THE CRISIS OF ANTHROPOLOGY*

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I.

If the present state of anthropology is to be judged according to what eminent practitioners of the discipline have to say about it, one cannot help having the impression that it is in serious crisis or even faces imminent decline.[1]

Bruce Kapferer thinks that anthropology has not only become 'watered down', it has also 'lost its sense or its ability to criticise on the basis of in-depth knowledge of other forms of existence' (Smedal and Kapferer 2000/2001). Marshall Sahlins sees the discipline as having arrived 'in the twilight of its career' (1995:14), while George Marcus refers to the 'most senior generation of anthropologists' claiming that they are 'clearly most pessimistic or worried [...], even with statements in sotto voce that anthropology is dying just as they produce their own last works' (1998a:231).

Similarly, the late Clifford Geertz believed that, should anthropology departments still exist fifty years in the future, they will not look like they do today and will not even keep their names (Handler 1991:612).

Indeed, the profession of anthropologist currently seems to be more difficult than ever. The 'object' of research is no longer what it used to be, and the method – so-called 'participant observation' or fieldwork – often seems to be no less discredited than the unchallenged self-confidence and the almost encyclopaedic claim to completeness with which the ancestors of the discipline were able to gather their data 'in the field' and present them in the form of monographs. At a time when 'grand narratives' seem to belong to the past and handed down certitudes are being shaken to the core, the search for a theoretical paradigm that enjoys unanimous support remains unsuccessful. It is against this background that, in the second edition of his introduction to anthropology, Karl-Heinz Kohl notes a long-term 'climate of perplexity and uncertainty'.[2]

Whether in the context of museums of anthropology, universities or mere research institutions, the sense of a common identity seems to be vanishing as the discipline is

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[1] The 'crisis of anthropology' is, in the present collection, also referred to by Spyer.

[2] Kohl (2000:168; all translations from the German, H.J.)

subjected to increasing splitting or disintegration. The emergence of more and more sub-groups within the American Anthropological Association, for example, was denounced by Eric Wolf in 1980 in an article published by the "New York Times" entitled "They divide and subdivide and call it anthropology".[3] This splitting or disintegration seems to blur the boundaries of anthropology with neighbouring disciplines.[4] At the same time, Sydel Silverman voices an undertone of irony when, in sketching the history of anthropology in the United States, she claims that 'other academic disciplines were encroaching on anthropology's heritage of concepts and methods' and that 'everyone in the social sciences and humanities, it seemed, was doing fieldwork and calling it ethnography' (2005:329). However, the widespread use of terms such as 'fieldwork', 'ethnography' or 'the ethnographic gaze' can also be taken to indicate a certain resonance or even a 'boom' in the discipline (cf. Gottowik 2005:39). According to Doris Bachmann-Medick, anthropology has 'helped an inclusive "cultural turn" to establish itself in the humanities' and developed 'important guiding principles which have led cultural analysis towards appreciating cultural otherness or pluralism and examining cultural differences in human behaviour' (2006:28). Thus, anthropology 'presses for the emergence of an anthropological perspective that can and should be focused on one's own culture as well' (Bachmann-Medick 2006:28–29). Yet, many anthropologists see themselves as being marginalised, misrepresented and pushed into the role of a 'cultural other' by non-anthropologists.[5] They claim that, beyond a small circle of specialists, the results of their research fail to receive sufficient attention (cf. Marcus 2002:194) and are distorted or, as Harri Englund and James Leach have it, that 'ethnographic analyses become illustrations consumed by metropolitan theorists' (2000:238).

Pessimism, anxiety and bleak predictions, however, are by no means new phenomena in the discipline. The alleged crisis of present-day anthropology has its predecessors. Here, I will demonstrate that the whole history of the discipline can indeed be described as a history of dangers and threats.[6] In so doing, I differentiate between three phases, the first of which begins in the 1830s, the second in the 1960s and the third in the 1990s.

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[3] In her overview, "Theory in anthropology since the sixties", Sherry Ortner refers to this article and agrees that '[t]he field appears to be a thing of shreds and patches of individuals and small coteries pursuing disjunctive investigations and talking mainly to themselves' (1984:126). Cf. George Stocking, who notes a 'centrifugal proliferation of "adjectival anthropologies"' (1983a:4) and Crapanzano, who, in the present collection, speaks of a 'pluralization' of anthropology.

[4] Cf. Stagl (1974:307, 1993a:43), Kohl (2000:172).

[5] Cf. Stagl (1974:97), Carucci and Dominy (2005:224, 226, 230–231).

[6] Similarly, William Kelly (2006) mentions the possibility of 'narrativizing the discipline's development as a history of crisis-and-response', while Paula Rubel asks 'whether anthropology is condemned to be always in crisis' (2003:3). Anthropologists' ideas about the imminent decline of their discipline are also referred to by Crapanzano, Godelier, Kohl and Münzel in the present collection.

Anthropologists who believe they are in a precarious situation identify themselves, I would argue, with the people with whom they work.[7] In the course of time, the latter have been said to be merely dying out, to be losing their discreteness due to an alleged 'westernisation', or – just like anthropologists – to be marginalised, misrepresented and pushed into the role of a 'cultural other'. Moreover, out of their supposedly precarious situation, they have been particularly interested in 'indigenous crises', that is, in the ways in which people cope with such crises by religious means. However, perceptions of Other and Self influence each other not only in the history of the discipline, but also 'in the field', when social reality, by offering a certain resistance, can force anthropologists to face and modify their preconceived ideas and expectations.[8] In my view, it is precisely this experience which makes participant observation or fieldwork so valuable. From this perspective there would be ample reason to confront the denounced marginalisation and misrepresentation of the discipline with self-confidence.

II.

Even before anthropology established itself as an academic discipline, its practitioners were afraid that they would soon lose their object of research. As the historian George Stocking (1982:409) writes, at the beginning of the nineteenth century they believed that, 'the dynamic of European colonial expansion and industrial growth initiated a new phase of race and culture contact, which by the 1830s was already seen as threatening the very survival of all "uncivilised" peoples'. Their disappearance was held to be inevitable during the phase of evolutionism between, according to Stocking, 1860 and 1895,[9] and corresponding ideas continued to be widespread in subsequent decades.
Thus, the foreword of Bronislaw Malinowski's famous "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" published in 1922, begins with the following words:

> Ethnology is in the sadly ludicrous, not to say tragic, position, that at the very moment when it begins to put its workshop in order, to forge its proper tools, to start ready for work on its appointed task, the material of its study melts away with hopeless rapidity. Just now, when the methods and aims of scientific field ethnology have taken shape, when men fully trained for the work have begun to travel into savage countries and study their inhabitants – these die away under our very eyes (Malinowski 1922:xv).

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[7]   Münzel, in his contribution to the present collection, speaks rather of 'the anthropologist's identification with the end'.

[8]   This defamiliarization of the familiar is also referred to by Spyer in the present collection.

[9]   Referring to this phase, Stocking states that 'savages and civilized men were integrated in a single developmental framework, in which the disappearance of the former was accepted as an inevitable concomitant of the same cultural process that produced the positive knowledge of anthropology' (1982:410).

The dreaded loss of its object of research appears as an early threat to the discipline, but it was also called upon time and again in order to portray anthropological research as necessary, or even as not to be delayed. Correspondingly, on the second page of his foreword, Malinowski concludes that, '[t]he need for energetic work is urgent, and the time is short' (1922:xvi). This strategy should prove quite successful, since Malinowski's "Argonauts of the Western Pacific", that is, his previous stay on the Trobriand Islands to the southwest of what is now Papua New Guinea, marks the beginning of an era that has been termed the 'classic phase' of anthropology (Stocking 1978:535) and the 'golden age of ethnographic data-gathering' (Stagl 1974:108) and that, according to most histori- cal accounts, lasted from approximately 1920 to 1960. During these years, the number of publications, students and positions within the discipline increased with what almost seems to be paradisiacal rapidity when viewed from the present-day perspective (cf. Stagl 1974:110, 1985:306). Yet, towards the end of the 1950s, Claude Lévi-Strauss was still invoking the 'disappearance of the last "primitive" tribe' (1985:24), and, in light of the 'terrible rate at which groups of people sometimes die out within a few years', asked himself if 'anthropology is not very soon doomed to become a discipline without an object'.[10]

Malinowski was by no means the first anthropologist to come close to complying with the methodological requirements formulated in the introduction to "Argonauts of the Western Pacific". However, despite the work of 'predecessors' such as Johann Stan- islaus Kubary, Frank Hamilton Cushing, Franz Boas, Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown or the participants in the famous Torres Straits expedition of 1898/99 (William Halse Rivers, Charles Gabriel Seligman and Alfred Court Haddon), and due to his personal charisma and his distinctive talent for self-promotion, Malinowski managed to surpass the others in turning participant observation or fieldwork into anthropology's major symbol of identity, or, as Justin Stagl has it, a 'ritual of admission into the guild', as well as its 'main means of control'.[11]

During the 'classic phase', the method significantly propagated by Malinowski was regarded as a sort of initiation that turned still ignorant students into inaugurated or regular members of the academic community. Lévi-Strauss writes that an anthropolo- gist

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[10]   Lévi-Strauss (1985:23). Lévi-Strauss then echoes Malinowski's appeal for 'energetic work' by claiming that 'one should accelerate one's research and make use of the last remaining years to gather informa- tion' (1985:23; cf. Kohl 1988:252).

[11]   Stagl (1974:107). For Clifford fieldwork 'has played – and continues to play – a central disciplining function' (1997:1992), Marcus calls it 'the core activity that continues to define the discipline's collec- tive self-identity through every anthropologist's defining experience' (1998b:126), while Gupta and Ferguson claim that 'fieldwork is increasingly the single constituent element of the anthropological tradition used to mark and police the boundaries of the discipline' (1997:1).

needs experience on the ground. For him, this experience is not a career goal, not a sup-
plement to his culture and not a technical apprenticeship. It is a decisive moment in his
education; before he may have unrelated data which will never form a coherent whole; it is
only afterwards that these data can be understood as an organic whole and suddenly they
acquire a meaning that they lacked before (1967:400).

In Lévi-Strauss's view this can be compared to the fact that psychoanalysts have to go
through a training analysis, and, referring to the anthropologist's fieldwork, he contin-
ues:

> as with the psychoanalyst the experiment can succeed or fail and no examination but only
> the judgement of experienced members of the guild, whose work confirms that they have
> victoriously sailed round this cape, can decide if and when the candidate for the anthropo-
> logical profession working on the ground has undergone this inner revolution which will
> truly make him a new man (1967:400).

In retrospect, Edmund Leach writes that, during the 'classic phase', a whole genera-
tion of Malinowski's followers 'were brought up to believe that social anthropology
began in the Trobriand islands in 1914' (1957:124), and, to put it perhaps a little more
bluntly, fieldwork came to be regarded as a ritual re-enactment of Malinowski's stay
in the Trobriand Islands as a kind of mythic event. According to a much-cited dictum
of Charles G. Seligman's (to whom Malinowski had dedicated his "Argonauts of the
Western Pacific"), '[f]ield research in anthropology is what the blood of the martyrs is
to the Church'.[12]

The religious character of words such as 'ritual of admission', 'new man' and 'blood
of the martyrs' may seem surprising, since, after all, they are being used with reference
to a scientific method, yet this relates to an exaggeration for which Stagl has coined
the phrase the 'ideology of fieldwork'.[13] Part of this ideology was what Morris Freilich,
in his edited volume "Marginal natives at work: anthropologists in the field" (1977b),
calls 'field-work mystique', that is, the idea of 'field work as a "mystery" to be solved
by doggedly following tradition and being of right character and personality' (Freilich
1977a:17). Correspondingly, most anthropologists maintained that their method could
only be learned through personal trial and error, not by reading manuals or attending

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[12]   Cf. Köpping (1980:21) and Stocking (1995:115). Köpping refers to C.G. Seligman: Department of
        Anthropology 1972–3. London: L.S.E. 1972, p. 4; Stocking refers to a letter Seligman wrote to Ma-
        linowski on 7 January 1912. In an earlier publication, Stocking also quotes as Seligman's words 'as
        the blood of the martyrs is to the Roman Catholic Church' (1983b:83–84) and refers to Raymond
        Firth: "A brief history (1913–1963)", Department of Anthropology [London School of Economics]
        programme of courses 1963–64:1–9, 1963, p. 2.

[13]   A chapter of his book "Kulturanthropologie und Gesellschaft" (1974) has the heading "Die Feld-
        forschungsideologie", and in a later article entitled "Feldforschung als Ideologie" he understands
        ideology as 'an obscuration of reality in the service of life interests' (1985:298). Marcus uses the same
        term, albeit without referring to Stagl, when he mentions a 'reigning traditional ideology of fieldwork'
        (1998b:119).

seminars. Thus the 'candidate for the anthropological profession' had to rely on infor-
mal conversations with already initiated practitioners of the discipline.

Not only in the context of informal conversations or teaching, but above all in the
monographs published during the 'classical phase', anthropologists have tried to make
their own persons or the actual conditions of the research situation invisible. Mary
Louise Pratt speaks succinctly of a 'self-effacement called for in formal ethnographic
description' (1986:33), while Martin Fuchs and Eberhard Berg refer to an 'elimination
of the subject' (1999:64) or of the 'subjective moment' (1999:65; cf. Gottowik 1997:188–
189). 'If and to the extent the eliminated side was publicly articulated at all', Fuchs and
Berg continue, 'it could at first only be expressed outside the canon of scientific writing,
i.e., in the form of novelistic processings of individual fieldwork histories, [...] autobiog-
raphies [...] or documentations kept in a personal tone'.[14]

For Stagl, the exaggeration or ideology of fieldwork helped the 'anthropological
guild' to establish itself as an academic discipline (1993b:103) and to develop 'a hierar-
chical grading' as well as 'a well-designed system of leadership' (1985:303). At the same
time, however, Stagl attributes Lévi-Strauss's 'fervent doxology' of fieldwork to a 'sense
of being threatened' (1974:107), and he refers to a 'hymn-like self-praise' that, in his
view, has to be interpreted as 'a symptom of decline' (1985:307).

III.

The second phase of my history of the discipline as a history of dangers and threats be-
gins in the 1960s, that is, at a time when the process of globalisation was believed to be
leading to a loss of cultural difference or to 'a growing uniformity of the world' (Szalay
1975:117). Sahlins writes that, according to the corresponding theories, '[i]ndigenous
people who were not destroyed would be suborned by the commodification of every-
thing and everyone, their ways of life thus transformed into marginalised and impover-
ished versions of the one planetary culture' (2005:3).

In the so-called 'Third World', the 1960s were also a time of liberation and de-
colonisation movements. The historical conditions which had been conducive to the
emergence of the discipline and their corresponding power relations thus finally be-

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[14]   Fuchs and Berg (1999:65–66). Fuchs and Berg refer to Eleonore Bowen [Laura Bohannan]: Rückkehr
       zum Lachen. Ein ethnologischer Roman. Berlin: Reimer 1984 ('1954); Robert H. Lowie: Robert H.
       Lowie, ethnologist: a personal record. Berkeley: University of California Press 1959; Hortense Pow-
       dermaker: Stranger and friend: the way of an anthropologist. New York: W.W. Norton 1966; Claude
       Lévi-Strauss: Traurige Tropen. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1978 ('1955); Jean Malaurie: Die letz-
       ten Könige von Thule. Leben mit den Eskimos. Frankfurt am Main: Krüger 1977 ('1956), Georges
       Balandier: Afrique ambigue. Paris: Plon 1957; and Michel Leiris: Phantom Afrika. Tagebuch einer
       Expedition von Dakar nach Djibouti 1931–1933. 2 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat 1980/1984
       ('1934)

longed to the past. Anthropologists not only lost direct access to their traditional 'field', they were increasingly accused of assisting in and benefitting from moribund colonialism, thus acting against the interests of their own hosts and informants.[15] The latter began to reject the role ascribed to them and, rather than serving as objects of research, they wanted to speak for themselves.[16] The Trobriand islander John Kasaipwalova, for example, referred to Malinowski's work by saying that 'if we are going to depend on anthropological studies to define our history and our culture and our "future", then we are *lost*'.[17]

The inhabitants of 'savage countries' became the citizens of independent states, self-conscious actors who by no means remained 'untouched' by Western influences and who did not conform or no longer conformed to the image coined by Malinowski. To the extent that these actors were not 'dying away', but, due to the process of globalisation, had allegedly lost their cultural discreteness – which is what had made them interesting from an anthropological perspective to begin with – and to the extent that they refused to be subjected to further examination, it seemed that initial fears of anthropology soon ceasing to have an object of research or of its material melting away had actually become reality, albeit in a different sense than at first expected. In Miklós Szalay's view, the 'indigenous refusal' in particular led to a 'crisis of fieldwork'. And because of the major significance of the method, he held this crisis to amount to a 'crisis of anthropology' in general, arguing that 'calling fieldwork into question [...] implies an existential threat to the discipline'.[18] At any rate, the era called the 'classic phase' of anthropology or the 'golden age of ethnographic data-gathering' was irretrievably over. The future seemed bleak, and in 1970 Peter Worsley published an article, the title of which aptly expressed the prevailing sentiment: "The end of anthropology?"[19]

Anthropology has reacted to its supposedly precarious situation by what Szalay calls 'turning back on itself' (1975:11). This includes the attempt by anthropologists to assure themselves of their own history in the sense of doing an 'anthropology of an-

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[15]   Hoebel and Currier speak of 'reckless charges' that included the allegation of 'moral insensivity, imperialistic subversion and exploitation of subjected peoples, and political oppressionism' (1982:xxi). Cf. Fuchs and Berg (1999:67), Gottowik (2005:32), Köpping (1980:27), Stocking (1982:415).

[16]   Szalay states that '[t]he object of research has become a subject that wants to dispose of and decide for itself' (1975:11). Lynch refers to anthropologists being called 'nursemaids to colonialism or handmaids to the CIA', and claims that such 'accusations come from those in the Third World now conscious of themselves as a subject, not just an object, of study' (1982:80). According to Eric Wolf, '[t]he object has become a talking subject with a definite point of view' (Friedmann 1987:117). Cf. Bachmann-Medick (2006:145).

[17]   Fuchs and Berg (1999:68; italics in the original) quote Michael Young (ed.): The ethnography of Malinowski. The Trobriand islands 1915–18. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1979, p. 17.

[18]   See Szalay (1975:109, 111) and, following Szalay, Stagl (1974:107, 1985:305, 1993b:105). A 'crisis of fieldwork' is also referred to by Hauschild (1987:52).

[19]   Kapferer summarises this article as saying 'that anthropology was a thoroughly colonial discipline and that the end of colonialism was the end of anthropology, now was the time of sociology' (Smedal

thropology'.[20] In addition, anthropologists have scrutinised their own method, i.e., its political, ethical and psychological dimensions, increasingly critically.

Since the 1960s, more and more autobiographical reports, epistemological reflections and practical instructions related to fieldwork have been published, some of them compiled in much-read edited volumes and rather disparagingly referred to by Clifford Geertz as 'confessional literature'.[21] Here, the problem is no longer the person the anthropologist works with 'dying away', succumbing to a 'growing uniformity of the world' or refusing to be subjected to further examination, but the anthropologist himself and the web of relations in which he participates. Accordingly what has been eliminated returns, the 'subjective moment' is made conscious, and 'self-effacement' no longer called for. Freilich emphatically welcomed this development:

> The mystique of fieldwork – the aura of magic, mystery and glamour which anthropologists once attached to life in the field – has gone. In its place we have an ever growing literature of what problems, pains and pleasures face the researcher in a foreign culture. [Footnote omitted] In less than a decade many of the problems caused by the 'mystique' have been solved (1977c:vi).

The loss of aura and mystery welcomed by Freilich – and incidentally regretted by Stagl (1985:306) – can certainly also be attributed to the posthumous publication of Malinowski's diaries (1967), since the oft-cited passages in which he expressed disinterest in the 'life of the natives' or understanding for 'colonial atrocities' (cf. Kohl 1979:27–28) indicated that he himself had only partly managed to comply with his own methodological requirements.[22]

Apart from the engagement with its history and method, the very invocation of terms such as 'crisis' and 'end' can already be taken to indicate anthropology's 'turning back on itself'. Szalay claims that, '[i]n a rather simplifying and cynical way one could say that in this case an academic discipline is examining itself because it does not really have any other object left' (1975:117).

Together with the insights of the 'interpretive turn', decisively influenced by Geertz, the increasing awareness of the anthropologist's subjectivity contributed to the fact that interest shifted from the process of doing research towards the process of

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and Kapferer 2000/2001). This corresponds to what, according to Hoebel, Malinowski had already claimed in 1941, namely that 'the future of anthropologists is to commit suicide by becoming sociologists' (1982:3).

[20]   Cf. Casagrande (1982:70), Hallowell (1965), Jarvie (1975:263), Kirsch (1982:92), Stocking (1978:534, 1983a:3–4), Trouillot (1991:17, 22–23).

[21]   This phrase is mentioned by Kämpf (2005:133). Edited volumes on fieldwork include Casagrande (1960), Freilich (1977b), Golde (1986), Spindler (1970). Cf. also Stocking (1983a:9), Fuchs and Berg (1999:66) and Gottowik (2005:29).

[22]   Cf. Fuchs and Berg (1999:66).

writing, from the anthropologist and his relationship with the people with whom he works towards the texts he writes.[23] Correspondingly, the means came under scrutiny by which the authors of ethnographies attempted to produce authenticity and plausibility or to construct the figure of the 'cultural Other' to begin with, involving, as Fuchs and Berg have it, 'a "deconstruction" of the formal conditions and rhetorical conventions of scientific accounts' (1999:72). A major factor in the history of this 'turning to the text' has certainly been James Clifford and George Marcus's edited volume "Writing culture" (1986). Significantly, in his introductory chapter, Clifford refers to a 'complex interdisciplinary arena, approached here from the starting point of a crisis in anthropology' (1986:3).

Clifford, Marcus and others criticised the ethnographies published during the 'classic phase' of anthropology for having misrepresented and marginalised Malinowski's inhabitants of 'savage countries'. In this context, the term 'othering' enjoyed great popularity: increasing the distance between oneself and those who are pushed into the role of a 'cultural Other', or, in the words of Fuchs and Berg, constructing 'the Other by way of exclusion' (1999:35, n.26).

IV.

In the 1990s, anthropology's self-reflexive gaze returned from the ethnographic text to the method, or, to be exact, to the kind of fieldwork that was shaped in accordance with the archetypical example of Malinowski's stay in the Trobriand Islands. Authors such as James Clifford, George Marcus, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argued that one could no longer work like this today, not because of politics or ethics, but for epistemological reasons – not because of a critique of colonialism or an 'indigenous refusal', but because 'Malinowski's model' would fail in the modern world, characterised as it is by de-territorialisation, compression and acceleration, where new technologies of transportation and communication reduce spatial distance, partly imagined and partly real, and where time seems to pass ever more quickly.[24] To the extent that the members of a given culture are not or are no longer living in one and the same place, and to the extent that the boundaries between different cultures or between 'here' and 'there', between 'the West' and 'the Rest', prove to be permeable, the notion of a separate and well-defined

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[23]   Thus Bachmann-Medick speaks of a 'turning back of reflexivity on one's own texts' (2006:144).

[24]   Cf. Gupta and Ferguson (1997:3), also Englund and Leach (2000:225, 238). The latter refer to Arjun
        Appadurai: Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalisation. Minneapolis: University of Min-
        nesota Press 1996; Ulf Hannerz: Transnational connections: culture, people, places. London, New
        York: Routledge 1996; James Clifford: Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century.
        Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1997.

'field' that the anthropologist first enters and then leaves after gathering sufficient data is called into question.[25]

On the one hand, Clifford, Marcus, Gupta, Ferguson and others claim that theoretical innovations have not caused changes in what anthropologists actually do, while on the other hand, they refer to an increasing number of research projects that allegedly no longer conform to handed-down conventions.[26] In Clifford's view the multiplicity of sites that are examined ethnographically and the increasingly heterogeneous composition of the anthropological guild in particular have made established practices 'come under pressure' (1997:206).

Since the mid-1990s, Marcus has attempted, in a number of articles, to counter 'handed-down conventions' or 'Malinowski's model' with an 'alternative paradigm of ethnographic practice' (2002:191) for which he propagates the term 'multi-sited ethnography'.[27] Corresponding studies would arise

> from anthropology's participation in a number of interdisciplinary (in fact, antidisciplinary) arenas that have evolved since the 1980s, such as media studies, feminist studies, science and technology studies, various strands of cultural studies, and the theory, culture, and society group (Marcus 1998c:80).

Forming what Marcus calls a 'second wave', such works allegedly build on the 'writing culture critique', which had largely left fieldwork 'untouched'.[28] Yet, in one of his own contributions to the edited volume that gave this critique or debate its name, Marcus had already suggested a possible 'experimentation with multi-locale ethnographies' which 'would explore two or more locales and show their interconnections over time and simultaneously'.[29]

'Multi-sited ethnography' aims at the ethnographic construction of the local, the life worlds of differently placed subjects, on the one hand, and of the global as articulated in the relationships between various scenes or sites on the other. Marcus speaks of 'obvious cases of multi-sited ethnography' where movements of peoples, objects and technologies through time and space or dispersed communities and networks are concerned. In 'non-obvious' cases, however, the 'discovery and discussion' of the relationship between the various scenes or sites would be left to 'ethnographic analysis' (1999:67).

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[25]   Cf. Bamford and Robbins (1997:4), Gupta and Ferguson (1997:35).
[26]   Cf., e.g., Gupta and Ferguson (1997:32, 39), Marcus (2006:116).
[27]   Marcus (1998a–d, 1999, 2002, 2006). On 'multi-sited ethnography', see also the contributions by Crapanzano, Godelier and Kohl in the present collection.
[28]   Marcus (2002:192). The term 'second wave' also appears in Marcus (1999:6).
[29]   Marcus (1986:171). Later, Marcus equates 'multi-locale' with 'multi-sited' when he refers to this suggestion and writes about 'the multi-sited (then "multi-locale") possibility' (1998d:26, n.2).

For Marcus, anthropologists and the people with whom they work look at each other with the same curiosity and share the same anxiety vis-à-vis a 'third', that is, 'specific sites elsewhere that affect their interactions and make them complicit (in relation to the influence of that "third") in creating the bond that makes their fieldwork relationship effective' (1998b:122). At the same time, anthropology increasingly relies on 'the reflexive maps and indeed crypto-ethnography of its subjects' (Marcus 2002:196), so that the separation between the productions of anthropologists and the people with whom they work decreases, or, as Gupta and Ferguson write, '[g]enres seem destined to continue to blur' (1997:38).

According to Marcus, 'multi-sited ethnography' cannot be understood as a mere supplement to the old practice with additional sites, since 'fieldwork engagements and collaborations in new arenas of research are far deeper and more complex than envisioned by the traditional Malinowskian paradigm' (2006:116). Marcus admits that it is not possible to examine all the sites that are selected in the same way or with the same intensity (1998c:84, 1999:8). Yet, in his view, 'accounting for the differences in quality and intensity of fieldwork material becomes one of the key and insight-producing functions of ethnographic analysis' (2002:196). In addition, Marcus stresses that, with his 'alternative paradigm of ethnographic practice', anthropology would lose neither its approach to perceive as foreign what is familiar – 'defamiliarizaton' deriving from the knowledge of relationships and connections that extend old frames (1998d:21) – nor 'the function of translation from one cultural idiom or language to another' (1998c:84). 'Good fieldwork is good fieldwork overall', Marcus writes, 'and it involves the same standards that are invoked by the pioneering projects of the greats such as Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Firth, and their descendants' (1999:10).

Marcus's co-editor of the 1986 volume, James Clifford, refers to 'Malinowski's model' as the 'exotic exemplar', claiming that although it 'retains considerable authority', it 'has, in practice, been decentered'.[30] Consequently, 'traditional fieldwork' still holds a certain legitimacy, but it does so only in connection with some of the selected sites or within a broader range of 'acceptable routes and practices' (Clifford 1997:207), while the knowledge gained through 'intensive fieldwork' can, in Clifford's view, no longer claim a privileged position (1997:194, 218). For Gupta and Ferguson, the process in which the method propagated by Malinowski has lost its aura and mystery during the 1960s appears to be perpetuated:

> Participant observation continues to be a major part of positioned anthropological methodologies, but it is ceasing to be fetishized; talking to and living with the members of a

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[30]   Clifford (1997:192). Accordingly Marcus writes that 'a certain valorized conception of fieldwork and what it offers wherever it is conducted threatens to be qualified, displaced, or decentered in the conduct of multi-sited ethnography' (1998c:84), while Gupta and Ferguson suggest 'a reformulation of the anthropological fieldwork tradition that would decenter and defetishize the concept of "the field"' (1997:4–5).

community are increasingly taking their place alongside reading newspapers, analyzing
government documents, observing the activities of governing elites, and tracking the inter-
nal logic of transnational development agencies and corporations (1997:37).

The 1990s' critique of fieldwork has led to the impression of the serious crisis or im-
minent decline mentioned at the beginning of this paper, because it was taken as an
attempt to devaluate or abolish anthropology's old symbol of identity, or even to do away
with the discipline altogether. Here Bruce Kapferer's notion of anthropology having
been 'watered down' refers to the process of 'decentering' propagated by Clifford and
others, the splitting or disintegration denounced by Eric Wolf appears to result from
the increasing number of different anthropologists, anthropological projects and sites
examined ethnographically, as well as 'acceptable routes and practices', and the blurring
of the boundaries between anthropology and neighbouring disciplines corresponds to
the blurring of the genres or to the fact that different cultures are now more difficult to
separate than ever.

V.

To learn that one's own discipline is in serious crisis or faces imminent decline can
certainly be regarded as a 'disturbing experience', to use a term that Mario Erdheim
(2008) has recently rendered useful in a comparison of the theories of Leo Frobenius
and Sigmund Freud. I have tried here to cope with this experience by putting present-
day prophecies of doom into a temporal perspective and by describing the history of
the discipline from the 1830s through the 1960s to the 1990s as a history of dangers and
threats.

   Apparently the 'melting away' of anthropology's 'material of study', once predicted
by Malinowski, corresponds to the allegedly imminent decline of the discipline. First
the inhabitants of 'savage countries' disappear, then their Western visitors follow suit:
the process remains the same, only the affected party is replaced. In my view, however,
the idea of sharing the destiny of one's hosts and informants has to be interpreted as an
identification which also manifests itself in the claim of many anthropologists – largely
unchallenged up until the so-called 'writing culture debate' – to be able to speak for the
people with whom they work or to act as their advocates.

   This identification becomes even more obvious when practitioners of the disci-
pline claim that they too are strangers, strangers not only 'in the field' but also at home,
because a certain alienation from their own society is often regarded as a decisive fac-
tor in their career choice, which then, reinforced through the experience of fieldwork,
enables them to view this society critically.[31] Dennison Nash writes that '[t]he typical

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[31]   Cf. Stocking (1978:531) and Kohl, according to whom Malinowski stated a wish to flee from civili-

anthropologist, by socialisation, training and the practice of his profession, becomes a stranger who can never go home, i.e. never find a point of rest in any society', and he suggests that we 'conceive the anthropological community as a place where strangers meet'.[32]

Anthropologists have also referred to themselves using the term 'marginal man', which Robert Park (1996) coined in 1928 for Christian converts in Asia and Africa, that is, for people who, in Park's view, lived in the borderland of two cultures, in two worlds without really belonging to either of them.[33] Accordingly, Stagl states that, because of their relatively recent professionalisation and their particular character, anthropology and related disciplines only play a marginal role within academia (1974:97), adding that 'a not yet established and not yet really respectable discipline attracts all kinds of weirdos, awkward customers and dreamers' (1974:98). At any rate, and as already mentioned, many present-day anthropologists see themselves as being marginalised, misrepresented and pushed into the role of a 'cultural Other' by non-anthropologists, just as, according to the protagonists of the 'writing culture debate', the inhabitants of 'savage countries' have been subjected to 'othering' during the 'classic phase' of anthropology. Even after their hosts and informants have failed either to 'die away' or to lose their cultural discreteness, anthropologists apparently continue to identify with them.

Stanley Diamond curtly defines anthropology as 'the study of men in crisis by men in crisis',[34] and indeed anthropologists have long been particularly interested in 'indigenous crises', which result from, for example, the contradiction between individual needs and social conventions or from individual persons or whole groups changing their status, and which people attempt to manage with the help of rituals in general or initiation rituals in particular.[35] The anthropological literature has focused especially on

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sation (1979:41); Evans-Pritchard demanded from the anthropologist the ability to 'abandon himself without reserve', which, in Kohl's view, presupposes a broken relationship with his own society (1979:43); and Lévi-Strauss assumed that, in the life history of every anthropologist, there are certain factors that show that he was not or only poorly adjusted to the society into which he was born (1979:59). For Gottowik '[t]he alienation from the Self is [...] not only an initiating motive of the [anthropologist's] journey but particularly its immediate result' (2005:26). On cultural difference, critique and the 'in-betweenness' of the anthropologist, see also the contributions by Crapanzano, Godelier and Kohl in the present collection.

[32]   Nash (1963:164). Stagl expressed a similar view by stating that '[t]he ethnographer is at home everywhere without really being at home anywhere' (1974:66). Cf. Meintel (1973).

[33]   Cf. Stonequist, for whom '[t]he marginal man is the key-personality in the contacts of cultures' (1961:221); Freilich, who states that '[t]he anthropologist has been a marginal man for most of anthropology's history' (1977a:2); and Bargatzky's attempt to give 'an impression of the object and the possibility of a marginal man research' (1981:161–162).

[34]   Diamond (1974:93). Cf. Smedal (Smedal and Kapferer 2000/2001) and Streck, who also cites Aidan Southall as saying that '[i]t is not that anthropology is in crisis, but that anthropology is crisis' (1997:13). Streck refers to J.W. Burton: "An interview with Aidan Southall", Current Anthropology 33(1):67–83, 1992, p. 81.

[35]   Cf., e.g., Bolte (2001), Grohs (1993), Kalinock (2001) and Streck (1987).

certain religious phenomena that already have the term 'crisis' in their name: I am, of course, referring to so-called 'crisis cults', collective phenomena found in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, as well as in North, South and Central America which – unlike, for example, initiation rituals – emerge in the course of contacts between different cultures and which, under various headings, have been said to be motivated not only religiously, but also politically, economically and psychologically.[36]

There are, however, differences. Thomas Hauschild points out that crises 'can be described under the aspect of both structure and the dissolution of structure' (1993:470) and that 'the ambivalences of harmonising and revolutionary understandings of the term [...] closely parallel each other' (1993:468). For Hauschild, anthropologists and scholars of religious studies who examine crisis cults 'even misunderstand crises, which by no means return to their point of departure as reconstituting and expressing stable basic attitudes or elementary structures' (1993:468). In my view, however, crises in the history of the discipline tend rather to be regarded as various stages following upon each other within the framework of a teleological development.[37]

On the other hand, the sentiments of pessimism, anxiety, perplexity and uncertainty, outlined in the first part of this paper, do not particularly provide reasons for an overly accentuated belief in progress. According to Bruce Knauft, the history of the discipline does not move on linearly but in the form of 'cycles of the long term', with a continuous alternation between theoretical innovations and their upbraiding 'for neglecting the details of socio-cultural life'.[38] Other authors speak of different paradigms, agendas or even turns that may succeed each other with increasing rapidity, but that often lack a thorough assessment of the theories just declared to be outdated.[39] 'As each successive approach carries the axe to its predecessors', Eric Wolf writes, 'anthropology comes to resemble a project in intellectual deforestation' (1990:588).

I would argue that the history of the discipline shows a mutual influence between perceptions of Other and Self when anthropologists believe that they too face the alleged destiny of the people with whom they work and when, out of their supposedly precarious situation, they prove to be particularly interested in 'indigenous crises'. The same mutual influence has already been noted to become manifest 'in the field', when,

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[36] Cf. La Barre who stated: 'A "crisis cult" means any group reaction to crisis, chronic or acute, that is cultic. "Crisis" is a deeply felt frustration or basic problem with which routine methods, secular or sacred, cannot cope' (1971:11).

[37] The word 'stages' in the subtitle of Fuchs and Berg's account of the 'history of the problem of ethnographic representation' (1999:8), for example ("Reflexionsstufen ethnographischer Repräsentation"), doubtlessly connotes ascent or advancement.

[38] Knauft (1996:37). Moreover, Knauft states that 'there will always be an ebb and flow between more centripetal moments, which strive for relatively greater coherence, and more centrifugal ones, which expand our horizons in a more diffuse and fragmentary way' (1996:38).

[39] Cf. Bachmann-Medick (2006), Kelly (2006) and D'Andrade (1995:4). Similarly Thomas Kirsch speaks of 'faddism' (1982:104) while Knauft sees the danger of a 'top-forty anthropology' for which 'today's new fad is tomorrow's rubbish' (1996:2).

confronted with a somehow resistant social reality, one has to face and modify one's pre-
conceived ideas and expectations, which in turn results in the development of a changed
view. This very experience tends to be obfuscated by the critics who gained prominence
during the 1990s, but it constitutes the specific value of fieldwork and differentiates
'talking to and living with the members of a community' from other 'acceptable routes
and practices'. In view of the 'decentering' – or 'watering down' – propagated by Clif-
ford, Marcus, Gupta and Ferguson, it is therefore necessary to stress that fieldwork is
not the same as 'reading newspapers, analyzing government documents, observing the
activities of governing elites, and tracking the internal logic of transnational develop-
ment agencies and corporations'.

Accordingly, the much-denounced 'ideology of fieldwork' does appear to be jus-
tified to a certain extent, although the critique of its exaggeration, mystification and
fetishisation is as appropriate now as the statement in the 1990s that the contemporary
world has become quite different from what it was in Malinowski's times.

After anthropology's 'turning back on itself', after its engagement with its own his-
tory, method and texts, I think it would be worthwhile to shift one's gaze onto the Other
again, not as, in Knauft's words, a 'retreat into neo-empiricism' or a 'tendency to take
reactionary refuge by simply presenting more and more specifics' (1996:36), but in order
to reclaim the ability lost, according to Kapferer, to 'criticise on the basis of in-depth
knowledge of other forms of existence'.

Fieldwork can doubtlessly be made productive for self-reflexive concerns, for ex-
ample, when one undertakes to examine indigenous ideas or constructions of 'being
white' or of 'whiteness' that have emerged in various parts of the world in the course
of contacts with Western colonial officials, traders, missionaries or anthropologists.[40]
Although the latter have increasingly experienced situations in which their hosts and
informants tell them about more or less famous colleagues who have previously worked
in the same region or with the same ethnic group, and although such references may
express culturally specific notions of 'tradition', the present or change in general, the
indigenous view of 'anthropological predecessors' has, in my view, not yet received suf-
ficient attention in the literature – much less, at least, than the way particular anthropo-
logical terms such as 'cargo cult' are understood and used by the people to whom they
were applied in the first place.[41]

To assure oneself of one's own history also means discussing one's own identity,
not the least vis-à-vis neighbouring disciplines. Without wanting to undo the splitting
or disintegration denounced by Eric Wolf, it should be permitted to ask if, when speak-

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[40]   Cf., in this collection, Crapanzano's reference to what he calls 'an informant's counter-ethnography'.
[41]   For assessments of the indigenous view of 'anthropological predecessors', see Larcom (1982, 1983),
       Kühling (1998), MacDonald (2000), as well as my own work (Jebens 2004a, 2007, 2010) which, in tak-
       ing up contributions by Hermann (1992) and Lindstrom (1993), also deals with the 'indigenous usage'
       of the term 'cargo cult' (Jebens 2004b, 2007, 2010).

ing about 'fieldwork', 'ethnography' or just 'the ethnographic view', anthropologists and other scholars are really referring to the same long-term process of transformation that also affects the subject of research. The answer will not always be in the affirmative. Thus, neither the appropriation of such terms by other disciplines nor the 'anthropologisation of the cultural sciences' recently propagated by Därmann (2007) can be taken as proof of the specific value of fieldwork, although this specific value would be reason enough to confront the denounced marginalisation and misrepresentation of anthropology with self-confidence.

Whatever form the 'study of men in crisis by men in crisis' may take in particular, having begun my account with a reference to pessimism and anxiety, I would like to conclude with a perhaps more hopeful speculation. The fact alone that in 1970 Peter Worsley declared the end of anthropology and that in 1922 Malinowski spoke about its 'sadly ludicrous, not to say tragic, position' gives reason for the assumption that the successors of present-day 'weirdos, awkward customers and dreamers' will still be deploring the imminent decline of their discipline. At this moment, however, neither the currently widespread prophecies of doom have come true, nor has Malinowski's fear that the material of study 'is melting away with hopeless rapidity'.

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