: why do it, and whether it was justified. After all, they did not do it for the simple pleasure of voyeurism or because of a conviction that everybody should know ‘the truth’ about the famous scientist. The publishers felt that the text would have a great significance for anthropology itself and would influence it, although not in a conventional way. This feeling was based on the conviction that a person writing about another culture, in the way that Malinowski did, is not the usual author of a scientific dissertation. In fact, he had already been present in his monographies – after all, the fieldwork method was related to a very personal experience of the researcher.

Malinowski knew too well that anthropology is a branch of science which bases its analysis not on verifiable experiments, observations or calculations, but on a personal experience of one person in a distant place. That is why it was extremely important for the anthropologist to gain readers' trust and to convince them that everything said is true. Proving that he really had been in the place he was describing and really had seen the things he used for his analysis was therefore vital for the credibility of the text. That is why the presence of the author was evident in his anthropological texts to convince the reader in the best possible way. This kind of approach to the construction of cultural description can be called 'I-witnessing'. It means that the central text-building problem is rendering one's account credible through rendering one's person so (Geertz 1988). The anthropologist must be present in his writings and he should be reliable.<sup>7</sup>

Malinowski did a lot to gain readers' trust. From the first pages of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* he declared methodological openness and underlined the importance of clarity in the anthropological researching procedure to the reader.

The results of scientific research in any branch of learning ought to be presented in a manner absolutely candid and above board. No one would dream of making an experimental contribution to physical or chemical science, without giving a detailed account of all the arrangements of the experiments; an exact description of the apparatus used; on the manner in which the observation were conducted; of their number; of the length of time devoted to them, and of the degree of approximation with which each such measurement was made... I consider that only such ethnographic sources are of unquestionable scientific value, on which we can clearly draw the line between, on the one hand, the results of direct observation and of the native statements and interpretation, and, on the other, the interference of the author.

(Malinowski 1922:2-3)

Malinowski did not hide behind the scientific discourse in his monographies. He was constantly present in them. He is a narrator who not only tells a story but also gives an account of the problems, doubts and dilemmas that he had to confront during the fieldwork. Thus, he brought his 'being there' experience into the scientific text. In a sense, to be persuasive in anthropology means to construct a rhetorically convincing narration. This issue is related to a methodological problem: the conflict between the presentation of the objective truth and the subjectivization; the conflict that emerges from the problematic situation of constructing a scientific text from a biographical experience.<sup>8</sup>

The presence of the anthropologist and his experience ‘there’ in Malinowski’s texts made the decision of the publishing of the *Diary* easier and more justified. The reader did not have to deal with a scientist who had been absent and whose secrets and private life were suddenly revealed in his confidential notes, but with Malinowski – the explorer and researcher well known from his monographies, the leading actor of paradigmatic travel to the islands he made famous. Anybody who took the book to hands expected to find the places and people he would recognize, to come back to the familiar moments and especially to meet again the figure of Malinowski, now, finally – with no distance, to discover so to say the ‘backstage’ (Goffman 1959) of the anthropologist’s work.

At the same time, *Diary* was expected to throw, in an indirect way, new light on the fieldwork. It was treated as a ‘hors-text’ – a kind of writing beyond the official, published work of the researcher, which, however, remains in relation to it; a text that accompanied the process of production in the social science (Lourau 1988). Everybody was waiting to read not only an intimate diary, but also an ethnographic one. It was assumed that it would be linked to Malinowski’s work, if not directly, at least, in a way revealing the process of the work in everyday life of the great master.

\* \* \*

What a deception it was to discover a completely different face of Malinowski. With what a sudden blow the image, created by himself and his surroundings, fell into ruin. All the things the name Malinowski represented had to be rethought and transformed. If we agree that the name of an author is meaningful because of the connotation with all the writings produced by him (Foucault 1994a), then the same name begins to design and describe something different when we discover a new work that remains in conflict with others. Initial reactions were full of deception, disgust or even aversion. Malinowski’s pupils felt embarrassed and followed Raymond Firth in trying to defend or justify the master albeit rather awkwardly. His opponents and others expressed their disapproval openly.

Pretentious, platitudinous, unsystematic, simple-minded, long-winded, intellectually provincial, and perhaps even somewhat dishonest, he [Malinowski] had, somehow, a way with the natives. (...)

Indeed, for a discipline that regards itself as nothing if not broad-minded, it is most unpleasant to discover that its archetypal fieldworker, rather than being a man of catholic sympathies and deep generosity, a man who his Oceanist contemporary R. R. Marett thought could find his way into the heart of a shiest savage, was

instead a crabbed, self-preoccupied, hypochondriacal narcissist, whose fellow feeling for the people he lived with was limited in the extreme.

(Geertz 1967: 12)

\* \* \*

Before we pass on to the analysis of the anthropological experience of ‘being there’ present in the *Diary*, it seems crucial to examine the text from the point of view of its character and the role it had for its author. The intimacy of the notes always gives the impression of dealing with the most honest and candid expression of author’s thoughts and feelings. Readers might think that they will finally know the whole ‘truth’ and get into contact with the ‘real’ person, devoid of the social mask which is assumed to be false. But is it like this indeed? Are those human thoughts and feelings that are secret, or repressed, as some would call them, closer to the truth than those openly expressed? The main questions here are: Can a text be a direct recording of human thought? Can it reflect like a mirror a person’s interior? Does not the author, writing for himself, create an image anyway? Why did Malinowski write his diary? Under what circumstances did he write? And what did the diary mean to him – in other words, using Malinowski’s language, what function did it fulfill in his life?<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \*

I had some essential thoughts about keeping a diary and adding depth to my life. I am going to take a shit by the sea, among the mangroves.<sup>10</sup>  
Ideas about the historical value of the diary.  
[1 I 1918<sup>11</sup>]

As in many other cases, the author of the *Diary* gave some definition to his notes and tried to explain the role they played. In the text we can find a so-called ‘diary of the diary’ – a critical reflection on the writing in this particular case and a tentative of some kind of diary theory (Lourau 1988). Finding these fragments and analyzing them could be a first step to understand what meaning the notes had to Malinowski.

Malinowski recognized from the beginning the difference between a diary destined for publication and a private one. In his notes from Leipzig, signed with the date 17 of October 1909, he decided to write only for himself. He was aware of the consequences this decision would have for the shape of his notes.

The diary for oneself is something different. Frequently personal rubricating. The diary written for oneself can not be available for everybody. Such a diary should guide. A kind of memoranda for letters, important things. While to eliminate the herd.

[19 X 1909, trans. M.K.]

The main issue was related to the receiver. A publishable diary must be written with the reader in mind. It is inevitable to censor it in a way, to adjust it to what is socially acceptable. In a private diary this kind of censorship is limited, which does not necessarily mean, eradicated. But, what is more important, the removal of a look from the outside can change the role of the writing for the author. If one is not keeping the diary with the intention of publication, other aims can come to the fore. The ‘elimination of the herd’ could then mean not only taking away the reader’s public in the case of the diary, but also the reduction of the role that other people could have in Malinowski’s life: the social influence on his decisions, motivations and behaviors. It was related to a project of creating the self and leading life in accordance with oneself and not under the pressure of the environment.

While writing his diary, Malinowski distinguished two types of notes. Normally he gave an account of current events within one or two days where he related up to date thoughts and feelings. But during some periods, after some months of having given up the writing, he decided to keep a retrospective diary, in which he would note things that had happened some weeks, or even months, earlier.<sup>12</sup> However the retrospective diary is only a small part of all the notes. The diary written day-to-day constituted their majority. Malinowski did not only use writing to record passing moments, although this was also important for him; he wanted each thing that happened to him to leave its mark and to be saved from forgetfulness; he wanted all these small things that created him as a person to be preserved. But the diary was much more than this.

I think of the value of the diary [...]: grasping the deeper currents in contrast to mere *ripples*<sup>13</sup>; conversation with oneself, and glimpse of the content of life.

[16 I 1918]

The diary was hence a tentative to reach the essence of life; to analyse it and start to be aware of it. This consciousness should in the long term provide Malinowski with the knowledge necessary to shape his own life in the most adequate way. And actually this very diary seemed to be a tool of such an action. The writing itself was changing the way of living.

(...) of course training myself in to keep a diary affects my way of living.

[25 XI 1917]

\* \* \*

This is what we can learn from the notes of Malinowski, in which he was trying to describe the role of the diary and its character. But, of course, in many other places within the text we get, in a more or less direct way, references to what the diary was kept for and how it was regarded by its author. It seems that the diary, from the very beginning, i.e. from January 1908, was the main tool of a much larger project.

Problem. Is not really the changing of myself – the interior transformation – the essence of my creation? [...]

The mountains. To introduce order into life. Equilibration – not to go too far. The life from the pract[ical] point of view: conditions that make the work possible. To get indispensable hygienic conditions. To overcome the laziness and clumsiness. Life can not go on like this any farther. I have the impression that I am able now to introduce *régime* of some energy. I will set my room in order and my life in system. Scandal that I can not, living alone, live differently than a pig in a sty! I will enter the system. I will write the diary.

[21 V 1908, trans. M.K.]

The project that was intended to lead Malinowski to a better life, one more productive and of greater value, was based on ordering and constant development. It was supposed to function on different levels to, in the best possible way, reach one objective: create a better man. It seemed to be an incredible struggle on a daily bases for discipline and self-control, a fight for a stronger character and a fine construction of a desired personality. The project was to be put into life through several tools.

First of all, the rhythm of a day should be elaborated and maintained. To wake up and to go to bed early were supposed to guarantee good conditions for both body and mind. And actually this harmony between the corporal and mental state was one of the priorities. As we notice directly in the diary, Malinowski was extremely concerned about his health. He was ill with many diseases, which caused him a lot of problems. In fact, he first started to write the diary during a stay with his mother in the Canaries, where he had been advised to go because of his health troubles. He suffered from heart disease and had problems with his eyes. Maybe that is why he always felt so much that he should care in a special way about his body. And

certainly it constituted a large part of his project of gaining self control. He felt that if he dominated his body, it would help to take the control over his whole life.<sup>14</sup>

Today I am strong, exercised – free from hysteria. I should stay in this *régime*, and by the continuity of work, I will get what I want.

[20 VIII 1912, trans. M.K.]

One of the resolutions, repeatedly noted on the pages of the diary, was to exercise each day or, even better, many times per day. Malinowski did Swedish gymnastics, so popular at the time<sup>15</sup>. He would walk a lot, especially during his stays in the Canaries, in Zakopane and later during his travels in New Guinea. He would swim and row.

– Gymn[astics]. Light, free movements, to feel the ad[equate] invasion [?], not to execute them by throwing, but in a continuous<sup>16</sup> way. To proceed slowly into the pressure on these movements, into their execution with effort. – To exercise the muscles in every respect, to analyse all possible combinations of movements.

[18 II 1908, trans. M.K.]

All these activities were intended not only to improve the strength and suppleness of the body, but also to become more resistant against tiredness and to encourage and maintain self-discipline. Physical exercise was for Malinowski a kind of departure-point for the development of a strong will.

Sometimes, this training of character took a somewhat ascetic form. It was a step towards strengthening of the will by exposing the body to many hardships, for example sleeping on the floor or outside and having to overcome fear and discomfort. For the same reasons Malinowski was trying to eliminate some things from this life – narcotics, he called them. They were what detached him from his project or what he considered bad.

– At present: 1° straight into the face: I silence all the appetites; as a punishment, I do not drink anything <these kind of circumstances come sometimes just at the right time. At present, if I do not win, I am threatened by a strong and powerful shock. I can not afford this luxury. I want to put myself strongly on my feet. Small, trivial, stupid acts are the most difficult to achieve– I will!>, I will not loose myself in flirting conversation with ladies, with clowns; appetites: greediness, eroticism, vanity.

[29 II 1908, trans. M.K.]

By narcotics Malinowski understood many different things. He used the word in the common way to describe drugs that a person can get addicted to, like alcohol. But in most cases he used the word to speak of all the things that gave a kind of superficial satisfaction and pleasure, but in the long term were harmful and destructive. They were not followed by true and meaningful development and they were not a source of any value.

One such narcotic was eroticism. However, it did not mean that Malinowski avoided any kind of it because of religious or moral reasons. On the contrary, the erotic part of his life, both in reality and in his fantasy was of great importance and occupied a lot of space in the diary.<sup>17</sup> During the whole period of note taking he distinguished two types of eroticism: the good one and the bad one. The first was always related to the woman with whom he was at the moment, and it was considered to have good influence on him and to play a significant role in a successful relationship. The second, such as masturbation, fantasies about strange women or flirting, were for him disgusting and provoked remorse because they were not the fruit of a real and meaningful relationship with a person he loved.

In a similar way all thoughts that were not productive, in a sense that would lead to the understanding of a problem or could be a tool to train the mind, he banished, or at least tried to. All fantasies he had about success and his future were disregarded. Every time he gave the reins to his imagination, he felt guilty. Dreaming about his future success and the honours it would bring him gave him a lot of pleasure. But in fact he did not like this feeling, since he was overly conscious of its falsity and its transitory nature.

Instead, he sought to gain complete control over his thoughts, in a similar way to how he tried to control his body and sexuality. He wanted to be in full command of the stream of consciousness passing through his head. He wished to set a right course for it, as with the whole of his life – not to think about small and unimportant things, but to concentrate on what was important and could be fruitful.

Success! Essential, the development of the self. Is making an issue of “the self” only the exterior stimulation to work? Have the interior sources dried? No. I have to swim out to the bottom, swim out to my own deepness. Again, I have to make a fundamental effort. I eliminate: exterior dust and sentimentalism (together with the scheduled music). I have noticed that I have lost the capacity to work, to work out, to extract from the soul, to dig down laboriously, slowly. If I do not feel sharply enough, I recognize the problem and come back. I absolutely have to formulate a programme and a system of work: constant protocols of what I am doing. The diary.

[20 II 1909, trans. M.K.]

The diary was to feature in this project of self-perfection in different ways. It would serve as a place to note all the successes and failures of the author. Each time Malinowski did something that was contrary to his decision he recorded it in his notes and reprimanded himself with harsh words. He wrote down, again and again, all his resolutions and plans; pointing out aims for the future; setting a course for the development of his self.

This morning (I.6.18) it occurred to me that the purpose in keeping a diary and trying to control one's life and thoughts at every moment must be to consolidate life, to integrate one's thinking, to avoid fragmenting themes. – Also gives a chance for reflection (...).

[5 I 1918]

\* \* \*

The protective means against the crowd, the prostitution of the spirit, the street, the journals. Maintaining the fortitude, the loneliness.

[19 II 1908, trans. M.K.]

The project could be fulfilled, as we said, only by eliminating all the appetites, the narcotics, futilities of everyday life. This was almost always related somehow to isolation, if not complete, than at least from some elements of the surrounding world. Malinowski wanted to overcome the mob, i.e. the money, the fame and the boasting. That meant closing himself off in a hermitage. Solitude was supposed to help him to concentrate on what was important and what came from the inside. This, together with the prioritising of the ascetic way of life, brings to mind a hermit or a monk; both, concentrated on their interior, leave the world to devote their lives to the spiritual or mental, in order to reach a higher level of consciousness or to fulfil a better form of existence. Malinowski was certainly distant from the reclusive way of living, but it does not mean that the comparison is wrong. His endless struggle is still similar to that of a hermit. It is the same because of the means he had chosen, the things he wanted to avoid and the objectives he gave himself. Also the character of the *Diary* brings to mind the practice of writing by monks. The so-called 'self-writing' (Foucault 1994b) is partly related to a kind of punishment by noting down sins with the intention of making oneself ashamed and, by this, avoiding future transgressions. Malinowski certainly used his diary in

this way. He was trying to put shame on himself by scrupulously writing down all the wrong he did. The 'self-writing' is, at the same time, strictly related to the idea of isolation. Hermits used it to substitute human company. It eased loneliness by becoming an interior dialogue. We can find all these aspects of writing in the *Diary*.

But loneliness had in Malinowski's case two dimensions. On the one hand, he was seeking it. He believed it was the only way to achieve what he wanted and not to dissolve in the banality of life. He knew it was vital for him to concentrate on important things. Only by being alone could he also discover his true motivations and his true self. He sought so much to discover the substance of himself and to shake off the yoke of social determinism. It did not necessarily have to be a literal solitude. Sometimes Malinowski meant by this merely separation or keeping away from all he considered banal and low. This attitude concerned both the outside world and inner weaknesses. In fact, he could reach the ideal state both completely alone and among people, "on a fair or in a monastic cell", as he called it [21 V 1908, trans. M.K.]. The important thing was to succeed in keeping a distance in his thoughts.<sup>18</sup>

Loneliness also came to Malinowski in a different way, and not only by his choice. And, notably, each time it did he began to write a diary. We find two sorts of isolation determined by the outside in the *Diary*. The first one was when Malinowski's relationships with women were coming to an end. Many times after a long time of silence he came back to the diary when a woman had left him.<sup>19</sup>

The second sort of isolation, which pushed Malinowski into writing, was when he, for different reasons, had to travel. The first time it was the trip with his mother to the Canaries. From this period came the first notebook we know of. The second such circumstance was related to his anthropological trip to New Guinea. What was characteristic was that he kept the diary only when isolated: throughout the cruise and during two expeditions to the field. This proves that the practice of writing was itself somehow related to the fact of being isolated from normal social life. The important thing is a bilateral relation between the *Diary* and isolation. On the one hand, writing the diary – a part of the project of self-perfection – demanded loneliness. On the other hand, during the hard periods of separation from loved ones or from his own culture, Malinowski used the diary as a way of dealing with the difficult situation.

\* \* \*

If we want to analyse the *Diary*, we have to be conscious of the very special nature of the text. It cannot be treated merely as a description of the daily life of its author, nor as a pure recording of the thoughts and feelings from a period of time. The main problem here is not honesty and dishonesty, nor truth or lies – although for a long time the text was discussed and evaluated in such terms. The important thing to recognize, the thing which can make understanding the content and the meaning of the *Diary* possible, is that the very text and the act of writing constituted a part of an experience. The fact that Malinowski was making these notes during particular periods of his life is meaningful – keeping diary is a cultural practice itself, and it should be investigated as such.

Therefore, the *Diary* will not remain for me a simple source of knowledge about those facts or events that I am interested in. I will treat the text and the act of writing as a practice that had a fundamental influence on Malinowski's experience, that not only changed the way he thought about and treated past events but, importantly, one that influenced the way he approached future ones. Keeping a diary in the way Malinowski did meant transforming his technique of living, thus creating a new man, experiencing things and approaching reality and all it involved in a different manner. The experience and the writing remain strictly related and reciprocally influenced.

## Chapter II

### **‘Being There’ –**

### **Malinowski’s Encounter with the Trobrianders**

Got up with a bad headache. Lay in euthanasian concentration on the ship. Loss of subjectivism and deprivation of the five senses and the body (through impressions) causes direct merging with surroundings. Had the feeling that the rattling of the ship’s engine was myself; felt the motions of the ship as my own – it was I who was bumping against the waves and cutting through them.

[2 XI 1914]

From the moment anthropology became Malinowski’s main interest, he thought about traveling to an ‘exotic’ place to conduct some kind of empirical study. At that time several survey studies had been organized and Malinowski thought about joining one of them. Finally, in 1914 he was offered a grant to undertake a two years trip to New Guinea. When he restarted writing his diary in April, he already knew that in a few months he would leave. The stay on the other side of the globe was well planned and prepared.<sup>20</sup>

In his diary, Malinowski noted impressions and feelings related to the trip. With the oncoming of the departure he seemed more and more enthusiastic and exited. “I am in general already carried away by the travel’s momentum.” [18 IV 1914, trans. M.K.] He wanted to organize everything in the best possible way, to put all in order and to be ready mentally. He made all the preparations: bought the equipment necessary for the expedition, such as binoculars and camera. He read books about natives from the region and the ethnography in general, as well as novels by authors somehow related to colonies or traveling: he devoured Joseph Conrad; studied *Notes & Queries on Anthropology*<sup>21</sup>. He did not want to miss any occasion to get more information about the world he was going to. On the 31st of May 1914 he paid a visit to William Strong – an ex-functionary in the colonies, who had participated in the Seligman’s expedition in 1904 – to watch his “Papuan curios” [31 V 1914]. Malinowski knew a lot about the region, himself having written a book about Australian Aborigines. He was focused on anthropology and was well aware that the trip could offer him a chance to make a big step forward in his professional career.

This journey now appears a little bit as a blank in my life. If I manage to do something, I will be back and something will come of it. If I do not manage, I will have a number of interesting and extraordinary experiences behind me.

[21 IV 1914, trans. M.K.]

Thus, the trip was not only a professional expedition, a way to gather a lot of valuable data on which he could work in the future. It was also an exiting adventure; a unique experience that was supposed to enrich, or even change him and form a new stage in his life. The ‘exotic’ attracted him with its promises of new impressions. Travel was considered an exploration of an unknown and mysterious world, although he had already tried to classify it and give it some possible shape in his imagination.

\* \* \*

In the *Diary* we follow Malinowski on his travels: first to France, where he boarded the boat which was going to carry him along to Australia. But not directly: the first stop was Naples, the second Port Said. Then it continued by the Red Sea to Ceylon, where the travelers spent more than a week before proceeding to Australia, which became a base for Malinowski in the following years. After having spent a couple of months there, he began “a new epoch in [his]<sup>22</sup> life: an expedition on [his] own to the tropics” [20 IX 1914]. So, although the duration of the anthropological experience, i.e. of staying among the natives and conducting the fieldwork, was actually limited, I will include it in the wider context of the whole journey. Thus, we can notice that the moment of leaving Europe was crucial and constituted a point of demarcation.

Travel by sea was the first step, an entrance to another world, a sort of preparation for the future. It also turned out to be extremely exhausting due to seasickness. Weakness of the body accompanied a feeling of depression and nostalgia for Otolia Retinger who had left him just before the departure. And already during breaks in the journey, Malinowski had to face another difficulty – he reacted poorly to the hot weather. He felt apathetic, tired and exhausted. He could hardly find the energy to do anything. That made it difficult to absorb the new reality. The discomfort was exacerbated by the fear that this state would continue and make his work in the tropics impossible.

The first sensation related to the journey was thus corporal. Leaving his environment involved a physical change. He had to adjust to stifling heat, to different smells and tastes.

The direct impact on the body seemed to precede any other impression. And the corporal weakness provoked change in perception, in emotions and in general mental state.

I am strongly apathetic; I get tired terribly easily, the physical state does not permit me to experience intensively or to long after happiness, or to remember, or to desire. I spend the energetic moments on receiving impressions, sometimes I perceive more strongly; normally I perceive apathetically, externally.

[4 VII 1914, trans. M.K.]

Corporal adaptation and well-being remained extremely important during the whole stay in the tropics. It could be described as a fight for a normal existence in these difficult conditions. And later on we find in the *Diary*, fragments that prove that different kinds of exotic diseases impeded Malinowski's stay. In some periods he spent days or even weeks just lying troubled by a blackwater fever [I-II 1918, V 1918].

Breaks in the trip and short stops in ports offered the possibility of first contact with different cultures. Malinowski set foot in Egypt, in Ceylon, in Australia and after some months, finally, in New Guinea. Early impressions seemed to reach him from all sides, but at the same time they did not seem real to him. The exoticism, so tempting and attractive before the journey, in reality paled.

First contact with a completely new culture, from which god knows what one was expecting, first impressions of a completely new country, religion, landscape are always full of such disappointments. Sometimes only, very rarely, lucky coincidence: fresh, rested thought, well-disposed sensibility and lucky arrangement of the conditions in a given place make it possible to at once capture the content of a new world, the value of beauty in new surroundings. Then clairvoyance happens, a grasp, sudden and profound, of things unheard and beautiful, since true – one of the happiest kinds of experience. Unfortunately, during this journey I do not have this lucky coincidence, among other things because of a concern about the future, about the acclimatization in the tropics and the big tiredness from the heat.

[4 VII 1914, trans. M.K.]

The biggest problem seemed to be a certain dissonance between his expectations – that which had been imagined and looked forward to – and reality. Malinowski's interests had been stimulated a long time before he went to Asia and New Guinea. Books, not only scientific but also novels were one of the principal sources of these images. We have an

example of how his interests were aroused some months later when, on Mailu Island, he was reading Kipling. He noted in his diary: “Through his novels India begins to attract me” [17 XI 1914]. It is obvious from this that Malinowski’s interest in the tropics was stimulated by pictures present in literature. He based it on the kind of representation that existed in the European collective imagination<sup>23</sup>. His knowledge about other cultures, founded both on scientific elaborations and common images, caused the reality to disappoint him each time it did not correspond to what he expected.

How differently a man imagines his life for the way it turns out for him! The island is volcanic, surrounded by coral reefs, under an eternally blue sky and in the midst of sapphire sea. There is a Papuan village right next to the shore, which is strewn by boats. I would imagine life amid palm groves as a perpetual holiday. That was how it struck me looking from the ship. I had a feeling of joy, freedom, happiness. Yet only a few days of it and I was escaping from it to the company of Thackeray’s London snobs, longed to be in Hyde Park, in Bloomsbury – I even enjoy the advertisements in the London newspaper.

[21 X 1914]

As a result the real being in contact with another culture and experiencing what he had thought would be an adventure, turned out to be unbearable. His imaginary world appeared much more attractive than the surrounding exoticism. The clash between representation and reality made discovering the charm and authenticity of the world he visited difficult and rare.

We could relate Malinowski’s fascination with the ‘exotic’ – fascination fed by romanticized images – with a larger phenomenon existing in European culture at that time. Modernism, especially among artists, brought a strong interest in distant cultures. Vanguard groups of painters and sculptors, searching for new, fresh inspiration and wanting to reject classical aesthetics, turned to non-European art. Art objects brought from Africa, America and New Guinea became a stimulus for new trends, such as expressionism, fauvism or cubism. A strong attraction was evident when it came to Eastern cultures. India and China had already for some time offered an alternative to European tradition. It was especially visible in the case of Buddhist philosophy, which gained a special position in the desired illumination by something new and authentic – ‘ex oriente lux’, as it was called. (Hutnikiewicz 1996, Kwiatkowski 2000) That is why it should not be surprising that someone like Malinowski referred to Nirvana [15 IV 1914]. The inclination towards metaphysics and transcendence caused European philosophers, such as Schopenhauer, to draw from the East. But the highly

intellectualized vision of Buddhism hardly corresponded to the places of cult that Malinowski had the opportunity to visit during his trip. These appeared to him as “a living-room of the uncultivated bourgeois, or a festive room of the peasant” [4 VII 1914, trans. M.K.]. The disappointment with ‘exotic’ cultures was not only due to the confrontation between representation and reality, but also because of one between ‘high’ and popular culture.

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Yet, the travel and initial contact constituted merely an introduction. The real experience of ‘being there’ – the experience of living for a long time in an alien world – was still to come. And it is the two parts of the *Diary* which were written during expeditions to Mailu and the Trobriand Islands that are the most significant for analysis of the anthropological experience.

Traveling to New Guinea meant moving to the tropics – living in a different scenery. Nature, landscape and climate – all new and unknown – provided strong sensations. Sometimes attracted, other times repulsed, Malinowski could not stay indifferent to this environment. It influenced his perception, physical condition and frame of mind. Many times his feelings were contradictory and changed from one moment to another. Sometimes he felt displaced and alienated.

Marvelous. It was the first time I had seen this vegetation in the moonlight. Too strange and exotic. The exoticism breaks through lightly, through the veil of familiar things. Mood drawn from everydayness. An exoticism strong enough to spoil normal apperception, but too weak to create a new category of mood. Went to the bush. For a moment I was frightened. Had to compose myself.

[30 X 1914]

In the beginning, the feeling of being out of place, surrounded by the vegetation and in a land strange to him, disturbed his normal perception. But, after having spent some time in the tropics, on many occasions this exotic scenery became quite ordinary and domesticated.

The tropics have completely lost their extraordinary character for me;  
I cannot believe that I could feel better anywhere else.

[17 XII 1917]

The moments when Malinowski had a sensation of being in harmony and agreement with the surrounding world were in fact not so common. The positive impressions were

instantly romanticized and captured in a poetic description. The practice of transforming sensations into words facilitated their absorption. And many times one has the impression that real pleasure was felt only by this process of creating images. Sometimes something that in reality did not offer any special ambience nor absorbed Malinowski's attention would be transformed in his imagination into an attractive reflection. This proves again that many of the most enthusiastic and strong feelings were actually produced more by Malinowski's mind than by real impressions. As if he were not able to be there and enjoy it in a direct way; as if he needed some kind of transformation of the surrounding world to make it possible to feel and immerse himself in reality.

I am going to the jungle; not very exotic; tiredness; I dream of how I will recall these strolls after the return.

[4 VII 1914, trans. M.K.]

The beauty and magnetism of the 'exotic' were related to a strange feeling of some kind of obscurity, strangeness or even danger. From a distance it seemed so tempting and attractive, but, when near, it turned out to be repulsive and dreadful. We can sometimes find almost Conradian descriptions in the *Diary*. They emanate with the sensation of estrangement and threat, of impression that the landscape – the promising idyllic paradise, hid an infernal darkness.

I was unable to concentrate amid this landscape. Not at all like our Tatras at Olcza, where you'd like to lie down and embrace the landscape physically – where every corner whispers a promise of some mysteriously experienced happiness. Out here the marvelous abysses of verdure are inaccessible, hostile, alien to man. The incomparably beautiful mangrove jungle is at close quarters an infernal, stinking, slippery swamp, where it is impossible to walk three steps through the thick tangle of roots and soft mud; where you cannot touch anything. The jungle is almost inaccessible, full of all kinds of filth and reptiles; sultry, damp, tiring – swarming with mosquitoes and other loathsome insects, toads, etc. "*La beauté est la promesse de bonheur*" [in Polish version *de bonneteur* – "The beauty is the promise of a trick player", M.K.]

[15 X 1914]

Of course we find moments of real satisfaction and well-being: Malinowski felt then that he was "*in the middle of things*" [2 IV 1918], had a "lovely, pleasant and amusing picnic" [8 V 1918] and "*good fun*" [6 I 1918] camping. Sometimes he apparently experienced "the

joy of being with real *Naturmenschen* [men in the state of nature, M.K.]” [20 XII 1917], lived “in harmony with reality, actively, without spells of dejection” [1 XI 1914] and had “such pleasure to explore, to make contact to the tropics” [21 III 1918]. These moments, though, were rare and exceptional. In fact the *Diary* is extremely somber and dark and his author seems to go through a deep depression. Instead of harmony we find alienation and estrangement; instead of enthusiasm – apathy and resignation; instead of adaptation – nostalgia and homesickness; and instead of tranquility – irritation and rage. Most of the time Malinowski was “fairly depressed, afraid [he] might not feel equal to the task before [him]” [20 IX 1914], “the work did not interest [him]” and he “thought of civilization with *pang*” [14 XII 17]. He had “moments of frightful longing to get out of this rotten hole” [11 II 1918].

The experience of ‘being there’ was indeed painful and tormenting. What at first seemed to be a romantic escapade, an exiting adventure or a possibly fruitful isolation from his own culture, turned out to be a dreadful imprisonment. The alienation, for such a long time considered to be the only possible way to achieve a better self, was in fact a part of a very difficult and harsh stage of this process. The *Diary* actually reflects a phenomenon that had been called the ‘imperialist nostalgia of moderns’ (Kaplan 1996). It involves leaving home in search of a change of life, guided by a conviction that reality and authenticity are elsewhere: in other historical periods or in other places and cultures, in purer, simple life styles. The dislocation, however, leads to an inevitable nostalgia, a malady of homesickness and a regret of having changed one’s life. What one could name ‘modernist exile’ (Kaplan 1996: 28) is related to a kind of celebration of singularity, solitude, estrangement, alienation, but at the same time to melancholy connected with an irreparable loss and separation from the familiar or loved.<sup>24</sup> Malinowski’s experience fits perfectly in this model. He explicitly sought out a different experience and new environment; he romanticized the tropics and its inhabitants and to some extent even lived in this imagined world by transforming the external into poetic images. And, at the same time, he suffered from depression, missing the world that he left behind him.

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The most important aspect of Malinowski’s new situation was his contact with natives. Changing environment meant not only finding a new place, nature or climate, completely distinct from his own; it meant as well, or even above all, to make contact and interact with an alien culture. It served, therefore, to shake the foundations of his cultural and social self and to throw himself into a new world, where all he was familiar with, disappeared. This was the

central part of Malinowski's estrangement. Contact with another culture was, of course, the main objective of the expedition, its goal and condition. But, in the case of a science, where the object of study is a human being, the subject has a difficult task to accomplish. These scientists are thrown into a situation, where they must continuously participate and be deeply involved in their own process of the research.

In the *Diary*, we find traces of the influence this contact had on Malinowski and of his attitude toward the natives in his everyday life. Although we hardly get any direct or profound descriptions of the people with whom he interacted, his comments and small notes give us a picture of what the encounter meant to him and what kind of relationship he had with the natives.

Since direct contact with people from other cultures was something that the anthropologist had been looking forward to for a long time, his first reactions written down in the diary might be significant. Malinowski's first meetings with non-Europeans, during this trip, were made in Egypt and Ceylon. The only sensation noted was that of superiority. "Black monkeys imitating Europeans in the tram give me a feeling of superiority of the white race" [4 VII 1914, trans. M.K.] – he wrote in Ceylon. Later, already in New Guinea: "the crew of fuzzy-headed savages in government uniforms gave me very much a 'Sahib' feeling" [13 IX 1914, trans. M.K.]. He had this strong feeling of superiority, especially towards the Europeanized people. The sensation was somehow related to a kind of disregard towards mixed cultures. What he was looking for was pure men of nature – as he called them; 'noble savages'. He was attracted by isolated tribes, where time did not leave its mark and intercultural changes had not reached in a higher degree<sup>25</sup>.

When the anthropologist went on his second expedition and reached his dream island inhabited by 'savages' he did not react in any stronger way. He stayed indifferent to them; without any sign of interest or curiosity.

All this time (from arrival until today, Friday) I have not been too alert, and my first impressions of the natives are very dim. A kind of emotional lethargy: the first night I heard the distant noise of a *walam* [scream] in the village. I saw them on Billy's veranda, acquaintances from these villages and from the interior. But I did not react too strongly.

[4 XII 1917]

During Malinowski's interaction with natives, their usefulness to his work constituted the most evident criterion to evaluate them. And the main relation he established with them was that of informant-questioner. He liked or disliked people depending on the quality of information they gave and on the degree of difficulty in making them speak.

Collected information which here bubbled out as fast as I could take it in. [...] Very intelligent natives. They hid nothing from me, no lies.

[1 XI 1914]

Or:

At 4 I began to work with Mataora – garden. They lied, concealed, and irritated me. I am always in a world of lies here.

[25 III 1918]

In these cases it is difficult to talk about a personal relation between two human beings; it is rather purely technical contact between a scientist and an object, an object which sometimes is difficult to dominate and thus irritating. Getting information did not seem to be an easy task. Normally Malinowski treated it in terms of exchange: when he wanted a native to talk about familiar relations, taboos, magic or gardening, he paid with tobacco or other goods. He got furious each time somebody took his gifts and left him without any answers. He seemed conscious about the character of his investigation; he had the impression that it was similar to a battle, a hard process of getting something, of taking it away by force.

Then I went to Towakayse. There I had to do a lot of urging<sup>26</sup> before they were willing to talk.

[13 XII 1917]

Getting the information gave Malinowski a sensation of violation and it normally required a lot of patience and energy. It was as well his main, if not the only, form of participation in the life of the village. Observing, talking or any other kind of interaction with the natives was motivated by the wish to pump information out of them. Of course, occasionally, such meetings had effects on Malinowski; he had to be in a way involved in the situations he was taking part in. Nevertheless, there is only one description in the diary, which shows a different way of getting information. It is the only moment when Malinowski took the initiative and in a very active way encouraged the natives to act – the only moment, when he really participated.

In the evening I went to Tukwa'ukwa, where the Negroes refused to *mwasawa* [play]. Then to Teyava, where Marianna and her court also went. I walked arm in arm with Napula. To encourage them to play (there was no one on the *baku* [main square]), I began to *kasaysuya* [kind of dancing game] myself. I needed exercise, moreover I could learn more by taking part personally. Much more amusing than the *petits jeux* [little games] organized a few days ago in Nyora. Here at least there is movement, rhythm, and moonlight; also emulation, *playing of parts*, skill. I like naked human bodies in motion, and at moments, they also excited me.

[24 V 1918]

We can notice on this occasion that the anthropologist not only tried to stimulate the object of his study into performing a certain action that he was eager to observe and analyze; his decision to dance proves first of all that he knew the practice of the culture he was studying well enough to be able to recreate it. And between the ability to distinguish, describe and understand a cultural practice and to actually perform it oneself there is a big difference. Secondly, it reveals a high intensity of personal involvement in the research process. The fact that Malinowski initiated the dance and that he had good fun performing it indicates that he was able to enter whole-heartedly into an alien culture.<sup>27</sup>

Could we treat Malinowski's fieldwork experience as part of the process of creating the self, and his attempt to see through the natives' eyes as a tentative to switch to another social and cultural context? He certainly believed that reaching the essence of a native was related to the issue of reaching his own essence; that anthropology was indeed searching for the answer for humanity in general. The study of a distant culture was a step in understanding the human being and the culture.

What is the deepest essence of my investigation? To discover what are his [the native's] main passions, the motives for his conduct, his aims. [...] His essential, deepest way of thinking. At this point we are confronted with our own problems: what is essential in ourselves?

[7 XI 1917]

We can not state, though, that any sort of identification or empathy with the Trobrianders occurred during the stay on the islands, even if we find in the *Diary* fragments such as when he was dancing or like this one, when he apparently succeeded in seeing the world in the way of the natives:

What is terrible is that I am unable to free myself completely from the atmosphere created by *foreign bodies*: their presence takes away from the scientific value and personal pleasure of my walk. I saw and felt the utter drabness of the Kiriwina villages; I saw them through their eyes (it's fine to have this ability), but I forgot to look at them through my own.

[24 XII 1917]

Most of the time, the diary was far from being a reflection of empathy. It was rather a vent to grate distance, lack of interest, irritation and antipathy. Malinowski fell “into a rage” [20 I 1915], “dislike[d]” natives [18 XII 1917], had “general aversion for niggers, for the monotony” and felt “imprisoned” [23 XII 1917]. In these moments the object of study seemed to him “utterly devoid of interest or importance, something as remote from [him] as the life of a dog” [27 XII 1917].

More personal relations appeared rarely and were linked to feelings of superiority and complete contempt or even repulsion. Malinowski was often in “a state of white rage and hatred for bronze-coloured skin” [24 IV 1918] and “so angry that [he] simply couldn't look at the Negroes” [25 IV 1918]. At one point he developed an attitude towards the natives which he termed “exterminate the brutes” [21 I 1915]. This literal quotation from *Heart of darkness* shows that Malinowski, in a way, played with a cultural role so well presented in Conrad's story. He used the words of Kurtz to express his own desperation in the deep isolation, and – by identifying with this literary character – tried to find a way to act in this overwhelming situation. Here we have a sort of interrelation between reality and its literary transformation. The colonial experience was an inspiration for Conrad's story, which found its expression in the figure of Kurtz. This again became a pattern and a way of captivating the individual sensations and attitudes for Malinowski. Literature appears as a reflection of collective history, but this is not all. It is a source of patterns, of common images, of models for characters and situations to reproduce. Of course, Malinowski did not repeat Kurtz's life story. But he found in this character a ready role to play: that of colonizer. If we agree that Conrad's novel is an account of colonialism with all the dark sides of the encounter of the ‘civilized’ world with the ‘savage’ one (Hampson 1992), then the reference that Malinowski made was very telling. And actually, the diary gives us dozens of examples of situations, where power relationship between Malinowski and his natives corresponded to this of the colonial world.

First of all, it was completely natural for him to have his own “boys”. They pitched his tent [20 III 1918] and served him all the time. But most of all they were getting on his nerves

by eating too much betel-nut [18 I 1918] or just by irritating him, like mosquitoes [27 IV 1918]. Malinowski could recognize that he needed them, but he could not stand their presence.

I am on a war footing with my *boys* (i.e. with Ginger), and Vakuta people irritate me with their insolence and cheekiness, although they are fairly helpful to my work.

[17 IV 1918]

He even went to the extreme of beating Ginger, one of his boys [15 IV 1918]. Some weeks after the incident, he wrote the following in the diary:

The natives still irritate me, particularly Ginger, whom I could willingly beat to death. I understand all the *German and Belgian colonial atrocities*.

[25 V 1918]

The sense of power and the “delightful feeling that now [he] alone [is] the master of this village with [his] *boys*” [25 III 1918] gave Malinowski a lot of satisfaction. It offered him a sensation of enjoyment and corresponded to his ambitions. But it was not only this mere feeling of domination that Malinowski liked; being the lord meant for him much more. It was in fact related to a strong conviction of possessing this tropical village and its people by transferring them into his writing.

Joy: I hear the word “Kiriwina”. I get ready; little grey, pinkish huts. Photos. Feeling of ownership: It is I who will describe them or create them.

[1 XII 1917]

Anthropological description, i.e. the presentation of ‘exotic’ tribes to the European public, meant in a way bringing them to life. This attitude, so typical for early discoverers and explorers, had its continuation in the later activity of scientists. The project of the enlargement of knowledge about the world met at this point with the project of its domination (Kieniewicz 1986). And it embedded a so typical colonial split between the sense of superiority and the sense of responsibility. This gives us a sensation that the relationship between Europeans and the natives in general, and between anthropologists and their object in particular, bore at that

time a resemblance to that of an adult with a child – an asymmetry typical for the world of colonial power (Asad 1975).

This kind of power relation was thereby present not only during day-to-day life, but also during anthropological work. On many occasions, scientific interest remained completely detached from the actual way of treating the natives. Malinowski was able to be profoundly concerned about Trobriand culture and would spend hours cataloguing, describing and analysing it. And, at the same time, he acted as if its representatives had nothing to do with it. This was the case when he made a register of the inhabitants of the village. *Gwadi* – the word for children in their language – not only helped in writing down all the names, they were also carrying around the chair on which he was sitting during this procedure [15 XII 1917]. The help received from them was not only of an informational character, but also physical. Normally, the natives were above all ‘specimens’. Malinowski would even go to the lengths of carrying out small experiments to collect his data.

I came back in the dark and once again frightened a little boy whom I call Monkey; he utters strange sounds when frightened; I persuaded him to come a stretch of the way with me, bribing him with tobacco, then I would suddenly disappear in the bushes, and he would begin to squeal.

[13 I 1915]

Malinowski’s attitude towards native women had a distinct character. They were not only interesting as an anthropological object or irritating as disobedient informants or servants. A different feeling was related to them, and it could be called sexual attraction. Actually, the only moment, when Malinowski expressed in his diary a wish to be one of the natives was in relation to a woman.

At 5 I went to Kaulaka. A pretty, finely built girl walked ahead of me. I watched the muscles of her back, her figure, her legs, and the beauty of the body so hidden to us, whites, fascinated me. Probably even with my own wife I’ll never have the opportunity to observe the play of back muscles for as long as with this little animal. At moments I was sorry I was not a savage and could not possess this pretty girl.

[19 IV 1918]

Malinowski was strongly tempted by the women surrounding him and the naked bodies only strengthened this feeling. Sometimes, he could not resist and “pawed” a girl [19 IV 1918] or wanted to “pat her on the belly” [15 XII 1917]. These acts were always followed

by remorse and anger. Nevertheless, feelings of repentance were not caused by the conviction of doing a wrong to a particular girl, but to his fiancée whom he was unfaithful to, and to himself. These excesses were a part of his uncontrolled character or, more specifically, libido, which he so strongly desired to restrain. That is why they bothered him – they were a deviation from his straight laced path; a breaking of resolutions; a step backwards in his trend towards perfection and self-control. Malinowski tended to blame the native girls to be able to deal with the feelings of frustration and remorse. He would call them “lousy girl[s]” or “Kiriwina whore[s]” [19 IV 1918] and accuse them of being provocative [18 III 1918]. In addition sexual desire was not related to any other kind of interest or attraction. It seemed to be a purely corporal lust.

I met women at the spring, watched how they drew water. One of them very attractive, aroused me sensually. I thought how easily I could have a *connection* with her. Regret that this incompatibility can exist: physical attraction and personal aversion. Personal attraction without strong physical magnetism. Going back I followed her and admired the beauty of the human body. [...] I realized the gulf between me and the human beings around me [in Polish version: between me and this human animal, M.K.].

[11 V 1918]

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Malinowski did not surrender completely to the nostalgia and frustration provoked by isolation; he did everything to emerge unharmed from the experience. But he had to fight hard to achieve this. The *Diary* can be read as a record of his ups and downs. It shows so clearly how much he had to struggle to persevere against crisis and not to forget himself in the world around.

Malinowski dedicated the most successful moments of his stay in the tropics to hard work. It gave him not only satisfaction and feeling of fulfilment, but also was a way to order his time and impose a kind of discipline on his life. The discipline and the control were what he needed to combat feelings of despair and melancholy. But work, just like exercise, seemed also to be a way of escaping from the surrounding world.

Gymnastics should be a time of concentration and solitude; something that gives me an opportunity to escape from the *niggers* and my own agitation.

[17 I 1918]

Thus, ethnographic work, Swedish gymnastics, rowing and finally keeping the diary – all this was supposed to put his life on the right track.<sup>28</sup> The discipline was again related to both body and mind. Distraction by novels, fantasies and so on, had similar effect on the mind as overeating on the body. Malinowski was exposed to both corporal and mental temptations and ordeals. And in the diary we witness many of his defeats. He continuously escaped into reading, searching for a refuge from the real world in that of imagination. Reading was like a drug: he was not able to control or stop it – he just could not resist doing it, loosing the sense of time and place, completely submerged in the illusive shelter it gave him.

Thursday I began to read *Bragelonne* [“The Vicompte de Bragelonne”, by Alexandre Dumas (père)] and I read it literally without interruption, until Wednesday or Tuesday night. [...] I would start reading the moment I got up, I didn’t stop while I was eating, and kept on till midnight. Only at sunset did I drag myself from my couch, and went for a short walk along the seashore. My head was humming, my eyes and brain were [blood-shot] – and yet I read, read, and kept on reading without let up as though I were reading myself to death. Resolved that after finishing this trash I wouldn’t touch another book in N[ew] G[uinea].

[16 I 1915]

But he did. Each time he felt frustrated or irritated with the surroundings, he took up reading. Sometimes, it was the only possible way “to ignore the niggers” [30 III 1918]. He could choose between reality and imagination. But the real world also offered him ways to escape. The most significant was to enter into contact with white people. At that time some missionaries, officials and traders lived on the islands. All of them, even if they normally would provoke in Malinowski the most sincere disrespect, appeared as an asylum in moments of depression. They were Malinowski’s only possible contact with his own world and culture. Because of his isolation, Malinowski felt a strong kind of union and solidarity with all the white people he met. They were “humans” [19 XII 1914] – the only creatures with whom he could find an understanding and have a relation. This way of escaping, like any other, although pleasant on many occasions after a while gave Malinowski a sensation of “fidgety” [29 IV 1918]. He knew too well it constituted a “byway” or a shortcut and in fact was only distracting him from what was important.

Sometimes, those ups and downs bore resemblance to a struggle between rational solutions – which would lead to an improvement of character and life – and irrational

escapisms. The whole experience of ‘being there’ was like a hard battle to keep the head above water; to remain conscious in a situation where all that was known and usual became distant and substituted by a completely new environment; to secure his own cultural identity and his normal stream of thoughts in conditions that threatened to alter them. Solitude combined with freedom from control and restriction from his own culture offered unexpected liberty. And this freedom exposed the self in a dangerous way. Malinowski was, like Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, passing through a test (Erdinast-Vulcan 1991, Goonetilleke 1990). Confrontation with the ‘wilderness’ was in fact a confrontation with oneself.

At the same time, Malinowski had to struggle to maintain his cultural integrity. It had much to do with not surrendering to a strange, unreasonable fear [6 V 1918]. And we could see it as a struggle between giving up to overwhelming cultural alienation and maintaining the interior order of the well known, clear and logical grasp of reality. In these moments of crisis, Malinowski’s belief in all that was related to the security of rationality offered by his own culture was used as a protective measure to drive away uncontrolled sensations. In fact, during these moments a battle was fought for his cultural integrity, a battle against new instincts and beliefs imposed in an invisible and unconscious way by the new environment – Malinowski was fighting to remain himself and to not become a native.

At night, a little tired, but not exhausted, I sang, to a Wagner melody, the words “Kiss my ass” to chase away *mulukwausi*<sup>29</sup>.

[19 XII 1917]

## Chapter III

### **Becoming the ‘Other’ – Hastrup’s Experience in Iceland**

The publication of the *Diary* should be seen in the context of both the immediate scandal it gave rise to and the later reflections and discussions it provoked. At first it led to great disappointment with Malinowski. The self-proclaimed father of modern anthropology turned out to be a racist full of disdain for and, on occasion, even hatred towards ‘his’ natives. But the criticism the *Diary* met with was significant, because it was not limited to the mere condemnation of Malinowski. What may have been much more important was that the text strongly undermined the credibility of anthropologists in general and thereby the science as a whole. With sometimes painful sincerity, the text clearly showed some of the most difficult, but crucial, problems that anthropology had to face. It exposed anthropologists during their fieldwork, showing the dangers and complexity of the situation they found themselves in. The criticism therefore had a more fundamental importance than the simple dethronement of Malinowski. It was obvious that personal experience inscribed into fieldwork should not merely be treated as such, since it is strongly connected to issues of methodology. The *Diary* was a distorting mirror in which anthropology had to look at itself. The first and most obvious reflections the image provoked were of an ethical nature. The colonial context only strengthened the feeling of ambiguity related to the anthropologists’ presence in the field. Moreover, the question of problematic inequality within power relationships was not restricted to the political question. It evoked deep discussions about the possibility of cognition of other cultures. The *Diary* also showed the complexity of the fieldwork situation for researchers, bringing the problem of their identity into focus. The experience of ‘being there’ appeared as a walk on a tightrope, a situation in which the anthropologists’ cultural self is threatened and in which each step could mean a fall into the surrounding reality. Thus the *Diary* illustrated above all else a fundamental flaw in current anthropology and in the long term the text would be used as a starting point for discussion in search of better solutions for this branch of knowledge.

I will try to show how the main dilemmas of anthropology, revealed by the *Diary*, are reflected in the work and life of Kirsten Hastrup. Her story will serve as a counterweight to

and, in a sense, provide contrast to that of Malinowski. The comparison of these two figures will help, I hope, to illustrate not only what has changed within anthropology, but at the same time highlight what is still problematic.

\* \* \*

Kirsten Hastrup is a professor at the Institute of Anthropology, at the University of Copenhagen. In 1982 and 1983 she carried out fieldwork research in Iceland, where she gathered data for various ethnographic texts. Her most important books on Iceland are: *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland. An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change* and *Nature and Policy in Iceland 1400-1800. An Anthropological Analysis of History and Mentality*. At the same time, the fieldwork experience and the writing of ethnographic texts became a stimulus to a reflexive approach to anthropology. Hastrup produced a series of articles and edited anthologies of a theoretical nature, such as *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*, together with Peter Hervik and *Feltarbejde. Oplevelse og metode i etnografien*, together with Kirsten Ralmøv.

Kirsten Hastrup is also known as a quite different character. As an inspiration for the main protagonist of a theatrical piece – *Talabot* by the Odin Theatre<sup>30</sup> conducted by Eugenio Barba, Hastrup became a part of the theatrical world. The performance told the story of a female, European anthropologist. For some time before, Hastrup had participated in meetings organized by the International School of Theatre Anthropology and had been deeply interested in performance as a cultural phenomenon. She also drew many analogies between the work of the anthropologist in the field and that of the actor on the stage (Hastrup 1995). But it was not until 1987 that Barba, in a conversation with her, revealed that he was interested in her story and was thinking about using her as the inspiration for his next work, was she offered the chance to participate fully in this world. At first, she did not exactly realize what her involvement in the creation of the performance would mean. Having agreed to play a very special part in the process of the theatrical creation, Hastrup suddenly found herself in a situation she had not really expected. She analyzed the work with the Odin Theatre in an article written some years later (Hastrup 1995).

\* \* \*

When the work on *Talabot* started there was no scenario, no text to be learned. The actors were waiting for the story to be told. And Kirsten Hastrup had been chosen to be the storyteller. Her participation in the preparation of the performance could be divided into two

phases: the first one consisted of ‘sessions’ with Eugenio Barba, during which he made her talk not only about herself as anthropologist, but also about her life; the second phase was to work with the whole group.

Already during the private conversations with Barba Hastrup realized that it would not be only about theoretical discussions on anthropology. The interest that the director showed for her had to do with her as a person and not only her profession. Barba was curious about her personal motivations and experiences. He wanted to understand what kind of person becomes an anthropologist and why. Thus, all the questions he bombarded her with had a more personal than professional character, having to do with all – even the most secret or unconscious – wishes, fears and memories. Hastrup was thus, in a way, forced to talk about herself, to define and explain her choices and to tell as well as write an autobiography, which would include all aspects of her life.

As the day passed I became increasingly exhausted. Clearly, Barba’s energy exceeded mine; I did not know the theatrical context and I hardly knew the man who made me talk. He had an immense ‘presence’, which somehow paradoxically made me fade away. As I spoke and related more details from my life and work, I became increasingly uncertain as to who I was. Why was I so interesting anyway? I was not, of course, but I was becoming an object of study, implicitly interesting and exotic. Although I did not realize it then, Barba had started doing fieldwork on me, and I had assumed the wearisome role of informant.

(Hastrup 1995:128-129)

The work continued in a similar way with the entire theatrical group. Yet there was a difference: Hastrup found herself in front of a group of people, all working to dramatize her story, who were eager to know many different things about her. Or, perhaps more significantly, Hastrup noticed that interest in her as a person was somehow lacking; as though all that mattered to the group was merely getting the story, but her as an individual did not count at all. It was as if a new person was born – Kirsten – the principal character of the performance, created less by Hastrup’s storytelling, and more by an interaction between her and the Odin group. This Kirsten was negotiated and redefined. She was reinvented from the material Hastrup gave to exist as a theatrical figure (Hastrup 1995).

This was what Hastrup discovered when she saw the finished piece one year later. She found herself in front of Kirsten, as near and familiar as if she had been her mirror reflection, but, at the same time, different and strange; “her and not-her” (Hastrup 1995). Hastrup

described the process of giving information and presenting herself as extremely painful. The fruit of the cooperation received an independent life. It was as if the essence of Kirsten Hastrup had been torn away from her. She was left with nothing; another – not real, but represented or dramatized – Kirsten was given life. She wrote about the night she first saw the spectacle:

It was a strange night. I was present but non-existing. The performance-made-public transformed me. The illusion of my own otherness had been represented as a fact – even to me.

(Hastrup 1995:135)

\* \* \*

We could recall now previous remarks about Malinowski concerning his relation with natives. The relation had a deeply unequal nature which was manifested on many levels, sometimes more, sometimes less clearly. At times he seemed to have power over or even use violence towards the natives. This was partly due to the historical context – we can see it in the way he reproduced the colonial model. Being ‘master of the boys’ was the largest part of Malinowski’s colonial behavior. But this power relationship also became visible in more subtle ways. We noticed above that the very relation between the anthropologist and his informants could lean toward violence<sup>31</sup>. Many of the analyzed fragments of the *Diary* proved that even Malinowski himself perceived his work as a kind of ‘urging’ or ‘oppressing’ since collecting data required a lot of strength.

Hastrup’s encounter with the Odin Theatre was a very tough experience, but at the same time it offered her a possibility to switch roles. Suddenly, and not completely intentionally, she found herself in the informant’s skin. And, even though she had some kind of consciousness of the nature of fieldwork research, only now could she experience it from the other side. Only now could she fully understand that the anthropologists’ presence, observation and questioning strongly influence or even disrupt the life of those being analyzed. The intrusion is present on many levels. First of all, posing apparently simple questions about the most obvious routines forces informants to define and formulate themselves and thereby undertake a form of auto-analysis. At the same time, their creation of a self image is strongly conditioned and guided by the anthropologist. The way anthropologists act, their approach, the things they are interested in discovering and those they expect to learn about have a huge influence on the information received. Secondly, the inequality and the harmfulness of this relationship are demonstrated by the fact that the

informants are then abandoned when the research process is completed. In other words, anthropologists walk away with an image of the other, constructed through interaction during fieldwork, leaving the informants alone and perhaps with a sense of having been used. The anthropologists then move onto the second stage of their work, the writing, in which it is crucial to have some distance and in which the 'native' is present only in the transformed form.

We could ask ourselves why Hastrup participated in the project. Was it only the desire for a new adventure or a narcissistic instinct? Or maybe she felt that this experience would offer her a possibility of a new view, not only on her personal life, but also on the condition of her profession? She had allowed herself to undergo quite a powerful and potentially dangerous experiment: not only because it required her physical and emotional involvement, leaving her exposed to analysis which would lead to the construction of her double; but it was also risky, because Hastrup, by taking the role of informant and by passing through the process of the field-research from the other side, acquired a new look at her profession, devoid of illusions. The anthropologists appeared to her as though they were inquisitors who force a witch to reveal her identity (Hastrup 1995), who pump out the information by constant violence. Hastrup did not only take a risk on a personal level but also on a professional one.

If we compare the power relationships between the anthropologist and the 'natives' in the case of Malinowski and in the case of Hastrup, we can see some clear differences. First of all, in the case of Malinowski, we learn about this issue only from the *Diary* – private and secret notes not intended for publication. Just as the whole experience of 'being there', the violent character of the anthropologists' work remained behind curtains. There was never any question of anthropology's validity or ethics. Inequality was so strongly inscribed in the historical and political context that it did not provoke any particularly profound reflections. And actually, the context caused anthropologists to appear in a completely different light to other westerners. Anthropologists were on the side of the natives and against the missionaries and colonial politicians. They were there led neither by the wish for material gain nor by the promulgation of their own religion. They were the only ones deeply interested in the culture and society of the 'other', and were the only ones eager to preserve them, proclaiming the equality of all humans. But it did not mean that in their work they did not practice violence. We saw it clearly in Malinowski's notes. The fact is that the violence was hidden. Anthropologists perhaps unconsciously knew that it existed, but in their theoretical dissertations and ethnographical monographies there was no room for it. Nor was the modern social science in a fit condition to raise such a question.

In the case of Hastrup the issue of inequality and complexity of the anthropologist-informant relationship occupies center stage. Colonial reality had vanished, though one could, of course, question to what degree. Actual decolonization took place in the international political arena, but it was strongly related to, if not conditioned by, self-criticism of western societies and a profound reflection over the form of the European encounter with other cultures. The debate also took place in the field of anthropology, so profoundly rooted in the colonial past. Anthropology was declared “a child of Western Imperialism” (Gough 1968) and its legal validity questioned. The involvement of the anthropologist in the world of colonizers was discussed on two levels: one ethical and one epistemological. In the first case, the anthropologists were treated as representatives of the dominating world, individuals who considered the colonies their own personal possession, and worked on behalf of the oppressors. Their position in the field turned out to be ambiguous: they could never cease to represent their own culture, which for the natives signified colonizing power (Asad 1975). In the second case, the anthropological knowledge connected to the European scientific tradition was accused of being based on an imaginative representation of the other cultures created by the scientists (Said 1978). Indeed the criticism highlighted the complex issue of the frontiers of cognition of other cultural realities.

Under these circumstances, analysis of the very relation between anthropologist and informant gained a special position. The interest in and explanation of the issue by Hastrup should be seen as a part of this trend. From the sixties on, many texts were produced to create awareness and encourage analysis of the condition and the problems of anthropology. The anthology edited by Jay Ruby is a perfect example (Ruby 1982). Referring to “the human capacity to generate second-order symbols or meta-levels – significations about significations” (Ruby and Myerhoff 1982) the authors suggest to create an ethnography of anthropology, i.e. to analyze not only theoretical and methodological problems related to this branch of science, but also to scrutinize the condition of being an anthropologist; to expose the impact of personal experience on the production process of science, as well as the ambivalent relationship with the object of study. This self-reflection impelled many to include their autobiographies in the scientific discourse. We come across not only isolated episodes from the fieldwork, but also very private, almost confessional, accounts of the author’s experience (see f. ex. Ruby 1982). In this context Hastrup’s openness and sincerity when it comes to confessing her feelings about fieldwork, are not so out of the ordinary. They are deeply rooted in the discourse of the time, just as Malinowski’s silence and secrecy were.

The second difference we could point out concerns the character of the violence involved. In Malinowski's case the unequal power relationship found expression in very real and tangible situations. It took the form of an authentic violence. We saw examples of explicit abuse, of cases in which his colonial condition manifested itself in the clearest way. But another kind of violence was also present throughout Malinowski's stay in the Trobriand Islands. The unequal relationship between anthropologist and informant was even present in their dialogue, and Malinowski was conscious of it.

In the case of Hastrup we find only the second kind of violence – the symbolic one. Since it is not so obvious, it is difficult to capture and define.

The last and maybe most important difference between Malinowski's and Hastrup's approach towards the anthropologists' unequal relationship with informants, relates to their way of dealing with this situation. As we concluded from the previous analysis of the *Diary*, Malinowski's predominant feeling towards the natives could be generally classified as antipathy. This stemmed from both feeling of superiority of his own culture and that of domination as a scientist; the latter argument is clearly evident in Malinowski's conviction that, by describing the Trobrianders, he would create them.

If we would like to name Hastrup's feelings towards the object of her study, empathy would certainly be the right word. Her awareness of the unequal power relationship between herself and the 'natives' was so intense that Hastrup felt obliged to take part in a project that would expose herself to the same inequality, but this time as an informant. During her work with the Odin Theatre, she transformed herself from scientist into object. She made herself vulnerable to a kind of experiment that would make her personal identification with the 'other' possible. She toyed with the fieldwork situation. Her empathy was total. She simply became an informant and experienced the fieldwork process from the other side, from the initial interest in her 'exotic' character, through the slow and painful process of tearing information out of her and forcing her to define her own self, to the final moment of abandonment and confrontation with the dramatic Kirsten – her and at the same time not-her.

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Hastrup's experience of 'being there' occupies a really special place in her texts. On many occasions she refers to episodes and events from her stay in Iceland. She not only recalls happenings but also reveals her fears and emotions during the fieldwork, trying to present herself unveiled – without a 'writer's mask'.<sup>32</sup> It is Kirsten Hastrup the fieldworker we

have in front of us. Yet, it does not mean that we as readers are given access to all aspects of the experience. The episodes are carefully chosen and they serve a specific purpose.

We see Hastrup when she got letters from ‘home’ in which her friends say they miss her and want to make preparations for her return; they try to arrange classes for the next semester and ask about her plans. We witness when she throws the letters away, not willing to read or answer them (Hastrup 1995:15).

Then we meet Hastrup in the middle of a snow-storm. She is stranded, her car snowbound, and she is with a local man who came to help her. In the middle of nowhere, she experiences physical freeze and psychological fear, waiting for the rescue that finally comes. But, as she argues, at the same time she also experiences *úti* – being outside in the space considered by Icelanders to be beyond normal rules and prohibitions, where all that is uncontrolled can happen; where Hastrup, she later found out, would have been permitted by the local norms to commit adultery with her companion in distress without any consequences (Hastrup 1995:54-55).

We see Hastrup again when she returns to the village in which she had lived some months before working on a farm as a milkmaid and shepherdess. During that time she established distinct relationships with ‘her’ animals. She had liked some and disliked others. When she comes back and meets her old enemy again, i.e. one of the most rebellious cows, she looks her into eyes and says: “So, there you still are, you silly old beast”. When the cow dies the next night with no apparent reason, Hastrup – totally shocked – feels herself responsible for this sudden death (Hastrup 1995: 17-18).

And finally, maybe the most significant story she tells us.

Staying for some months during the autumn on an Icelandic farm, I once took part in an expedition to collect stray sheep in a rather rough mountainous region. At a certain point in time I was left on a rock ledge to hold an ewe that had just been recovered from another ledge where it had been entrapped [...] I had a beautifully clear view down toward the flat coastal lands where ‘my’ farm was situated. [...] Suddenly, a dense fog came rolling down from the upper mountains and with an icy cold. In the subarctic area you know never to trust the sun, and I was prepared to meet the cold; but in the long run not even woolen clothes could prevent a degree of fear from creeping in. It was not so much a question of fearing to get lost, even though I knew that I could never descend alone. It was a kind of fear related to the place where I found myself. [...] In that particular place the fog was a very specific veil over the Icelandic landscape, of which I had become a part. And there, a nebulous human figure appeared in the mist. I knew instantly that it was a man of the ‘hidden people’ (*huldufólk*) who visited me in the small space of vision left to me and my ewe by the

fog. Ever since the Middle Ages *huldumenn* have been known to seduce Icelandic womenfolk, and especially shepherdesses in misty mountains. Apparently he did not touch me, but who knows if he did not seduce me in one way or other without my sensing it? When the fog lifted, and I was finally rejoined by my own people, the only thing that remained clear in my mind was the real experience of the materialization of the unreal.

(Hastrup 1987a:52)

From all these stories we get a clear message of what the fieldwork experience means to Hastrup as she helps us to interpret the episodes correctly, giving us explicit clues with which decipher their meaning.

First of all, in the story about the letters, we notice that working in the field places the anthropologist in an unusual position with regards both her own culture and the other's. Hastrup felt that she did not want to belong to her own world. She rejected it abruptly and desired to maintain a double distance – on the one hand, real, physical absence, on the other, emotional detachment and a negation of the interior cultural affiliation. She wanted to cut ties that linked her to her country, her surroundings, her job and all that she normally was. Not only was she denying her own culture, but at the same time she was rejecting of her 'normal' self. She did not want to be Kirsten Hastrup – the Danish professor – any more. She wanted to become somebody else.

As we follow this transformation in other accounts, we see how she turned into Kirsten – the Icelandic shepherd girl or a peasant working among the fishermen. We see how she entered the 'other's' culture to such a degree that she herself grew to be a part of the world she was to describe. Her becoming native was profound and multifaceted. It was closely related to her physical presence in the other world. She not only observed and learned about the other reality, she entered it; she learned how to act in it and how to be a member of it. One of the most important things was that Hastrup really participated. She worked in the fish factory and grazed her sheep. Turning native had at the outset a lot to do with entering local routines and adapting to the local way of living. To fully understand how people saw their surroundings, how they related to the outside world and how it functioned, she first had to experience it in the same way. She decided to immerse herself completely in their world. By physically 'being there', sleeping at the same farm and working as they did, she learned how they confronted the world, she discovered their fears and joys, not by investigating or observing them but by experiencing it as they did.

According to Hastrup, fieldwork does not only involve investigating and researching the other culture. It has to do with a radical experience of estrangement (Hastrup 1995:14-15). Hastrup felt she was not herself in Iceland. When afterwards she wrote about the things that had happened to her, the sensations or the fears she had had, she did it in the third person. This grammatical change in language reflects the shift in identity. The person doing the fieldwork was not the same as the one who wrote down her observations, analyzed them and tried to offer explanations. There were two different Kirstens. The experience, defined by Hastrup as self-dissolution, provoked an inherent anxiety (Hastrup 1992).

Hastrup described the world in which the anthropologist meets with the 'other' as the 'third space'<sup>33</sup>. The anthropologist's new identity is never completely integrated in the research culture. In the same way as Hastrup's new identity was something in between, the alien's world became something negotiated. The two sides, the 'natives' and the anthropologist changed via the dialogue they had. Meanings were created through joint authoring by natives and anthropologist, as Hastrup expresses it. The world in which they were interacting was distinct from either of the two worlds that existed before the encounter (Hastrup 1987b).

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If we again juxtapose the fieldwork experiences of the two anthropologists, some clear differences stand out. First of all, one can see a distinct difference in the importance attached to the phenomenon of personal experience. In Malinowski's case, the experience of 'being there' was important as a condition of his credibility. The validity of his ethnographical writings was, as we already mentioned, based largely on the fact that the author had been on the islands he described and had lived among the people he wrote about. Nevertheless, the personal experience itself remained in the shadows. Fears and frustrations felt in the field were only reflected upon in a hidden, intimate diary.

In Hastrup's case, the importance of the personal experience changed diametrically (Clifford 1986:109). It became a central issue. Contemporary doubts and criticism concerning the methodological basis of anthropology put matters in a new light. The simple fact of anthropologists' 'being there' was no longer sufficient to give epistemological foundation to the presentation of an alien reality. The weakening of realism and positivism in the social sciences in the late twentieth century led to the return of such basic questions as: How can we describe reality? How do we learn to know it?

During the time Malinowski was active, the observation seemed to be a sufficient tool for the acquirement of knowledge about studied cultural reality. Vision therefore played a central role in the process of empirical cognition. The aim was to make scientific observation perfect. And that is why methodology and fieldwork techniques were so important – they were supposed to guarantee the most exact ‘measurements’ of cultural reality. Participation in the lives of ‘others’ was merely a way to obtain the best and most faithful data possible, by watching the natives constantly in all possible moments of their daily life. To have all elements of the culture within eyesight was the main aspiration. (Clifford 1986:11)

Hastrup has openly expressed her doubts about the possibility of getting to the essence of a culture solely by means of visual observation. She believes that Western people have a distorted capacity to see things. Their vision is influenced by their cultural affiliation. Hastrup transformed herself “from spectator to seer and [her] knowledge from observation to insight” (Hastrup 1992). Cognition can, in her opinion, occur only by fully identifying with the object of study. Anthropologists must then consider themselves a tool in fieldwork. Both mind and body should be involved in the research process to the highest degree possible. Personal experience can not be eliminated from the scientific investigation; it is its base and foundation. Only by incorporating the other culture, feeling it from the inside and performing it like an actor performs a character, can anthropologists have real insight into it. And in this process of identification the border between object and subject is blurred; the border that Hastrup calls “an artifact of modernism” (Hastrup 1992b:117). She believes that anthropologists must embrace the other culture, become the object and thereby a source of information about the other reality. In this sense, Hastrup’s feelings, her perception and understanding of the reality she lived in during the fieldwork, provided valuable and precious data. The man of the *huldufólk* met by Kirsten the Shepherdess, could and should be taken by Kirsten the Anthropologist as a fact about and an intrinsic element of the reality that is to be described. And, what may even be more important is that it should be treated in terms of the studied culture. Led by the western habit of rational thinking, Kirsten the Anthropologist could maybe doubt for a moment what Kirsten the Shepherdess saw and wish to justify it as a hallucination brought on by tiredness. But Kirsten the Shepherdess saw and experienced reality and unreality in the same way the Icelanders did. She did not evaluate the event in terms of the possibility or impossibility of its occurrence; she just experienced it, paralyzed by a strange fear and a cold blow of the materialized unreality.

The experience in both Malinowski’s and Hastrup’s cases was extremely powerful, especially as they themselves were tested in a very risky and intense way. Both of them

balanced dangerously on the edge: in a very definite way they were caught between two different worlds. What was culturally usual and normal suddenly disappeared; all familiar habits were shattered and had to be, if not transformed, than at least rethought. Even the aspects of life so deeply rooted in the self that they appeared to be an inherent and essential part of it, suddenly turned out to be acquired and relative to the culture one grew in. The examination of the 'other' thus led to a discovery that had important consequences for the self.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, we get the impression that the journey to the 'exotic' place was not only motivated by science. Attraction to the 'other' was somehow provoked by a personal need to experiment with the self. 'Being there' is in the case of anthropologists always followed by going back home. It is like an adventure that is supposed to shed light on those sides of the self that are normally in the shadows. Playing in the world of the 'other' leads to the discovery and definition of the cultural self.

It is difficult to judge whether the fact that Malinowski and Hastrup reacted to this situation in different ways was due to distinct development of the fieldwork experience, their personalities, their sexes<sup>35</sup> or the moment in history in which the research was carried out in. Nevertheless, I believe that both of them were somehow prepared for the journey and the attitude they decided to choose was somehow prior to their 'being there'.

Anyway, their experience took different or even contrary shapes. Malinowski held on to his 'old' self like his life depended on it. His routines were basic for him and were supposed to guarantee not only success and persistence in work, but also the cohesion and survival of his identity. He stuck to his gymnastics, defined and redefined the rules of his interior discipline and formulated resolutions – all this to keep a grip on his self. He escaped, sometimes to the company of other westerners, other times to novels, a piece of his world that he brought with himself. His success in preserving his own cultural identity was due to decisive confirmation of his own culture and the brutal denial of that of the 'other'. Calling natives "niggers" and "monkeys" meant in fact refusing to acknowledge them as humans. He had to kill them symbolically, deprive them of their humanity and reduce them to the animals or slaves. Only in this way did his cultural self remained untouched and safe. Antipathy seemed to offer the only secure refuge.

Hastrup, in contrast, was brimming over not only with sympathy but also with real and profound empathy towards 'her people'. Her experience was one of deep identification with them. But in order to turn native she had to deny her own culture. She sterilized herself from all she was used to. She had to forget and reject her past and her cultural being. If we venture to say that Malinowski had to symbolically kill the natives in order to remain himself, we

should, equally, recognize Hastrup's symbolical suicide. Her profound identification with the 'other', her almost complete immersion in the new world, could only be possible at the cost of killing the old Kirsten. Without it Kirsten the Shepherdess could not be born. Her experiment at embodying the 'other' is possible because she deeply believes in the human capacity to shape one's own self. "Identities are invented, not given" she argues (Hastrup 1995: 132). This statement strongly reflects the conviction about the plastic, non-fixed and changeable character of the identity so typical for her times.

We might argue that these two different approaches reflect the shape of Western culture in general. Modernism, especially in the previous fin-de-siècle period and among artists was certainly related to a kind of decadency and tiredness. It felt deceived by the bourgeois style of life and was eager to find a new way of living. But, on the other hand, the beginning of the twentieth century passed under the banner of strong belief in the possibilities of modern western culture. The world seemed to offer a great range of opportunities. Science was in progress and seemed to present a perfect cognitive tool. European political domination in the colonies was stable and uncontroversial. It did not yet cause any doubts or hesitations. Contact with other cultures was still perceived in terms of modernization of the 'uncivilized' world. And even if we agree that the 'exotic' was seen as something attractive, it did not present a realistic alternative. It was regarded more as a chance for adventure or inspiration than as an ultimate escape.

Hastrup happened to live her experience in totally different times. In the second half of the twentieth century, the western world seemed tired and weak. Numerous dissolutions and uncertainties undermined not only European political activity from an ethical point of view, but also westerners' right to any kind of statement about the world. Science, and especially the social sciences, was exposed to strong criticism, which profoundly questioned its authority and capacity to make any statement about reality. The Enlightenment truth-claims and values were damaged and uncertainties were linked to the growth of conviction that language was in fact an inadequate vehicle through which to express any sort of 'reality'. All the social sciences, with the history at the head, were acknowledged to produce so-called 'grand narratives' conferring an illusory sense of direction on people who think they 'know' (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002). And this crisis tainted all what was related to the European presence in the world. Intercultural contact was seen as pure domination on the part of western civilization. One of the harshest criticisms concerned the inability to interact with the 'other' in a real, pure and equal way. Dialogue and thereby a true cognition of the 'other', were acknowledged as unattainable due to the euro-centric character of each Western

appearance in the alien reality. Westerners saw themselves as selfish, dominating, imperialistic, limited by their outlook and perception of all that surrounds them as well as unable or unwilling to open themselves to other, alternative and some might say better worlds.

In this light, Hastrup's way of experiencing during her anthropological journey obtains a more complex meaning. It is not only shaped by the search for a more adequate tool of ethnographic methodology. It is also, in a way, a really powerful response to the despair of her times. Hastrup's manifesto has indeed double significance. On the one hand, it tries to offer an alternative, to overcome the impasse created by criticisms that led scientists down a blind alley. She insists that cognition of the 'other' is possible, that one is not necessarily restricted by one's own culture to the point at which it renders a true dialogue impossible. She believes so strongly in the chance for an encounter of an open-minded nature that she reaches the point of participating in the 'other's' (un)reality. Her meeting with the man from *huldufólk* is thus the best confirmation of the capacity of western scientists to rise above their own cultural determination. On the other hand, though, the manifesto is an affirmation and a clear expression of the crisis of western culture. After all, Hastrup has to abandon her own self to be able to embody her Icelandic alter-ego. The very experience of entering the reality of another is thus a metaphor for the European condition; a wish to obliterate one's own identity and a desire to immerse oneself in an alternative one are expressed here unequivocally. At the same time, Hastrup formulates her point of view on the purpose of anthropology, leaving us without any doubts regarding her deep disappointment with her own culture on the one hand and hope in the others' one on the other.

Through narratives of this kind [anthropological texts structured by the experience which is not fiction but empirical truth] we are able to challenge the givens in our own society. If our texts capture LIFE and demonstrate its probability, we stand a good chance of influencing a kind of life, which in modern society has not only become genre but also triviality for many people. In this way we may also pursue the criticism of the barbarism of Western civilization.

(Hastrup 1987a:59)

The task of anthropologists is something more than a simple description and analysis of human culture in all its different variants. Their scientific work resembles a real mission which should help western culture find answers to its own failings and so revive 'true life' within it. Hastrup describes the anthropologists' work as dangerous. During her mission, she risks her entire self, testing it in the most drastic possible way. Anthropologists should

therefore be courageous (Hastrup 1987a). They should become a bridge that joins together two separated worlds. They are a mediator between them; they give people from their old world the only and unique possibility to get in touch with a new world. Hastrup compares her profession, or maybe better, her condition to that of a prophet (Hastrup 1995: 24-25). She claims that both figures represent somebody who has access to two different realities: the prophets in time, the anthropologists in space. Belonging to the old they give voice to the new. Hastrup's activity has a dual nature: on the one hand she experiences the 'other' reality, on the other she writes it. And writing unites discovering with defining. But the key to the prophetic condition of the anthropologist is her ritual presence in the other world (Hastrup 1995:25). Fieldwork is seen here as a ritual, as a *rite de passage* (Hastrup 1995:20). It is a way to mark the anthropologists' place in the world 'in between'.

Like a prophet, the anthropologist offers another language, another space, another time to reality. That is the emergent meaning of the anthropological practice.

(Hastrup 1995:25)

And also like a prophet anthropologists are supposed to appeal to their audiences' imagination. The only way they are able to portray the reality they experienced during the fieldwork is through the human ability to imagine the unknown.

I will propose here another comparison: Hastrup could be associated with a romantic poet. Similarities are visible in many different features of the figure of the anthropologist created by Hastrup. To begin we should scrutinize the prophetic condition. Prophecy certainly has a religious connotation. The word is used to describe a person through whom some kind of goodness speaks. Prophets are in contact with the transcendent world, which is normally considered impossible to sense in a direct way. Only a few can access it by the use of special techniques, such as ecstasy or possession. Knowledge is thus acquired by means other than rationality. Prophetic cognition almost requires the elimination of rational thinking. A special, ecstatic state is essential: it is the only way to get in touch and, afterwards, be able to mediate the 'truth'.

The romantic poet is also a mediator between two worlds. His capacity to write poetry is attributed not to the mastery of the poetic techniques and the capacity to use different metres and poetic images, but to his special condition. This permits him to get to a source of real inspiration and thereby to create a truly genial work of art (Young 2001:16-18). The

romantic poet reaches a peak inaccessible to ordinary human beings. His creation draws more from this ability to transcend realities than from the work of reason. Romanticism valued the irrational and supernatural highly. It was provoked by disillusionment with the eighteenth century's rationality. "I felt before I thought" said Rousseau and these words certainly inspired a large number of romanticists (Travers 2001).

Hastrup's anthropologist fits perfectly in this image. Her experience of 'being there' is presented as an experience of 'becoming'. She enters a special state, abandons the rational part of her cultural identity more so than the whole of it. Her cognition of the other culture – the message of truth so needed by the western civilization – occurs beyond her normal self. During her fieldwork she almost enters a trance. All she comes into contact with is absorbed by her senses and not by rationality.

The second feature of the romantic poet that comes to the mind here is his special status among the people he lives with. Poets, just like prophets, are considered exceptional. They embody geniality. One cannot achieve this state without having been born with it; the poet is the chosen one, a special figure who has access to another reality. This ability gives him the unique chance to touch the 'truth' and to see clearly – an ability others do not have. But at the same time it makes him suffer. His existence 'in between' is exhausting and dangerous and the lack of a clear affiliation provokes anxiety. In a way his messianic condition is a sacrifice.

Similarly, Hastrup's anthropologist runs the danger of exposing herself to risky experimental states. Her mission is difficult and not just anybody can accomplish it. Cognition of the other (un)reality requires a special condition. When describing herself to the Odin Theatre, Hastrup created an image of a 'lonely rider'. One of the actors noticed this, surprised that in none of her stories did any of her close friends or relatives appear. She completely omitted her marriage and family. She explained it to him as a sort of lack of affiliation, which had always been her mark and still was (Hastrup 1995:132). She had to fight for any, even temporary, feeling of belonging. Hastrup sees this feature of her personality as a central element of this special condition. The state of an "internal exile", as she calls it, is vital to be able to carry out fieldwork, but it also results in loneliness and isolation. What gives her a chance to accomplish the mission of mediating the worlds also constitutes a source of personal suffering. But at the same time, the anthropologist, just like the poet, is given a special status. Her mission places her above normal human beings; her capacity to transcend her world makes her a distinguished figure.

Finally, the last similarity: the mission of the anthropologist is accomplished only when the other reality is mediated. Experience must be transformed into the writing. This part of the work is perceived by Hastrup as ‘a state of art’ (Hastrup 1992b). The description of the ‘other’ is more a creation than a ‘mimetic’ representation. It does not mean that the ethnographer writes fiction. On the contrary. There is a distinct border between fiction and creation. Hastrup underlines that the only way to get close to “LIFE” is to escape from conventionality. Blind reproduction of ethnographical genre is the biggest enemy of the authenticity and of the real value of the text.

We hear again echoes of romantic ideology. The cult of originality and departure from the classical literary forms were the strongest features of the romantic condition. Creation had to be freed from these fossilized forms. The only way to express reality was by searching originality and breaking with the conventional. The use of imagination substituted traditional forms (Novalis 2001:27-28).

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The introduction of the romantic ideology is not accidental here. Hastrup herself referred to it in her writings. The mentioning of Romanticism appears in relation to criticism of the positivistic vision of science and the realistic representation of the cultural world. Thus it is deeply embedded in the project to reform anthropology as a science, both on a methodological and theoretical level. Romanticism is treated as a possible counterbalance for the dominant Western scientific vision of reality rooted in the Enlightenment.

Anthropology may not be a prototypical member of the category of scholarship, let alone of ‘science’, yet its import derives from its ability to discover and describe the reality just as much as linguistics and physics. Its potential stems from its power to question the givens of western culture rather than confirming them. As such anthropology continues the Romantic reaction against the Enlightenment reason, and against the sanctification of the natural sciences. The discovery of other worlds is explicitly creative.

(Hastrup 1995:12)

The very act of conducting anthropology, i.e. directing one’s sight towards another world and different way of dealing with reality than the western one, aims to undermine all

that is usual and taken for granted by a process of estrangement from one's own culture. It allows regarding one's own identity and habitual way of thinking, feeling and experiencing, as a cultural product. The purpose of anthropology is then to criticize western culture. Yet in the process it resembles the old struggle within the European tradition. In fact, all Hastrup does is reject and criticize one part of the European tradition, and refer and rely on another one. She calls out the spirit which has haunted Europe for centuries. She fights for a right to describe and define reality beyond the Enlightenment's scientific model. She wants to experience reality instead of merely observing it; to use her intuition and feeling instead of her reason. She wants to give the anthropologist the status of prophet and messiah instead of that of transparent observer. She insists on creation on the part of the anthropologist instead of mimetic representation and imagination on the part of the reader instead of rational understanding.

Hastrup certainly succeeds in solving the ethical problem of anthropology. She transforms the oppressive anthropologist, embodied in the main character of Malinowski's *Diary*, into a compassionate one. Both, during her experience in the field and afterwards – back home, when she worked with the Odin Theatre – Hastrup explores alternative ways of approaching the 'other' in order to find the most empathetic one possible. She sacrifices her own self to expiate the sins of anthropology.

In this sense, Hastrup and Malinowski could be thought to represent two extreme opposites. But the question of who, if anyone, truly manages to reveal the 'truth' about the 'other' still remains. Do they, in fact, seem too deeply immersed in trends of their own culture to ever achieve this? In this case, they represent two distinct paradigms within European tradition, and the epistemological problems of anthropology will remain unsolved.

## Conclusions

The publication of Bronisław Malinowski's *Diary* gave the personal field experience of the anthropologist a central place in discussions about this branch of social science. The field, a place where autobiography meets ethnography (Hastrup), could not any longer stay in the background. All the basic dilemmas of anthropology converged here, as if in a lens.

The experience that from the beginning was seen a little bit as a side-effect of the new and improved methodology and did not gain any special attention as such, some decades later turned out to be a hard nut to crack. Fieldwork resembled a strange laboratory where the scientist is thrown into his own experiment. The problematic situation of sciences which have man as the object of study appeared here with all its consequences.

First of all, every doubt related to the ethical side of anthropology took a very concrete shape. Nobody could any longer deny the existence of violence in the relationship between western anthropologists and 'their' natives. And decolonialization was not sufficient enough to make this inequality vanish since the sensation of abuse and violence were rooted deeply in the controversial status of a science that takes as its object another human being. Colonial and postcolonial domination of the Western world was only the surface of this complicated issue. And, although we should not diminish the importance of the connection that links anthropologists to the world of colonial domination and exploitation, this aspect of anthropological violence, was the most easily and quickly eradicated. The physical abuse, present in the case of Malinowski, disappeared completely from Hastrup's experience. But the other deeper type of inequality, remained. Antipathy has been substituted for empathy, but it has not changed the fact that anthropologists enter the field with a desire of accumulating information. They will always use 'their' people for their own purposes, irrespective of their personal attitude. They will always try to extract the essence of their informants for their own benefit no matter if they are guided by empathy and admiration or by antipathy and disdain.

But the fieldwork experience turned out to be vital also from another point of view. The strategies anthropologists adopt in the field, i.e. their choice of attitude when interacting with the 'other', is closely related to basic epistemological issues. The decision whether to observe or to participate is not only one of a degree of personal involvement in the work, but also that of the choice of path to cognition of the examined cultural reality. Anthropologists

meet here with basic problems of science in general such as how one gets the true essence of the object of study, if such a thing even exists. The scientists themselves become an experimental space, taking the form of different tools in their act of studying an alien reality. They can, like Malinowski, try to stay apart and with a cold eye observe the native culture. But they then run the risk that what they actually see would be to a high degree censored by the clear reasoning of their own culture. They would not notice things that, by the discourse they exist in, were considered unreal. The act of observation may be shaped by the cultural training which causes things to be seen in a very specific way. Observing another culture is then like watching a three-dimensional film without the special glasses.

Hastrup chooses a different way. She gives herself up completely to her intuition. She tries to embody the 'other'. By leaving rationality apart, she relies on her feeling and on the sensations of reality that come to her. She explores the most dangerous side of fieldwork. The side that was present in Malinowski's experience, but which he tried to cover or eliminate: that of irrational fears and of sensation that habitual ways of perceiving reality were collapsing. She exposes herself to experiments, but does not do it for mere adventure: the incorporation of the 'other' has scientifically defined aims. It is intended to give a perfect insight. She tries in this way to free herself from the determinism of her own culture and to access the true reality in a direct way: by experiencing it. As I already mentioned, my doubts here concerns three basic problems.

The first: is it possible to switch from one identity to another? Although I agree that cultural affiliation is something malleable and can be shaped and formed according to one's own will, I can not imagine a total and unquestioned conversion to another culture. The conscious project of transforming one's identity is in my opinion impossible to achieve. It is not only our consciousness that is involved, but also those parts of the self that are uncontrollable, and that are to the same degree influenced by the culture.

Secondly, we should ask if the choice of the 'other' by the anthropologist is completely neutral, i.e. is it equally easy to enter and embrace any 'culture' or maybe there are those that are just easier to overpower. In this sense, anthropologists will always establish some kind of hierarchy between the worlds they participate in. This would be another place where unequal power relationships are articulated, since it is difficult to imagine one of the Icelandic fishermen playing in Hastrup's academic world with the same ease. And it is here, perhaps, that the most problematic impact of anthropology's colonial heritage lies.

The third objection concerns the method Hastrup uses to embody the 'other'. My comparison of the anthropologist with the romantic poet was intended to show that simple rejection of positivistic rationality does not necessarily mean liberation from cultural determinism. What Hastrup does, is in fact to incorporate another discourse; one as strongly linked to Western culture as the positivistic one. The move she believed was from one culture to another can be seen merely as a switching of discourse. The romantic tradition is given voice. But it does not mean that she is closer to the 'other'. I would argue here that intuition is similarly shaped and determined by our culture, just as the reason is. It is deeply embedded in our cultural formation. We learn how to use it and where to apply it. We know when we are permitted to recall it and what to expect from it. It is a defined concept in our minds just like rationality is. Therefore, even though it could be treated as an alternative way to achieve knowledge, it is not the solution to the epistemological problems of anthropology. Hastrup takes a big step in the discussion about possible dialogue with the 'other', but her proposal should be discussed in every detail before being accepted as the only possible way for anthropology.

If we see it in this way, personal experience in the field becomes something which is not only the product of the situation the anthropologist is participating in. The very experiencing, i.e. seeing and feeling of the surrounding reality and the manner of participation in events that one is involved in, is shaped by the strategy one chooses. Just as the fact that the object is being observed, can change the result of the observation, the fact that anthropologists exist in a discourse of their own, can influence the way they experience in the field. In such a way, anthropologists might be considered the only scientists who are so deeply affected by their profession. During whole periods of their lives who they are, how they act and even what they feel is determined by the methodological choice they make on a professional level. Fieldwork is in this sense a laboratory; one in which the anthropologist himself is the guinea-pig.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> When quoting the parts edited in English I will use Norbert Guterman's translation, putting back the censored fragments though. The quotes from the rest of the notes will be given in my translation.

<sup>2</sup> I use the word discourse in the way that Michel Foucault defines it. I treat it as an intermediate sphere between the language examined in an abstract and formal way (*la langue*) and concrete facts of talking (*la parole*), which directs attention to the extra-linguistic contexts of talking. The discourse is not only the accumulation of signs, but also a special way of seeing the world and corresponding practices (Szacki 2002:905, Foucault 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Human documents can be defined as "an account of individual experience which reveals the individual's actions as a human agent and as a participant in social life" (Plummer: 13).

<sup>4</sup> Born in 1884 in Galicia, the Austrian sector of partitioned Poland, he was the only son of a professor of Slavonic studies. His father died early and his mother, a descendent of Polish gentry, took care of Malinowski and his education. They travelled a lot in Europe and Africa in search of a favourable climate, which would lessen Malinowski's health problems. In 1908 Malinowski finished the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, where he had studied physics, mathematics and philosophy. Next year he travelled to Leipzig to continue his studies, still in natural sciences; in 1910 he arrived in London and changed the orientation of his interests to social studies. One of the most important influences which contributed to this shift was the lecture of *The Golden Bough* by James George Frazer. In England, Malinowski worked in the British Museum and London School of Economics and Social Studies. During this period he spent a lot of time in Poland, especially in Zakopane, a little town in the Tatra Mountains – the aim of peregrinations of Polish modernists. In 1914 Malinowski left for his journey toward New Guinea, one of the most famous anthropological travels in history. He left Europe for almost six years, during which he made two research trips – first, in 1915, he spent ten months on Mailu and afterwards, in 1917-1918, one year on the Trobriand Islands. In Australia Malinowski met his future wife and the mother of his daughters – Elsie Masson. During this time he collected the material which, in the following twenty years, he would use to write several monographies (a genre, in which he has been considered the master to this day) concerning the Trobrianders, among them: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-western Melanesia*, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*. In 1927, Malinowski was appointed to the Chair of Cultural Anthropology at London University. During the thirties he dedicated himself to writing, teaching and formulating his functional theory. He also did some trips to Africa, where his pupils were conducting researches. In 1938 he travelled to the USA, where, surprised by the war, he decided to stay. He worked at the Yale University and, five years after having become widower, he got married for the second time. In May 1942 Malinowski died of a heart attack. (Gerould 2000:24-35, Paluch 1990:122-126)

<sup>5</sup> The functional school was in a way a reaction to the domination of evolutionism and diffusionism within anthropology at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It rejected the fascination with issues of genesis and of evolution of human society and concentrated on the society – an organism, in which each part is necessary to maintain a whole in life. Diffusionism was mainly criticized by the new school for ignoring the context in which the cultural facts occur, and using them in inadequate way (Kuper 1978). Three basic assumptions of the early functionalism were: of the functional unity of society – each social system is an internally related unit; of the functional universalism – each element in system fulfils a function in it; of the functional indispensability – each concrete part of the system is absolutely necessary (Szacki 2002:657-664). "The functional way of looking at culture [was] based on the assumption that, independently of the type of civilization, each custom, material object and belief fulfils a function, has a task to perform and constitutes an indispensable part within the functioning whole" (Malinowski, 1926:133). The main aim of the functional study was therefore to explain why a given institution was created and to analyse it in the context of its relations with other institutions in the society. The concept of function was directly related to the concept of social necessity. The institution fulfils a function, that is to say it satisfies some necessities of the collective life (Kubik: 1985). Culture, in Malinowski's theory, was constructed on the innate, natural necessities of the human being. The organic, individual necessities have been transformed into the derivative necessities or to the imperatives of culture (Szacki 2002:660-664). Malinowski divided human necessities into three categories: elementary, derivative and integrative. The first group is conditioned by the biological character of man and includes for

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instance metabolism and reproduction. The second one is related to man as a social being and the last one is created by the culture itself. Each necessity corresponds with an institution, i.e. a group of people executing the collective action or organized system of human actions (Paluch 1990:121-153). Each element of a culture – a garden, a boat, a law, a taboo, a belief, a play, a song, a magical formula, etc. – is the fruit of a necessity and was created for a very concrete purpose, although it is normally difficult to notice at once which.

<sup>6</sup> In the first decades of the twentieth century the overriding concern within the social studies was with the accumulation of data, which eventually lead towards empiricism (Kuper 1978). Before the most common way to gather material about other cultures had been to use reports of people who worked in the colonies, such as missionaries, traders or colonial administrators, and the objects brought by them. But, since this kind of information was selective, many times tendentious and inaccurate, scientists started to send special questionnaires to the people that had contact with other societies. In this way they could ask precise questions and get the data they needed. Around 1880, the social scientists went out from their offices, libraries and museums for the first time. The first expeditions were organized. In 1883 a group of American scientists, among which was Franz Boas, went to the Baffin-Island region of the Arctic. Some years later this kind of exploration was made in a region of the northern Pacific and of Torres Strait. Rivers and Seligman, who later had contact with Malinowski in London, participated in the second one. Exploration was normally carried out in a relatively large area and during a short time. The main research tool was the questionnaire. This kind of survey work could provide more detailed and verified data than that based on non-scientific reports and was first step into the field. Malinowski did not invent intensive fieldwork, but he is considered the father of the method, since he was the first one to implement it. He described it, elaborated it theoretically and created a base of research techniques with all the consciousness of the relevance of methodology within the anthropological work. Malinowski believed that the field had a principle importance for the creation of the theories. The most important thing was to describe the whole of a culture in the most complex and comprehensive way possible based on empirical research (Mach 1985). Malinowski believed that the first and indispensable condition of good study was to live among the described people for a long period. During the time of research the anthropologists should limit, or, if possible, eliminate any contact with their own culture. The second condition was to know the language to have a possibility of a direct contact with people and not be forced to use the translators' help. These rules were a result of the assumption that no fact or object, taken out of the cultural context, can be understood. Seeing a canoe in a European museum does not let us understand its significance in the real life of the natives. Only observing its construction, with all the ritual and magic procedures, its use and functions, the feelings that it is given and the atmosphere around it, can reveal its meaning (Malinowski 1922). According to Malinowski, the study should take account of three dimensions, called by him: the skeleton, the body and blood, and the soul. The first one is constituted by the social structure, which can be discovered by showing all kind of norms, traditions and rules – everything that is fixed in the life of a group. The second one includes the realities of the tribal life, the course of everyday existence. The last one, to finish, represents thoughts, beliefs and feelings of the natives. Its study offers a possibility to understand the meaning that behaviours and acts have to the members of a community and the observation of tribal life through the natives' eyes (Malinowski 1922). The anthropologist should then take two perspectives, both from the outside and from the inside.

<sup>7</sup> This presence of the author in the text is actually something uncommon for science. Since the Middle-Ages, when the text's value was attributed by its author's signature, the figure of the researcher was slowly put into the shadow. In the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries the function of the author in science became obliterated, contrary to the literature (Foucault 1994a). Only the anthropology gave the importance back to the scientist as an individual in the history of ideas, knowledge and writing. This was an inevitable consequence of the fact that the anthropological work is closely connected to its author.

<sup>8</sup> The solution in Malinowski's case was rhetorical rather than valid. Writing his monographies he, on the one hand, gave credibility to himself, and on the other, forced the reader to use his imagination: "Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while a launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight. Since you take up your abode in the compound of the same neighboring white man, trader or missionary, you have nothing to do, but to start at once on your ethnographic work. Imagine further that you are a beginner, without previous experience, without nothing to guide you and no one to help you. For the white man is temporarily absent, or else unable or unwilling to waste any of his time on you. This exactly describes my first initiation into fieldwork on the south coast of New Guinea."(Malinowski 1922:4). The anthropological text constitutes in this way a kind of imaginary journey – it transfers the reader into the described world. Malinowski constructs images in his monographies, which make it possible to better understand and to approximate to the reality he is describing. That is why he chooses to use some rhetorical figures, such as travel: his own travel to the tropics, the travel of Trobrianders within the Kula

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circle and the travel of the reader into the world of the text (Thornton 1985:8). Using his own presence in the text, Malinowski seeks not only to gain credibility, but also to stimulate the reader to use his imagination in activating the images.

<sup>9</sup> Almost all critics writing about the *Diary* notice a singular character of the text. From the beginning it was obvious that it was not a mere description of Malinowski's daily life. Everybody could notice that this writing was of some special use to the anthropologist. Some called it 'black diary' and 'a moral-booster' (Lewis 1968), others attributed it a purgative function (Stocking 1968); some recognized a safety valve in it – a means of channeling the personal cares and emotions away (Kuper 1978), others treated it as a mean to construct the self (Clifford 1988); some as an expression of a traumatized fieldworker (Rapport 1990), others related it to the modernist project of self-improvement (Barański 2000).

<sup>10</sup> This sentence was censured in the English version, trans. M. K.

<sup>11</sup> In order to make it easier to find the quoted fragments in both the Polish and the English editions of the *Diary* I will give the reference to the date of the note and not to the page. Following Malinowski's original text, I will use the Polish system in which the first Arabic cipher signifies the day, the Roman one – the month and the last Arabic – the year.

<sup>12</sup> Malinowski noticed that in this kind of writing attention is fixed on different areas. The memory and its features gained a central position together with the way the story is constructed in the mind: "(...) a diary is a 'history' of events which are entirely accessible to the observer, and yet writing a diary requires profound knowledge and thorough training; change from theoretical point of view; experience in writing leads to entirely different results even if the observer remains the same – let alone if there are different observers! Consequently, we can not speak about objectively existing facts: theory creates facts. Consequently there is no such thing as 'history' as an independent science. History is observation of facts with keeping with a certain theory, an application of this theory to the facts as time gives birth to them. – The life that lies behind me is opalescent, a shimmer of many colors. Some things strike and attract me. Others are dead." [13 XI 1917].

<sup>13</sup> I will use the cursive when Malinowski writes words in English, French or other languages.

<sup>14</sup> We could relate Malinowski's concerns about his health, hygiene and body in general to a larger trend in the modern European culture. From the end of the XIX century a new approach to the care of the body began to dominate. The hardening became one of the most frequently advocated measures for good health. The sun, the fresh air and the contact with the nature gained a special place in the modern project. The exercise became a basis for a healthy man. (Nilsson 1995:196-221)

<sup>15</sup> The Swedish gymnastics' system, devised by the gymnast Pehr Henrik Ling in XVIII century, emphasized rhythm and coordination (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

<sup>16</sup> All the underlining comes from Malinowski.

<sup>17</sup> The way Malinowski writes about the erotic side of his life as well his frequent analysis of the dreams in general could also be related to the raising interest in these areas of human life in Europe. Freud's theories provoked much curiosity leading to great concern about the unconscious. We get to know from the *Diary* that Malinowski was familiar with psychoanalysis. That is why we could treat his precise noting down of dreams as a part of this larger trend.

<sup>18</sup> At times, it seemed to take the form of a search for originality and individualism; of trying to create the self apart from what was common and popular; to measure his development in the individual scale and not by comparison with others. "The compl[ete] lone[liness] = not to talk with oneself using a style and comparisons; not to talk with anybody in the thoughts, not even with oneself" [26 III 1908, trans. M. K.]. Writing the diary was related to a problem of searching the individual way of expression. The main obstacle here was the language. The use of a certain kind of style had always some cultural connotation. A text always brought all the tradition and common places to mind; it remained in a constant dialogue with other texts, or other linguistic and cultural practices. Word existed only in a network of other utterances, in which it had been used; it was always intertextual. Language transformed what was individual into the social. "The style, by using the word, the sentence and the thought, must be an inadequate expression. It is about recording in a most simple way

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what has happened, and not simplifying it too much. It is even dangerous to classify own experiences in general categories, to express them in conventional clichés” [26 III 1909, trans. M.K.].

<sup>19</sup> This was the case in the Leipzig in 1909, when he was involved with Annie Brunton, as well as in Zakopane in 1912, where he survived the stormy love with Eugenia Zielińska.

<sup>20</sup> Malinowski was not going alone; he took his Polish friend Witkacy – painter and writer – who came back to Europe when he got to know about the outbreak of the war.

<sup>21</sup> The book, written by W.H.R. Rivers, was a kind of manual of fieldwork.

<sup>22</sup> When quoting the *Diary* in the text I will make some changes (mainly verbal forms and personal pronouns) in order to give the fragments a grammatical accordance. I will put changed words into squared brackets.

<sup>23</sup> Actually Kipling, after many years was considered one of the creators of this kind of pictures of Asia. “As Edward Said has remarked, Kim [the principle hero of one of the Kipling’s most famous novels, M.K.] constitutes a ‘major contribution’ to what Francis Hutchins calls ‘the India of the imagination...which contained no elements of either social change or political menace’.” [Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002].

<sup>24</sup> This exile could be connected to such social phenomena as artistic bohemia interpreted as an escape from the bourgeois style of life, from well accepted social rules that were seen as something restrictive and fossilized.

<sup>25</sup> It could be one of the main reasons why Malinowski was so critical of missionaries. He wrote about them: “These people destroy the natives’ joy of life; they destroy their psychological *raison d’être*. And what they give in return is completely beyond the savages. They struggle consistently and ruthlessly against everything old and create new needs, both material and moral. No question but that they do harm.” [19 XI 1914].

<sup>26</sup> ‘Gwałcenie’ in Polish means not only ‘urging’ but also ‘rape’, ‘violation’.

<sup>27</sup> The way he described the event is also significant. The last notebook of the *Diary* is to a high degree penetrated by expressions and words from the Motuan and Kiriwian languages. This is of course only one sign of the mixture of languages in the whole text. As already mentioned the *Diary* was written in Polish. But from the beginning, there were a number of interferences from foreign languages. Malinowski spoke German, French, English, Spanish, Italian, Motuan and Kiriwian. Words, expressions, whole sentences and sometimes even paragraphs in these languages peppered the text. This seemed to be a result of a long multilingual situation. It was a part of the process of moving from one country to another, of leading a cosmopolitan life. But it could also be seen as a way of creating one’s own sense of belonging to a place as well as of forming the cultural identity and the self by existing in other languages (Clifford 1988). The relation between identity and language is here of a great importance. The choice to switch to another language and especially to create in it, in case of writers, is somehow linked to a project of shaping the own cultural affiliation. Joseph Conrad is one of the most obvious examples. There are a lot of analogies between him and Bronisław Malinowski (Clifford 1988). Both were Poles, lived at the same time, used many languages and wrote in English. Conrad seemed to have taken one step further. Obviously conscious of own choices – he changed his name from Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski to the English Joseph Conrad. Of course, in the case of an academic career like Malinowski’s, this play with the cultural self is not so evident. Writing a scientific dissertation in English and choosing a chair in England, had practical reasons; it was more a way to an international career. But it does not mean that his approach first to the German culture and later to the English was neutral. In his diary, Malinowski many times expressed mixed feelings towards his national affiliation and the relation with other places he lived in. He oscillated between a strongly romanticized and patriotic vision of the ‘slave soul’ and a deep admiration towards German or English cultures which he treated as superior. He wanted to feel that he had no obligation toward any country or no need to feel that he belonged somewhere. He decided to take distance from his homeland, but at the same time he sometimes regretted this step. Certainly he was conscious of the possibility and his own capacity to shape his cultural identity: “I am a screen of penetration of cultures. I do not have an obligation to feel very close to my society. I just have to work for it.” [17 X 1909, trans. M.K.].

<sup>28</sup> A different issue is the loss of the sense of time. Keeping the diary was also a way of maintaining consciousness of the passing days, weeks and months. But reading it, we can see that, anyway Malinowski was many times confounding days, months or even years when writing down the dates of his notes.

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<sup>29</sup> *Mulukwausi* is the spiritual equivalent to the *yoyova*. Both names are used by the Trobrianders to describe the flying witches who inhabited the eastern islands and were famous for eating raw, human meat and bringing death to sailors. Hence dread among the natives. (Malinowski 1922).

<sup>30</sup> Odin is an international group that has its seat in Holstebro, Denmark. It could be denominated experimental, being inspired by Antoine Artaud with his 'theatre of cruelty' and Jerzy Grotowski with his 'poor theatre'. Both were characterized not only by special techniques of acting and directing a performance, but also by a conviction of the particular role that the theatre plays and by the effects it should produce on the spectators. According to Artaud contemporary society was sick and in need of healing. Rejecting psychological drama, he sought instead a religious, communal theatrical experience that would bring about this healing. He compared his concept of 'pure' theatre to the plague in its ability to destroy old forms and allow something new and transformed to emerge (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002). At the same time, the way of producing the performance and acting changed. The 'poor theatre' was stripped of all the inessentials, such as lights, music, or text. The actors' physical, vocal, and mental skills were its essence (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002). That is why the director should not base his work on a text – the scenario is supposed to emerge from the profound and intensive work of the group. All the actors are included and participate actively in the creation of a spectacle, which takes shape during months of concentrated cooperation.

<sup>31</sup> I will use 'violence' as a general term describing the unequal relation in which one part in some way uses the other. The term will be then applied to both the real, physical violence and the symbolic one.

<sup>32</sup> In this sense many of Hastrup's texts can be defined as autobiographical: they have an intimate character and the identity of the author, narrator and main figure is the same. The validity of such texts is obtained through the so-called 'autobiographical pact', i.e. the author commits herself to tell the truth and the reader recognizes all the author says as such. (Lejeune 1975)

<sup>33</sup> The term 'third space' comes from Homi K. Bhabha. He uses it to describe "the enunciative split" which "makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process and destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expending code" (Bhabha 2001:36-37)

<sup>34</sup> We could describe this process in terms of George Herbert Mead's theory. The encounter between cultural self and other is, in a way, equivalent to the discovery of the other by a child. This encounter would be thus a way to define and experience the self, which is only possible in a social process of interaction (Ritzer 1992: 341-346). "It is only by taking roles of the others that we have been able to come back to ourselves." (Mead 1959: 184-185).

<sup>35</sup> Hastrup refers to the fact that being a woman may have a special meaning in her profession. She points out that women are more permitted to use their intuition in the research process than men are. According to her, it has an importance in anthropology which "seems to explicitly dissolve the opposition between intuition and rationality" (Hastrup 1995).