

Introduction

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Discussions of method can become predictable in the teaching factory where social anthropology is sold for export dollars (pounds, euros) in an international education market. It is to the credit of some teachers of anthropology that the old ideals of ethnographic practice, criticism, doubt, and even paranoia, can maintain an anthropological pedagogy that does not succumb to formulaic closure. The idea of open-ended inquiry persists, and is valued. Whether it be the 'surrender and catch' of Kurt Wolf's ethnographic engagement, or the cunning inversions of the trickster figure who bumbles through to the solution no one could anticipate, the injunction to challenge, upset, provoke and outrage refreshingly innovates where so much anthropology battens down.

Taking up the themes of 'transgression' and 'transgressors' that have been central to the anthropological writing of Klaus Peter Köpping over many years, then, seems highly appropriate. To be published on the occasion of his 65th birthday, this book elaborates a lifelong engagement with the theories of authors as different as Bastian and Bataille, Wolf and Leiris, and with a diversity of theory in hermeneutics, ethics, ritual, surrealism and textuality. For Köpping, anthropology is a political and creative practice grounded in the transgression of cultural boundaries, which are shifted, reconstructed or transcended through the encounter in the field. Elaborating the metaphor of the trickster, Köpping shows how participation transforms perception and how this enables the transgressor insight through reflective practice that retheorises conventional forms of thought and life. Thus this is a strategy of creative transgression as well as a comprehension of transgressive creativity as social practice.

Analysing the meaning of transgression in the ethnographic encounter, the book initiates a reflection on order – of and in the subject of anthropology – as a constant process of recreation of meaning. Order is shaped through the realisation of imaginative horizons in human encounters, which recreate and shift perceived boundaries. The book adds a new angle to current debates on the meaning of cultural and anthropological knowledge production, by focusing on the intersection between order and creative inventions through realisation of transgressive experiences and pedagogical practice.

Anthropology as method

'Anthropologists are tricksters' (Köpping 2002a: 188). Köpping uses this metaphor in order to draw attention to the transgressions that form the basis of anthropological knowledge production. Anthropologists venture out to engage with other humans in order to penetrate, understand and engage in Otherness. They expose themselves to a situation in which they are ridiculed and alienated, they are out of place and laughed at. Ideally this laughter is participatory. It originates from a dialogue between differently situated actors, whose engagement with each other is motivated by curiosity and passion.

Anthropological texts reconstruct this experience. They originate from the memory of bodily participation in dialogue and reflect the knowledge it generates. For Köpping, writing anthropology means allowing the chaotic reality of real life to enter the world of science:

[T]he writing of ethnography should not degenerate into the mere technology of translation, but must be a creative act. It can only be so if there was true corporeal dialogue before and that indeed means transgression. (Köpping 2002a: 216)

Köpping struggles to understand the impacts of the body-experience of participation as a precondition for the authentication of anthropological writing. He insists on the need for a debate on method that will account for experiences in the field, not as a form of self-indulgence (see his critique of the book *Taboo*, Köpping 1998), but as a way to understand the kind of knowledge anthropologists produce (Köpping 1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b).

With this aim in mind, the first part of the book analyses experiences during 'fieldworks'. The articles reflect upon the kinds of encounters, the forms of dialogue created and their effects for the production of a particular kind of knowledge. These discussions on method take place amid the experience of change in the field of anthropology itself. The goal of anthropological study is no longer provided by the imaginarity of an exotic 'Other'. Accelerated global exchange has effectively destroyed the idea of the existence of bounded and stable entities called 'cultures'. Another impulse for decentering anthropological perspectives and reorienting research projects has come from postcolonial debates and their critical evaluation of typical forms of 'othering' in Western scientific discourses.

In effect, established dichotomies have been questioned, like the distinction between tradition and modernity, global and local, centre and periphery. Anthropologists have ventured into new 'fields', so that today we find 'European anthropology', 'anthropology at home', 'anthropology of elites', 'media anthropology', 'diaspora studies', to name just a few examples. However, what seems to have remained largely unchanged is the concept of 'field' and 'fieldwork'. Anthropology still, and perhaps increasingly so, draws its identity from the particular and peculiar method of participant observation, based on a long-term, intensive involvement with people in a marked locality. Gupta and Ferguson critically remark:

What are we to do with a discipline that loudly rejects received ideas of 'the local', even while ever more firmly insisting on a method that takes it for granted? (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 4)

Gupta and Ferguson want to understand 'the local' not as 'a' place, but as socially, culturally and politically constructed sites of interaction. They call for a reflexive process that pays attention to the way anthropologists and their subjects of research create locality. (Gupta and Ferguson 1997)

Thus the first part takes up this challenge. Anthropology is seen as a subject in the making, with each chapter entertaining reflections on how anthropological concepts are reshaped through feedback from various sites of engagement. In this context the term 'field' undergoes (sometimes savage) reconsideration. On the one hand, it is taken literally, considering the materiality of the 'field' and its relevance for the organisation of social relations. On the other hand, 'the' field appears as a dispersed setting, a reality that is no longer tied to a locality but resembles Appadurai's 'scapes', or Clifford's problematic 'traveller'. Building upon Köpping's ideas of fieldwork as a potentially transgressive encounter, the articles explore the 'boundaries' of anthropological method and the experiences that result from trespassing traditional ideas of participant observation.

Marcus starts his discussion with the Malinowskian code of fieldwork and refers particularly to the idea of reflexivity that defines norms for an ideal relationship between anthropologists and their subjects of research. However, since Malinowski's time, the reality of anthropological research has thoroughly changed. Today, there is no overarching project that legitimises particular investigations. Locations for research can no longer be taken for granted (and should never have been), and there can be no fixed set of norms for the relationship between researchers and their subjects. In 'multiple fields' reflexivity becomes paramount. Marcus argues that reflexivity must move beyond the definition of fixed norms to 'being a key means of defining the scene and circumstances of research itself in multi-sited spaces' (Marcus, this volume). A 'second-wave reflexivity' has developed as a practice in the post-writing-culture period and triggered extensive discussion about the multiple places of investigation, about collaborative relationships in the field, and about the reception of anthropological 'products' by the subjects of research themselves.

An example is given by the essay that follows. In 'News from the Field', Ursula Rao reflects on her work among journalists in Lucknow, India. She shows how research in this expert site became a collaborative effort that could be successful only by engaging in a joint meta-reflexive discourse about the rules that govern the production of journalistic knowledge, compared to anthropological knowledge. Journalists did not accept the role of informants. They acted as teachers and colleagues, who competed with the researcher for authority; they could easily claim that they have a much greater influence on the way the social life is perceived than anyone from University. In this situation the struggle was not to understand an 'emic' point of view. Rao states, rather, that she engaged with other, related professionals in a dialogue that produced new and surprising insights about each

other's practices and perceptions. Reflexivity, as a necessary part of the research process, turns back to throw light upon the researcher and the context in which she is embedded.

Howard Potter transforms this boundary between the own and the other, the researcher and the subject of investigation, between the field and the home. He accomplishes this by way of transgressing the boundaries of his own subject field. During his research at the site of a former German concentration camp in Sachsenhausen, Potter 'steals' earth from the locality and uses it to make an art-piece, so as to establish a material connection with his place of investigation. Potter himself offers possible associations: his act alludes to the concept of *Lebensraum* as a central part of Nazi ideology; earth also refers to the thousands of dirty shoes kept at Auschwitz as a reminder of all those who died. He also invites others to contribute their reflections. Struggling to represent the violent transgression that Sachsenhausen commemorates, Potter initiates a dialogue that allows an object to 'speak'. The anthropologist's report, which so often offers a particular interpretation and thereby creates a closure of meaning, is coupled here with a performance during which a piece of art is created and displayed. Personal memories of various audiences are evoked to create a connection between the place of talk and the place of research. Memories from the audience interconnect with memories from the field. The 'foreign' is recreated as a part of the self.

How is meaning created and how is perception transformed? These are the central questions of the last two essays in the first section. Sugishita and Reuter engage in meta-reflections about the involvement of anthropology in negotiations about the meaning of 'culture' (as a category) and 'cultures' (as particular sites of production) in the contemporary world. Kaori Sugishita focuses on the anthropologist herself and the stance she takes during the process of construction. Anthropologists are meaning-makers, who engage in 'power-based monologues' about the other. It is impossible to avoid this. What is possible is to reflect on the stance from which the construction takes place. Sugishita characterises her own subjectivity as it is created during interactions in the field and shares her personal reflections on, and doubts about, anthropology as a subject. She also shows that her voice is one among others. It influences and feeds back into the discourse from which it originates and in which various actors speak and struggle for the hegemony of their positions. The way anthropological knowledge may be put to use can surprise and frustrate the anthropologist. However, unable and unwilling to commit to one particular stance, the anthropologist is left to observe and deconstruct the various claims for truth.

This, Thomas Reuter asserts, should be the main message of anthropology to a world divided by strife defined in terms of 'culture', 'religion', 'ethnicity' etc. As experts in trespassing, transgressing and at times transcending cultural boundaries, anthropologists need to engage in self-reflection to develop knowledge about the coping strategies with which they try to bridge cultural barriers and use to deal with personal reservation, frustration and despondency when dealing with 'otherness'. Reuter identifies dissociation as one strategy among others. Similar to the argument of Sugishita, Reuter states that the fragmentation of mind through the immersion in another cultural context effects detachment as a form of tolerance. But what if such a

stance becomes undesirable in an environment of hostility such as that which Reuter experienced when he returned to Indonesia after the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001? Even if anthropologists give up a position of privilege and emphasise the embeddedness of every kind of knowledge, including their own, they still need to advertise their own position and assert that there can be no neutral and value-free stance outside power networks. Playing on Köpping's formulation that anthropologists are tricksters, Reuter asserts that anthropologists need to reflect upon *their tricks* and share them in order to show that there are better coping strategies than avoidance and warfare when it comes to negotiating cultural differences.

Order beyond order

The second part of the book, 'Performances' moves into the field and investigates the transgressions anthropologists encountered during their research. The focus is on ritual, festival and dance, the transgressive experiences they address or initiate; and the relevance this has for the imagination and organisation of social life. Transgression is seen from the point of view of its assumed 'other': the order of the social. The somewhat paradoxical issue is about how transgression is ordered and contained through communicative practices and body politics.

During her fieldwork in Bali, Mary Ida Bagus encounters narrations of violent and traumatic experience during a period called 'Gestok'. It began in September 1965 when Soeharto took power in Indonesia and established the 'new order' regime, during which society was 'cleansed' of communist activists. After 2000, when the sociopolitical conditions had changed, these events were for the first time publicly discussed and reevaluated. Families began to openly mourn their dead and identify the murderers of their kin. As with Potter's reflection on a German concentration camp, this chapter addresses the question of how to comprehend and deal with the experience and memory of violent disruptions of life, instigated by the political elite and the ideology they promote. However, this time the question is not how the anthropologist experiences his encounter with an unknown past and finds ways to communicate his insights to a larger audience, encouraging them to add their own thoughts and memories. Instead, Ida Bagus focuses on the coping strategies of survivors, of those who had direct experiences of the violent past. The aim is to show how people managed to live on by integrating the transgression into a larger ritual order that serves as a compensation.

The discussion focuses on the negotiation of the material (*sekala*) and intangible (*niskala*) aspects of existence in everyday life in Bali. People who died an unnatural death do not pass over easily into the world of ancestors and their 'spirits' make their presence felt, especially in the life of those who effected their death. The initial transgression, the untimely death, leads to further transgressions between the world of the mundane and that of the spiritual, between religious groups of Muslims and Hindus and between the families of victims and perpetrators. The pogroms during Gestok established a new political order but left many questions of unsettled spirits open. Ida Bagus concludes that readdressing the memory of these events in terms of the spiritual effects of the violent killings helps reconstruct 'a

more conformable reality where *sekala* and *niskala* interact and recreate subjectivity' (Ida Bagus, this volume).

Breaches in the past are addressed in a very different context in the 'Dance of Punishment' performed once a year in Orissa, India. During the rituals described by Burkhard Schnepel, the participants have to undergo various hardships or 'punishments', such as being isolated from their families, lying in the open sun or not being allowed to sleep at night. Through their performance they offer penance for transgressions of cosmic rules by gods, sages, kings and common men that have taken place during former times. Such ritual submission prevents the implementation of even harsher punishments that would have adverse effects on everyday life, like disease and death. Participation in the dance is voluntary and often the result of experience of pain and loss, which prompts individuals to participate in the dance in the hope that the god or goddess might help them to overcome the hardship. Once the ritual begins, the participants give up agency and submit themselves and their bodies wholeheartedly to the demanding rules of the ritual and the fickle play of the gods. It is this experience of patience, Schnepel argues, that transcends usual experience and brings the participants into direct contact with the divine. It is not so much what the bodies *express* but what is *impressed* into them that accounts for the effects of the ritual.

But what are these effects? The first two essays in this section discuss very different situations and we do not want to blur the differences between them. Rather, we want to draw attention to one common feature that accounts for the transformative power of ritual transgressions. Both articles address the interaction between the human and non-human sphere. Breaches in the past create an imbalance in the relation between the world of humans and that of spirits, gods and goddesses that needs to be rectified by ritual performances. In Bali murderers build and maintain shrines for their victims in order to contain the adverse effects their lingering spirits have upon them and their families. In Orissa the 'Dance of Punishment' is performed to prevent still more severe punishment for the transgression of social rules. In both cases, the initial transgression of social laws is addressed by ritual transgressions during which participants submit to the will of a non-human agency in order to heal the social order, while advertising their guilt. However, the penance is never complete. It has to be repeated again and again. Rituals can deal with the transgressions, but they can not eradicate them. On the contrary, every ritual act recovers the memory of the initial transgression and points towards the culprits. Unbearable pain that can not be forgotten nor explained, that can not be made sense of in terms of the normal social order, is contained within a language of a higher order. By accepting penance for the breaches within the ritual context, a new status is created that makes life possible again. By submitting their agency to a non-human power during the ritual, agency is returned to the humans in the social world.

Rituals are effective and transformative. This is a central theme in Köpping's discussion of ritual, which contradicts the idea that the main feature of rituals is their stabilising and traditionalising effect (e.g. Moore and Myerhoff 1977; Tambiah 1979). Köpping sees rituals as moments of intensified communication, which address contingency in the human world and through their performance open up contingent processes themselves that have the potential to transform perception.

This makes rituals risky activities, especially when they initiate transgression. Transgressions account for the powerful impact of many rituals, but they also make them uncontrollable. There is no guarantee that the transgressions are effectively contained within a set frame. A ritual may stabilise the social order by showcasing disorder as the Other of normal life. However, providing a platform for new experiences and highlighting the relativity of any particular order, rituals may also trigger a – more or less radical – reorganisation of perception and social contexts (Köpping 2002a; Köpping and Rao 2000; see also Kapferer 1997; and Schieffelin 1996, 1998).

A second set of chapters in this section looks at ambivalences in the experience and perception of ritual play. Hauser and Henn analyse how ritual performances serve to establish a contact, or even an identity between the human and divine world, which, however, is invested with many uncertainties. Beatrix Hauser discusses the Thakurani festival, a carnevalesque ritual celebrated in Orissa, India, every second year. The main attraction of the festival are men who dress up as tigers, child-eaters, deities, mock Buddhists or Islamic funeral procession etc. Often the costumes are provocative and the behaviour of those who dress up is offensive. These transgressions are expected, they are part of the festival since they serve to entertain the goddess and the audience. They are also an indication of the fact that the gods have taken over. They are means for humans to become part of the divine play (*lila*), which stands in contrast to the social order. Yet there are also negative reactions. Costumed men are said to behave in vulgar and shameless ways. They are accused of acting out of self-interest and personal desire. This ambiguity, Hauser asserts, makes the transgressions what they are: offensive even though they are expected. There is no way to distinguish human and divine acts in the performance. Various interpretations compete with each other and it remains open what the consequences of the transgressions will be, for individual actors and social contexts.

Alexander Henn further characterises this ambivalence between divine play and human action in an exploration of the meaning and practice of ritual mimesis. He describes various forms of mimesis in a Christian and Hindu context and shows that ritual mimesis goes beyond imitation to establish a – variously defined – connection between depiction and that which is depicted. The power and affectivity of the mimetic acts or objects is not necessarily an outcome of their authenticity. What appears to be more important is the intensity with which an act is performed or an object approached. In this process a ‘third party comes between the sign and the signified to be thought of as spiritual analogy, concrete correspondence or material affinity’ (Henn, this volume).

The next two chapters move away from the involvement with the transcendent and look at ritual plays or played rituals that give (aesthetic) pleasure. Sieveking looks at the interconnection between experience and the symbolic order in the context of modern ‘ethnic’ dance. She presents the case of Koffi Kôkô, a man born in Benin who lives ‘two lives’: one as dancer on Western stages and one as Voodoo priest in his native village. Kôkô’s performances are played rituals and ritual plays. They are thought to transmit some of the ‘energy’ associated with native African religions. Sieveking separates various levels of construction. Reappropriating concepts developed in religious anthropology, i.e. animism, modern ‘African dance’

(developed on Western stages) is given authority as a form of ‘authentic’ representation of people considered to be close to nature and the origin of humanity. This also serves to construct the idea of ‘an African dance’ that takes clues from Pan-Africanism and the Négritude movement. Ironically, the development of new transcultural (who would dare say hybrid) forms of dance reconstruct and stabilise ideas of separate cultures and an opposition between modernity and tradition. These performances blur the boundaries between ritual and theatre, while at the same time keeping the distinction alive.

This chapter bridges the second and the third sections of the book, by also focusing on the relevance of anthropological theorising for the reconstruction of cultural activities. Sieveking shows how modern ‘ethnic’ dance is constructed and given meaning by the use of a vocabulary appropriated from anthropology. ‘African’ heritage is (re)constructed through practices of ‘othering’, typical of the colonial encounter. Crapanzano clinches the bridge where he discusses the experiences and construction of intimacy through sexual transgression in the practice of a transsexual cross-over by Billy-George – a crippled man in his fifties living in New York. The erotic encounter is a ritualised activity that is risky and highly ambivalent. It is realised through a performance that plays with the symbolic order, that moves through the symbolic order in order to reach satisfaction that is never real and never complete. However hard we try, however we exalt simple sexual pleasure, we can never achieve what we imagine to be the full satiation of desire, for desire’s object, indeed desire itself, are cast within and through the symbolic order. The essays in the next section look at just this interrelation between anthropology and the construction of socially relevant knowledge. How do practices and experiences of transgression in and through fieldwork serve to reconstruct anthropological theory, which then becomes a tool for a critical reflection of contemporary political discourses?

Anthropology and politics

The last section, ‘Infringements’, integrates themes from Parts I and II and looks at anthropology as a form of politics. Who and what sort of anthropology might be passed down to those who are taught under this sign? The travellers who traverse the field and indulge in transgressions find themselves forced to reflect upon the meaning with reference to global political processes, through which order is defined and exercised. Anthropological statements appear to take place from the stance of a critical outsider while they are struggling with a social reality that has been fixed all along inside anthropological concepts of culture and engagement.

We started this introduction with a discussion of Köpping’s demand for an engagement in the field. Anthropologists need to commit themselves to the encounter in order to be able to speak about the other. Phipps now extends this argument by saying that such a commitment ‘has to engage with politics at some level, both the micropolitics of interpersonal, intercultural engagements, and the macro-political forces which structure them’ (Phipps, this volume). As an early example of such an involvement he discusses Leiris’ experiences and works. The

focus is on the Expedition Dakar–Djibouti – for which Leiris was appointed official scribe – and the way the experience of this travel echoes in and shapes his writings. Leiris’ texts move from psychoanalytical introspection to political engagement, reflecting his male subjectivity in the field, in terms of his sexual desire and his participation in a gendered colonial enterprise that dominates and penetrates the colonised other. Leiris’ text serves as an example to show how a narcissistic introspection can lead to political engagement, which in this case culminates in his anticolonial stance.

Judith Weiss adds Picasso and finds similarities between his art work and Leiris’ writing. The oeuvre of both looks at the other and leads to a reproduction of the self. The metaphor of the skin represents the borderline between the inside and outside. However, it is not the incorporation or the implementation of the other, but the sloughing off (Picasso) and the penetration of skin (Leiris) that are movements for encountering the other. What we find is a passionate involvement with inversions and an entanglement in interactions of the self and the other. Taken as a stimulus for the recreation of anthropology, these works teach us a more relativistic ethnology that incorporates into its own body of writing reflections on the power structures that account for a particular type of knowledge production.

The provocation offered by Klaus Buchheit is of a different kind. Reflection is not so much written into the text, but provoked through the text. In an article that experiments with styles of writing, Buchheit introduces Adolf Bastian, the founding father of German anthropology. Against much criticism Buchheit asserts that Bastian is not a fool of writing, but a trickster of writing, who provokes minds by transforming experiences into a provocative style of writing. Bastian writes about transgression creatively and creates writing transgressively. Opposed to Kantian notions of transcending the mind through abstractions, Bastian wants to make accessible a somatogenic and deconspirative mind. It is a transgression of one’s own ideas brought about through encounters with local minds around the world. The impact created through these encounters in one’s own mind requires a hybrid style of locative writing that avoids logical neatness. Consequently Bastian is neither a precursor nor even close to the so-called writing culture debate, because he is not interested in *ethnological* neatness of writing. Bastian’s writing is the consequence of transgressing encounters of minds, i.e. the concatenation of minds.

Köpping’s first book was on Bastian, so it may be fitting that this book ends with an experimental essay that is a tribute to the way Köpping’s teaching introduced misfits into the anthropological curriculum. The transgression of the conventional canon is productive here, both for students of anthropology and for the pursuit of critical thinking as such. John Hutnyk surveys the ambivalences, the ritual incantation of the names of the founding fathers (and uncles and aunts), exotic asides and a rampant curiosity, even paranoia, which may get the anthropologist into trouble but which are all also the requirement of a lively mind and an alert response to the predicament of the world. A method in the madness. The addition of still more transgressions to the teaching text of anthropology – the works of Louis Aragon, William Burroughs – seem a worthwhile tribute to the wise fool or cunning fox who conjures a more convoluted truth and meaning than might emerge in conventional readings of the discipline. In an anthropology forced to engage with

fieldwork in changed global circumstances, where political trauma, ubiquitous commerce and visual culture, the retreat from certitude and questions of relevance all threaten, it seems important to support not a cynical free-for-all but a radically open critical engagement. Such teaching is a legacy that may offer a tempting and tempestuous riff on taboo in order to entice a viable purpose for thought and action, in all its problematic, angst-ridden, sometimes ecstatic, sometimes melancholic glory. We thank Klaus Peter Köpping for the inspiration.

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