

# In-Between Fiction and Non-Fiction



# In-Between Fiction and Non-Fiction:

*Reflections on the Poetics  
of Ethnography in Literature  
and Film*

Edited by

Michelangelo Paganopoulos

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Reflections on the Poetics of Ethnography in Literature and Film

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TO ARETI

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances*

*[As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII]*

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF FICTION

MICHELANGELO PAGANOPOULOS

The idea of establishing an anthropological discourse focusing on the study of fiction derives from the very foundation of modern anthropology as a way of thinking in and about the world. Immanuel Kant first introduced the term in a series of lectures collected and combined in a volume between 1776 and 1780, entitled *Lectures on Anthropology*. In this series, Kant developed a pragmatic application of his greater philosophical project regarding the study of human nature and the potential future of humanity as a whole. By “pragmatic”, Kant paradoxically refers to the moral and teleological destiny of humanity to achieve universal freedom and unity through a collective process of individuation and self-realization. In this context, the pragmatic study of anthropology promoted a variety of types of communication, including travelling, the exchange of ideas, tolerance, and the study of world novels, all of which would contribute in the development of a common understanding of our human nature. Kant’s anthropological project invested in the potentiality of personal imagination and creativity in fictional and non-fictional accounts. He placed the anthropological vocation in-between non-fictional and fictional worlds as the means of fulfilling the greater responsibility of humanity to make a better world. The study of anthropology would contribute in the development of a mutual understanding between nations and social classes, in order to achieve peace and equality according to the values of the Enlightenment. Above all, it is important to highlight that Kant’s moral imperative was a political call inspired by the writings of Rousseau on Freedom and Equality. Kant called for a historical and political awareness of self in the world, and in relation to our fellow human beings. By placing the human being in the centre of the universe, the study of anthropology was thus a *protégé* of Renaissance thought, captured by Leonardo da Vinci in his portrait of the *Vitruvian Man* [c.1485]: a blend of art (sketch) and science (anatomy).

The introduction in Europe of new ocular technologies, such as the microscope and telescope, during the European Enlightenment radically changed the way of looking at nature and the universe. The new perception of the world accompanied a clear-cut separation of the arts from science in terms of both subjective and objective types of knowledge. This modern categorization of knowledge separated the irrational feelings and emotional sentiment of poets and artists from the bureaucratic objectivity of numbers and scientific facts. The dichotomy deeply affected the development of anthropology. Under the pressure of becoming a “social science”, it called for a more “scientific” approach to culture, society, economy, the human habitus, and the universe. However, it also presented a particular problem to the anthropological method of investigation. Kant methodologically defined the study of anthropology as one based on travelling and participant observation. In other words, on personal experiences that took place in the grey area between subjectivity and objectivity, the esoteric “self” and the “world” out there. In this sense, the study of anthropology formed a paradoxical discourse that combined two antithetical, and yet, complementary realms of experience: an understanding of the external world surrounding us through an introspective and internal struggle within, or even, against it.

This ambiguity characterized anthropological thought from its very conception as a discipline. It came to the surface in 1967, following the posthumous publication of the fieldwork diaries of Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski from his two expeditions to the South Pacific that took place between 1914 and 1918. At the time, Malinowski was (though to be) the father of professional anthropology. Nevertheless, the unauthorized publication of his private diaries in 1967 undermined his professional claims to scientific objectivity, which he had eagerly defended in the “Introduction” to the classic *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* [1922]. In the diaries, an alienated Malinowski often loses track of time and space, confusing familiar memories of Europe with the Pacific landscapes, in an overt state of self-narcissism and delusional nostalgia. The publication of the diaries exposed Malinowski’s “confinement”, in the words of Raymond Firth (1967, 17) revealing his alienation from the social environment of the islanders because of his personal insecurities. Furthermore, Malinowski’s detached method of observation suited his paranoia and his efforts to stay away from “them”: “a crowd of savages [...] by the light of bonfires” in his own words (1967, 27). His self-proclaimed authoritative position over the “informants” conveniently covered his own personal insecurities and the fear of communication of a man evidently lacking, and desiring, human touch. Instead, he functionally

replaced his inability to communicate with the cold (i.e. “scientific”) perspective of the binoculars, which he used to observe and categorize the world from the narrow window of his cabin. He dealt with his self-imposed alienation and increased levels of anxiety with excessive consumption of painkillers and a shocking addiction to other manufactured drugs that resulted in his delusional state of mind.

The posthumous publication of Malinowski’s diaries not only exposed the so-called “scientific” method of anthropology as a colonialist myth of the European world. Even more importantly, the posthumous publication of the diaries opened the Aeolian bag, letting out processes that blew anthropology apart, dragging it into decades of deep self-examination. The “crisis of the intellectuals” brought to the surface questions regarding the profession of anthropology, the authority of the ethnographer in the field, the method of participant observation, and the relationship of the ethnographer with the “informants”. In addition to these methodological issues, there were issues of representation, translation, and interpretation, all of which have since stigmatized the discipline (see Leach 1961, Needham 1970, Ardener 1971, Asad 1973, Bourdieu 1977, Marcus and Clifford 1986, Hammersley 1992, Grimshaw and Hart 1993 and 1995, da Col and Graeber 2011, among others). These issues further exposed an unbridgeable gap between anthropological theory and the ethnographic practice, enhanced by the interdisciplinary professionalization of anthropologists into other areas and disconnected discourses, which lacked a shared vocation, aim, or even a concrete methodology (Asad 1973). Furthermore, the crisis raised several ethical questions regarding the historical association of anthropology to colonialism and its relationship to history (Asad 1993, Herzfeld 1987, and Tambiah 1990, among others). Anthropology had completely lost all its claims to objective representations of reality, as the rigid modernist dichotomy between the social scientist and the artist in terms of non-fictional and fictional types of knowledge had finally collapsed (Foster 1996, Gell 1998 and 2006).

Inevitably, anthropologists turned their interest into how they produce ethnographic knowledge in relation to exotic portrayals of the strange and untranslatable Cartesian Others (*see* Fabian 1983, Needham 1984, Pratt 1986, Clifford 1988, Gell 1998, Herzfeld 2001, Katz and Csordas 2003, da Col and Graeber 2011). Many anthropologists critically questioned the practice of ethnography, which was the source of anthropological authority, regarding its historical predicament and ethics. Nevertheless, as a result of the “crisis of the intellectuals”, the ethnographic scope opened up towards more subjective and reflective forms of knowledge, often crossing the boundaries between the subjective and objective appropriations of the

world. In this context, Clifford (1986 and 1988) famously highlighted the significance of allegory and the “poetic dimensions”, or “plural *poesis*”, of the genre of the ethnographic text. He further re-defined the experience of “field working” as a kind of individuating process of “self-fashioning”: “the reconstitution of selves and others through specific exclusions, conventions, and discursive practices” (1988, 52 and 1986, 24–26, and 98–121). In this semi-autobiographical context, ethnography was seen as essentially a semi-fictional genre; the ethnographer as an *auteur*; the monograph as a *chronotope*; and the ethnographic text as an incomplete “true fiction”: a “system or economies of truth” (1986, 6–7). The turn to subjectivity not only undermined the “scientific” claims of the anthropology, but also further opened its scope towards the representation of everyday life in a reflective manner as a poetic mimesis of reality. Seen under this light, Clifford redefined ethnography as a poetic representation of Otherness, similar to a painting or a Shakespearean play.

This volume expands on this millennial collective turn to subjectivity, one that has revived the notion of authorship and the relationship of anthropology to a history-in-the-making. It aims to pave the way for a more systematic study of fiction. The volume re-evaluates ethnographic texts and films as semi-fictions, created by the charismatic minds (ethnographers or artists alike) of those who aspire to break away from the colonial past, and in a self-reflective manner to contribute to the creation of a better *world society*, referring to the historical processes, technological developments, and international mechanisms, which enhance our idea of a unified world. The reading of fictional and non-fictional texts invites the active engagement of the readers or viewers to re-evaluate their place and time through a process of self-reflection on their personal lives. By unfolding a variety of ways through which the anthropological discourse engages with fiction and world history, this volume expands on the general self-reflective turn in anthropological thought. For this, the contributors to this volume treat the “world” as a text. They take the roles of charismatic auteurs and/or readers, life-long travellers, anthropologists, writers, art critics, and filmmakers. They share a common interest regarding the relationship between anthropological thinking and ethnographic representation, between thought and expression, respectively. In this way, the contributors creatively reflect upon their own methodological and ethical reservations regarding the anthropological theory and the ethnographic method. Their texts expand on subjectivity in terms of self-reflection, while raising self-awareness, as they consciously choose to write or read a text within the grey area in-between and beyond the categories of fiction and non-fiction. This process of personal

communication with the “world” becomes the means of understanding and engaging with the social and historical changes taking place in the real world through storytelling.

## The Chapters

I have divided the volume into two main parts, the first focusing on literature and ethnographic writing, and the second on film and ethnographic representation. Accordingly, the approach to fiction is twofold: some contributors take the perspective of the *auteur* through a self-reflective and semi-autobiographical manner (such as the texts by Hart, Saikia, Kucza, and Heintz). Others write from the perspective of the reader, in terms of readership/spectatorship, by addressing particular *auteurs* and their written texts or films, which the contributors reread within their respective historical and aesthetical context of the place and time in which they were produced (Schmitz, Hutnyk, Calestani, Ranjan, Vaidya, Sahasrabudhe, and Tiwary). The majority of the chapters discuss authorship and readership in relation to each other. In doing so, they touch a variety of interrelated and overlapping themes in current anthropology. These include the ambiguous feeling of nostalgia and omnipotent absence in ethnographic writing and filmmaking (Hart, Clanton, Schmitz, Kucza and Heintz), the relationship of the ethnographer to so-called “informants” (Saikia, Calestani, Heintz), politics of representation and political action (Clanton, Hutnyk, Calestani, Vaidya, Sahasrabudhe, and Tiwary), and sensorial and other technologies of representation (Heintz, Tiwary, Vaidya, and Schmitz). Furthermore, by reflecting on anthropology as a way of thinking and ethnography as a way of representing, the texts address a number of world issues. These include the city as a cosmopolitan metropolis (Hart, Schmitz, Ranjan, and Tiwary) the power and responsibility of education in the relationship between teacher and pupil (Calestani and Vaidya), political issues in the workplace of the past (slavery) and present (neoliberalism) times (Hutnyk, Ranjan, and Sahasrabudhe), and historical records of conflict and change (Ranjan, Sahasrabudhe, and Tiwary).

## Part I: Literature

The opening chapter introduces the reader to Immanuel Kant’s *Lectures on Anthropology* [1776–1800]. The chapter brings forward key terms in Kantian anthropology, such as “citizen of the world” and “world cognition” (*welterkenntuisse*). It highlights the paradox inherited in the

anthropological discourse, the pragmatic appropriation of imagination. In this context, it critically raises questions regarding the “higher” moral imperative for the creation of a world society, in relation to the anthropological predicament and past association of the discipline with the history of colonialism. Accordingly, the chapter investigates Kant’s moral imperative in relation to the history of anthropology and critically reproaches the universal ethics invested in Kantian philosophy in relation ethnographic writing. It highlights the paradox in Kant’s anthropological project, which he ambiguously defined as a philosophical project placed in-between pragmatism and idealism, non-fiction and fiction, sense and silence. The chapter then argues that the inherited paradox in Kant’s idealism enables the space for creativity invested in the potentiality for imagining and working towards a better world. Despite the recent rapid development of network technologies that has contributed to the creation of a world society and a collective sense of belonging to the world (world citizenship), the historical and everyday reality of the brutality of globalization undermines Kant’s idealist transgression. The chapter argues that it is in this grey area, in-between history and imagination, that anthropology could rediscover its lost Enlightened Voice.

In looking at perceptions of the anthropological self in the world, the second chapter follows Professor Keith Hart’s personal journey from his birthplace, Manchester, to the world. Hart is a recognized expert in economic anthropology with a long career in development, who is also a writer, teacher, and advocate of Kantian anthropology. In a deeply personal manner, Hart describes his life odyssey from poverty to cosmopolitanism, beginning and ending in his hometown, the city of Manchester of the post-World War II period. His journey takes him to Cambridge, then Ghana, the US, and the Caribbean, up to his arrival in Paris. Hart passionately declares that he is not from England, but from Manchester, a memory of a “home” that is nostalgically elevated to the central referent point of his life journey. Hart travels from the production of the Lancaster bombers in World War II, to the changes in the Manchester Marxist movement in the 1970s, and from the closing of the factories in the 1980s, to the party city of the 1990s with its new economic models and values. Along Hart’s personal journey into the world, the reader can witness the transformation of the city of Manchester into an unrecognizable “*Madchester*”. This journey is contained in a bottle of *Manchester United Chardonnay*, a symbolic motif of Hart’s internal and external transformation of his identity (inevitably bringing in mind Orson Welles’ opening sequence in *Citizen Kane*, the enigmatic “Rosebud”).

Hart declares, “*We need to feel more at home in the world, to find the means of actively resisting alienation*”.

Following Hart’s life odyssey, the next chapter focuses on the personal journey of Prarthana Saikia into the world of academic anthropology. A reluctant student of anthropology, Saikia became a semi-fictional published author. Saikia divides her chapter into two parts. The first section focuses on two novels taken from Assamese literature, the classic *Miri Jiori* written by Rajanikanta Bordoloi (1894), and the contemporary *Katha Ratnakar* by Dhubajyoti Bora (2007). Saikia reads both novels as accounts of the time and place that produced them. The second part of her chapter offers a self-reflective account of her own fieldwork and experiences in the village of Gaggal, which is located in the Himachal Pradesh area. Saikia describes how she strives to discover her own creative space as the means of breaking free from the constraints of professional anthropology. She further reflects upon her failure to compromise her ethnographic experience within the limits of institutional anthropology, something that led her to write her own novel entitled *Jantadhari* (2011). In *Jantadhari*, she offers a living, self-reflective, semi-fictional text, one that completely rejects the sterile and barren structural interpretation of symbols and myths. Saikia’s intentions and personal sense of freedom expose the poverty and limits of institutionalized anthropology, arguing against the reduction of everyday experiences to objectified labels and lifeless structural categories. Instead, Saikia promotes a semi-fictional genre of writing as a more accurate way of transferring her experiences to paper within the present historical moment, that is, her own time and space.

The fourth chapter expands from questions regarding the anthropological vocation to questions regarding the collage of ethnographic writing. Carrie Clanton uses Derrida’s concept of *hauntology* in relation to Freud’s idea of the Uncanny. Clanton associates the uncanny, which she interprets as the “un-homely” [“*das unheimlich*”], with the *liminal* image of the father ghost in *Hamlet*, a fragment of time that is both familiar and strange. This fragment functions as a metaphor of ambiguity and homesickness (nostalgia) manifested as the silence that haunts ethnographic representation. She illustrates this paradox in ethnographic writing using as an example the journal, *Documents*, published by Georges Bataille in the short period between 1929 and 1930. In this illustrative manner, Clanton brings forward the idea of ethnography as a kind of surrealist *collage* that reconstructs the Other through a *montage* of images, as was first discussed by James Clifford (1980) and later developed in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986). However, Clanton critically

expands on Clifford's ideas by raising the political and ethical issues inherited in the affinity between representation and the uncanny, calling for the deconstruction of ethnographic writing and its anthropological categories in a self-reflective, and above all, political manner.

Following Clanton's call, Hutnyk's chapter formulates a political call for action in the workplace. Hutnyk focuses on the figure of the Factory Inspector (named Leonard Homer) in Marx's key chapter "The Working Day" of *Capital*. Through this semi-fictional figure, Hutnyk compares the use of the *Blue Books* by Dickens and Marx/Engels in their respective works, in reference to the parliamentary reports on the working conditions in England during the nineteenth century. For Hutnyk, Dickens offered "*to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists, and moralists put together.*" However, following Marx and Engels, hutnyk argues for moving away from the observant style of Dickens (and the classical poetic mimesis as imitation) towards a politicized self-reflection of the worker in the workplace. Accordingly, Hutnyk calls for an active readership that would enhance historical self-awareness as the means of understanding and resisting against the exploitations taking place in the work place. Hutnyk illustrates this through the dialogic composition of "The Working Day", which, in the spirit of Bakhtin's polyphonic texts (1984), consists of dramatic dialogues between the worker and the factory Inspector, enhanced by the facts given in the *Blue Books*. The dialogues sketch a set of dialogic relationships that reconstruct a collective voice for the worker, the "*zusammenrotten*", calling for political action against exploitation. Hutnyk further draws an evolution from the nineteenth century factory worker to the "laptop warrior" of the twenty-first century and the exploitative conditions of work ("slavery") imposed by neoliberal capitalism. In his hands, the active engagement with the semi-fictional text of "The Working Day" becomes the means of raising historical self-awareness for the workers against capitalism and exploitation. In this way, Hutnyk appropriates the personal, social, and economic realities, facing the worker in everyday life, within the politics of representation of Marx, and vice versa, shows how politics of representation collectively express the consciousness of working class calling for change.

Geetika Ranjan's reading of two contemporary novels illustrates Hutnyk's position by highlighting the changes in the new workplaces in India since the 1990s. Ranjan discusses Ravi Subramaniam's *If God was a Banker* (2007) and Illika Ranjan's *Puppet on the Fast Track* (2011), which were both written by former bankers. The two novels address the changes in morals and attitudes at work under the cruel environment of



international banking. Ranjan's reading offers a comparative portrayal of the rapid changes that took place in Indian society in the 1990s. She shows how the new competitive environments of international cooperations deeply affect the character of enthusiastic young employees, as well as, their sense of identity and personal relationships to their colleagues. In this context, she re-evaluates the two novels as insightful ethnographies, which bring forward the impact of the new work ethic imposed on employees, thus, expanding in moral terms on Hutnyk's aforementioned sharp critique of neoliberal capitalism and exploitation at work.

The final chapter of the first section moves from the public space of the workplace, to education and the moral imperative of raising free-minded citizens. Melania Calestani's chapter offers a historical account of Mario Lodi's pedagogic method in Italy in the remains of World War II. Mario Lodi was a member of the Italian Movement for Educational Cooperation, a group of liberal teachers who encouraged their pupils to think and act in a free manner. Calestani highlights the influence of Freinet's pedagogy on Lodi, including their common emphasis on collective education, freedom of expression, equality in the classroom, encouragement for experimentation and communication between pupils and their teachers. Both Lodi and Freinet wished to contribute to the development of responsible citizens beyond the limits of the Italian state. The pupils' aspirations then formulated a collective process of writing and publishing short stories. Calestani chooses *Cipi*, the story of a sparrow, in order to show us an example of how pupils were encouraged to express their hope collectively for a better future in poverty-stricken Italian post-war society. Calestani further draws a parallel between the role of Lodi as a schoolteacher and the role of the ethnographer, highlighting their common position of power due to the supervising nature of their respective professions. By highlighting the importance of learning, rather than patronizing, Calestani sees Lodi's pupils outside the limits of the ethnographic category of "informants" in the field. Inspired by Lodi, she ethically underlines the importance of learning from the pupils, while encouraging their creativity, rather than oppressing their instincts and reality of their everyday poverty. She closes her argument by highlighting the opportunities arising from new technologies towards more subjective and collective paths of communication, which could politically stand against the inequalities of globalization.

## Part II: Film

The second part of the volume concentrates on filmmaking. The opening chapter takes us for a life-journey to the holy city of Benares, the city of death, seen through the eyes of the maverick filmmaker Robert Gardner. Professor Schmitz follows Gardner's esoteric journey from life to death and back to life, from the Ghats to the holy river of the Ganges as he documented it in his *Forest of Bliss* (1986). Schmitz highlights the authoritative and idiosyncratic character of Gardner's filmmaking in terms of his manipulation of time and space and his unique visual language, which aesthetically renegotiate the firm categorizations of ethnographic and avant-garde cinema. By focusing on the uniqueness of "Gardner's case", in reference to the director's controversial style, Schmitz deals with the question of reality and authorship in ethnographic filmmaking, however, expanding beyond the heated, but much consumed debate over scientific objectivism. Instead, Schmitz focuses on the potentiality of an open artistic form of ethnographic filmmaking, one that engages with poetic metaphor and modernist melancholia beyond the superficial claim of objectivity in ethnographic representation. By highlighting Gardner's authorship, Schmitz uses the poetic images of the film and its means of construction, combined with extracts taken from his personal discussions with Gardner, in order to separate the artistic authority of Gardner from the autonomy of *Forest of Bliss* as a living work of art in itself. This is a controversial, and at the same time, creative take on Gardner's film, which brings the question of authorship directly to the heart of the discussion over the autonomy of art and Western perceptions of the world (Paganopoulos in chapter 1).

Another theme that is raised in the volume is the feeling of nostalgia manifested as a confounded silence in ethnographic representation (see Hart, Clanton, and Schmitz in this volume) examined in the next pair of chapters in terms of sensual resonance. The pair of chapters consists of the film-notes of two filmmakers, Marta Kucza and Monica Heintz, taken from their respective films on economic migration. The two chapters offer a complementary approach to the sensorial understanding of the experiences of immigrants in Europe. Kucza's film, *The Places from which we are absent*, follows the tradition of filmmakers who used home movies as ethnographic material in order to expand on the present moment and the past. Accordingly, Kucza highlights the impact of video and digital technology in her understanding of the past at the present historical moment. Through a systematic and detailed way of editing, she interconnects her personal experiences as a migrant from Poland to

Belgium, along with the life-journey of Kante, an immigrant from Guinea. Her film transcends the limits of the Cartesian subject/object dualism, offering instead a poetic way of looking at migration as part of the wholeness of human nature. The transformations in the lives of the two characters (Kuczka and Kante) allow the director to gain self-awareness through the parallel journeys that coincide at certain meeting points between them. These personal memories enhance the historical changes that happened in Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Kuczka masterfully juxtaposes extracts from her family videos in Poland in the 1990s with newsreels and chronicles that record the changes in Polish society at the time. Kuczka highlights the importance of screening sessions with her own family during which she projected the family clips and other extracts of her films to her family members, in order to engage with them in a discussion, or just to enable an emotional and self-reflective silence. Here, video technology re-evaluates and reconstitutes human relationships between the director and her family, as well as, the director and her friend Kante. An escapist feeling (*wanderlust*) enhances the interconnection Kuczka makes between her family story and the world of newsreels. This is manifested in Kuczka's and Kante's common search for a better life in the new Europe and nostalgia for a lost past, that may or may not have existed, an Ithaca that is never there: the "*places from which we are absent*" in the director's words.

Monica Heintz's film, entitled *Behind the Masks*, shares a similar ethical and self-reflective approach, focusing on the lives of economic workers in France and Moldova. The film is set between the two worlds, their working place in their host country and the "home" they left behind. Heintz highlights the feeling of absence as central to the migrant experience for the workers. However, unlike Kuczka's personal way of storytelling, Heintz's film exemplifies the sensorial approach by highlighting the social aspects of migration through an ethnographic depiction of the carnival celebrations in Moldova that take place at Christmas and New Year. Heintz uses the technique of sensorial resonance and analysis in her effort to reveal the true face of migration "*behind the mask*". In a similar fashion to Kuczka's *filmic* relationship with her own family members, after the end of the editing process, Heintz organized public screenings of her film for those families who were involved in its shooting, in order to encourage them to reflect upon their situation, and to record their feelings. Both Kuczka and Heintz, therefore, expand on the *liminal* feeling of nostalgia as a kind of absence set in-between two "homes". They both use their senses and personal experiences, enhanced by video technology, in order to portray the experience of migration as a way of life. The feeling of

nostalgia is also central to the ethnographic imagination (see Hart's and Schmitz's chapters) that constitutes a conjunction of two parallel ways of life on the road, on the one hand, the life of the ethnographer, and on the other, the life of the migrant worker. In Heintz's words: "*While this modern face of migration also appears to render it more human, it also carries the seeds of a chronic absence, which anthropologists know so well from their own experience of life long commuting between home and the field. Migrants are no more able than anthropologists to translate this feeling into words.*"

The next chapter looks further into the impact of new digital video technologies on the way we perceive the world (see also Kucza and Heintz in this volume). Ishita Tiwary's chapter highlights the impact of the digital video revolution on the formation of the post-socialist aesthetics, focusing on the Chinese maverick director Jia Zhang-ke. Tiwary points out that the emerging digital technologies in China offered a number of advantages to a new wave of groundbreaking filmmakers. The lightweight, easy operation, and low-cost production and distribution of digital video, allowed a number of young directors to emancipate themselves from the constraints of the commercial film industry and the complicated bureaucratic rules of the government. She argues that digital technology enhanced the direct contact of the filmmaker with society through instantly recorded life experiences and images. The poetic concrete reality, as depicted in Jia Zhang-ke's films, is a result of his authoritative style consisting of slow-paced camera movement and uncut long shots of city landscapes that capture the multi-layered and heterogeneous environment of a moment of historical transformation in Chinese society. In this manner, Tiwary argues that Jia Zhang-ke's use of DV technology enables him to offer an accurate ethnographic portrayal of the rapid changes in Chinese society from the perspective of the insider, despite being an "outsider" to the same institutions he regards as his "home" society.

Ira Sahasrabudhe explores Tomas Gutierrez Alea's film *The Last Supper* (1976) in relation to the political crisis that engulfed Cuba in the 1970s. By rereading the narrative of *The Last Supper* within the historical context of the time in which it was produced, Sahasrabudhe argues that Alea's authoritative and subversive film style reflects critically upon post-revolutionary Cuba. She uses as a historical example the Cuban failure to meet the ambitious target of *La Gran Granja*, the harvest of ten million tons of sugar in the 1970s in order to pay back for resources acquired from the Soviet Bloc. Sahasrabudhe argues that Alea reverses the religious narrative of Christ's Last Supper, as it was famously visualised in Leonardo da Vinci's revisionist painting, through a series of poetic, and at

times, ironic, visual and narrative metaphors. These enable the *auteur*-director to evoke the exploitative duality of sugar plantations at the time of colonial slavery, and the complementary ideological and exploitative system of the combination of free labour and Christian religion. She shows how, in a subversive but equally subtle way, Alea offers a direct critique of Fidel Casto's failed government policies following the success of the Cuban Revolution. Alea reconstructs the collective disillusion of Cubans using sharp metaphors through which the personal politics of the *auteur* meet the collective disillusion of the audience. Similar to Tiwary's chapter, Sahasrabudhe sees Alea as a filmmaker-poet, whose films offer an accurate ethnographic appropriation of the historical changes in Cuban history from the inside, beyond the a-historicity of functionalism and structuralism. Rather, she highlights the powerful perspective of the everyday insider, an outsider to his own institutionalized society.

The final chapter of the volume critically examines the evolution in the representations of the category of "disability" from Hindu mythology to contemporary "Bollywood" films. Shubhangi Vaidya focuses on three films: *Black*, directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali (2005); *Taare Zameen Par*, directed by Aamir Khan (2007); and *My Name is Khan*, directed by Karan Johar (2010). Vaidya highlights the shift towards more visible representations of disability in the film industry, in relation to the rise of new values and understandings in cosmopolitan world society. Central to her analysis is spectatorship, in terms of seeing through the eyes of the "Other within". In her chapter, Vaidya runs through a series of stereotypes, both negative and positive in nature, about the category of "disability" and its representations. She relates these to family life, the community, the universal right to education, and the politics of exclusion. In this context, Vaidya argues that: "*Disability is not an aberration or a tragedy, but a lived reality. It is an experiential realm that is different, but not deviant; rather, a feature of human subjectivity and personhood.*" For Vaidya, therefore, the (still limited and, at times, vulgar) representations of "disability" enable the spectator to engage with the personal politics and everyday realities of the disability discourse.

In spite of the variety of topics, the texts are interrelated in terms of authorship and/or readership (spectatorship). The *auteurs*, discussed by the contributors to the volume, wrote from the inside of the society they addressed, seeing however themselves as outsiders. Their *liminal* position, being simultaneously outsiders and insiders, is affinal to the Weberian "charismatic" authority of prophets. By critically reflecting upon the collective consciousness of the historical and political conditions that produced a text or a film, the contributors to this volume investigate the

potentiality of poetic metaphors to transform the reader or viewer from within. The paradoxical position and amateurish circumstances of charismatic *auteurs* empower them to offer distanced, semi-fictional or fictional accounts of their own experiences of *their* world, emancipated from the burden of professional anthropology. In other words, their *liminality* enables them to historically contextualize and politicize the material they have gathered from their lived experiences, represented through fictional or semi-fictional chunks of everyday life. The volume shows how the recognition of fiction as an anthropological resource emancipates ethnographic writing from its inherited conservatism (folklore survivalism), moving towards a political understanding of humanity as a whole, in the Aristotelian spirit of the human, i.e. the political animal. Equally, this emancipating ideal of freedom liberates anthropology from the constraints of professionalism (Asad 1973) while returning to the original Kantian roots of the anthropological vocation. A set of new technologies and ways of travelling have reinvented this return to subjectivity contributing to the inevitable transition of humanity towards a unified world society.

In the context of Kant's moral imperative, the simultaneously poetical and historical dimension of semi-fiction is aesthetically expressed in a text or an image in terms of the interplay between internal and external boundaries: "between self and world, private and public, subjectivity and objectivity, the interior spaces of mind and personal being and the public world" (Laura Marcus 1994, 79). Therefore, the poetics of a text or an image do not simply refer to the aesthetic and distorted "imitation" of reality (as in Plato), or as the means to morally measure and self-reflect within a closed narrative (as in Aristotle). Here, poetics expand towards a historical appropriation of the self in the world. Furthermore, the openness of poetics (Bakhtin 1984) contributes to the active formation of a history-in-the-making that begins inside each one of us (the term "poetics" derives from the Greek word *poio* meaning, "To make"). Hence, it is important to highlight that by poetics this volume does not simply describe a "mimesis" of reality, but refers to the personal politics of each world citizen and the right to equally engage with the pragmatic potentiality for social and historical change (as in Bakhtin 1984, Papastergiadis 1993, Gell 1998, Casarino 2002, and Rancière 2006, among others). Accordingly, the readings offered in this volume are open texts meant to encourage further engagement with anthropology and fiction in both intellectual and political ways. The volume uses a number of terms that derive from a number of languages (*lingua franca*, German, Italian, Spanish, French, Hindu, Chinese, and Greek) forming a multi-lingual text in the tradition of Bakhtin.

Furthermore, the personal poetics and aesthetics promoted throughout its conception respond to a number of world issues with historical and social substance. The chapters echo the *potentiality* given by new technologies to rewrite an alternative world history, one motivated by a collective and worldly sense of empathy, personal imagination, self and historical awareness of the present moment in the transition of our world into a world society.

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**PART I**

**LITERATURE**

## CHAPTER ONE

# KANT'S *LECTURES ON ANTHROPOLOGY* AND THE RISE OF WORLD SOCIETY

MICHELANGELO PAGANOPOULOS

### ***Kant's Lectures on Anthropology:* Towards an Anthropology of Fiction**

Kant introduced the term “anthropology” in the late eighteenth century in reference to the “pragmatic” study of human nature. For Kant, the physiological knowledge of human nature “is not yet pragmatic, but only theoretical knowledge of the world [...] It is properly pragmatic only when it incorporates knowledge of Man as a citizen of the world”, and only when it contributes to the “knowledge of the world” (1978, 4 section 120). Hence, “anthropology” was the pragmatic appropriation of Kantian philosophy in the quest for “world cognition” [*“Welterkenntnis”*], the knowledge of our world and our place in it. Kant aimed to contribute to the cultivation of “world citizens”, free-thinking agents guided by reason (i.e. “common sense”): “Physiological knowledge of man aims at the investigation of what nature makes of man, whereas pragmatic knowledge aims at what man makes, can, or should make of himself as a freely acting being [...]” (Kant 1978, 3 section 119). The study of anthropology was the practical application of Kant’s three major *Critiques*. The *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781/1788] that focused on the question of “what can I know”; the *Critique of Practical Reason* [1788] that morally expanded on “what I ought to know”; and the *Critique of Judgement* [1790] that concluded upon the question of “what may I hope”. He linked these simple questions to the study of human nature in terms of “what is man” and “what man makes”. By investigating the mystery of human nature, the study of anthropology was thus a *protégé* of Renaissance thought.

Kant promoted two types of movement as the means of knowing the world: a physical and a cognitive one. The former refers to travelling to

geographic places with occasional friends (“human geography”), while the latter to moral development and education (“anthropology”). Both activities are means of understanding and learning about human nature through our engagement with the world. Reading a novel, and nowadays, watching a film or using the web, offers an alternative and cheap way of travelling, one that uses our cognitive imagination and enhances our sense of self-awareness regarding our place in the world. The constant movement and changing positions allow the traveller-reader to leave behind the monolithic way of looking at the world, in order to develop a Copernican perspective (Hart 2003 and 2004, and in this volume chapter 2). The universe is not moving around us, but rather, we are moving and everevolving along with the universe. This constant movement conforms to our curious natural urge to wander, to know the world, our *wanderlust*. This sense of *wanderlust* is the central motivation behind the anthropological practice of ethnography, the possibility of experiencing and understanding ourselves through the eyes of others. Our identification with the world requires our co-existence with others. Traveling and reading are educational experiences that allow us to mature into self-responsible world citizens. World literature, pop culture and commercial films, not to mention social networks and the media, all contribute to a shared sense of world citizenship. Rather than behaving as immature, uncivilized citizen followers of a particular nation, faith, or established national history, rather than making war and promote self-destructive forms of intolerance and inflexibility, the technologies of the new world demand our personal engagement with it. By promoting the common characteristics of our shared human nature, the study of fiction contributes to the development of a collective feeling of belonging to humanity as a whole, through the personal experiences and feelings we share with others, those that define our humanity.

In this sense, Kant set an anthropological way of thinking in-between the cognitive self (metaphysics and morality) and the exterior world (geography and history) as a way of embracing our place in the world. The complementary study of human nature and human action formed the study of “pragmatic anthropology”, a Kantian term referring to his branch of practical philosophy, one that dialectically combines a self-reflective journey inwards toward the creation of a better self (“what is man”), with an outwards pragmatic vision of a better world (“what man makes”). In achieving the connection between the self and the world, Kant promoted communication, the cultivation of self-awareness, the uses and potentiality of imagination, the exploration of our “inner sense” and “intuitive understanding” (*intuitiver verstand*), and the practical application of

universal ethics in everyday life (Kant 1798, paragraphs 119–121/1978, 3–6). In addition to intuition and communication, Kant promotes the study of fiction as one way to cultivate a shared sense of empathy (“*Einführung*”). A fictional play, a biography, a film or an artefact, are mirrors to the human soul:

[...] while not exactly sources for anthropology there are nevertheless aids: world history, biographies, even plays and novels. For although the latter two are not actually based on experience and truth, but only on invention, and while here the exaggeration of characters and situations in which human beings are placed is allowed, as if in a dream, thus appearing to show us nothing concerning knowledge of human beings—yet even so, in such characters as are sketched by a Richardson or a Molière, *the main features must have been taken from observation of the real actions of human beings*: for while they are exaggerated in degree, they must nevertheless correspond to human nature in kind. [Kant 1798 section 7, paragraph 121/2007, 233]

Kant’s anthropological project embraced observation and traveling by physical and/or cognitive means. In addition to this, it was based on a highly moral stand, as the means of fulfilling the greater responsibility of humanity to make a better world. The study of world fiction would contribute to the developing of a mutual understanding between nations and social classes, in order to promote peace and equality according to the values of the Enlightenment. Above all, it is important to highlight that Kant’s moral imperative was a *political* call, inspired by the writings of Rousseau on Freedom and Equality. Accordingly, Kant called for historical and political awareness of ourselves in the world, in relation to our fellow human beings. This volume examines the current turn to subjectivity as the means of understanding and engaging with global and historical changes through storytelling. My aim is to re-examine the relationship between anthropological thinking and ethnographic representation, between thought and expression, in relation to this great historical moment: our technological transition to a new world society and engagement with a history-in-the-making. In doing so, the essay highlights the central paradox in Kantian anthropology, that is, Kant’s call for a *pragmatic* appropriation of an *imagined* better world, in order to examine it through the colonial legacy of the anthropological past, and the greater political paradox embedded in technological progress which envisions a technologically connected and yet increasingly unequal world society. In this context, the essay raises the question of the relevance of anthropological thought to history and the politics of a possible future for an equal world society.