Anthropology written for a popular audience is the most neglected branch of the discipline. In the 1980s postmodernist anthropologists began to explore the literary and reflective aspects of their work. *Popularizing Anthropology* advances that trend by looking at a key but previously marginalized genre of anthropology.

The contributors, who are well-known anthropologists, explore such themes as:

- why so many popular anthropologists are women;
- how the Japanese have reacted to Ruth Benedict;
- why Margaret Mead became so successful;
- how the French media promote Lévi-Strauss and Louis Dumont;
- why Bruce Chatwin tells us more about Aboriginals than many anthropologists of Australia;
- how personal accounts of fieldwork have evolved since the 1950s;
- how to write a personal account of fieldwork.

*Popularizing Anthropology* unearths a submerged tradition within anthropology and reveals that, from its beginning, anthropologists have looked beyond the boundaries of the academy for their listeners. It aims to establish the popularization of the discipline as an illuminating topic of investigation in its own right, arguing that it is not an irrelevant appendage to the main body of the subject but has always been an integral part of it.

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Towards the memory of Godfrey Lienhardt, 1921–1993
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Preface

The original stimulus which led to this book was a series of evening conversations between ourselves, during which we came to realize both the importance of the topic and the fact that no anthropologist had so far focused attention on it. Words led to action: a seminar series held at Oxford Brookes University during the course of 1993, and a day conference held that summer at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University.

Unfortunately, we were not able to include in this book all the papers given, and we would like to thank those who came to speak but whose words we have had ‘to leave out here. Also, for their financial support and assistance, we wish to thank the British Academy, the British Council, the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Oxford University, Maison Française, and the School of Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University.

Articles by Casajus and Descola were translated from their original French by McDonaugh.

We dedicate this book to the memory of Godfrey Lienhardt. Even though none of the contributors were formally taught by Godfrey, almost all of us have been influenced, in different ways, by his work and example. Godfrey would not have considered himself in any way a popularizing anthropologist, but the elegant, pellucid way in which he powerfully expressed his subtle ideas remains exemplary to any anthropologist who wishes his words to reach beyond the walls of academe.

Jeremy MacClancy
Christian McDonaugh
Chapter 1

Popularizing anthropology

Jeremy MacClancy

It is a perfect summer’s day. The view across Idle Valley is marvellous. The house is impressive and, above all, expensive, befitting its owner, a writer of best-selling historical romances.

But Christopher Marlowe is bored. His suspect, the writer, is drunk, but not drunk enough to confess all. Instead, he ruminates out loud. Two paragraphs into his ponderings he turns anthropological. ‘Ever read The Golden Bough? No, too long for you. Shorter version though. Ought to read it. Proves our sexual habits are pure convention—like wearing a black tie with a dinner jacket.’

(Chandler 1953:212–13)

The terse comment exposes the worst fears of industrious, committed academics. Decades of work by a distinguished intellectual who painstakingly puts together an encyclopaedic series of tomes are smartly reduced to a single, misrepresentative phrase: ‘proves our sexual habits are pure convention’. Any sense of subtlety or of shades of opinion is lost for the sake of a throwaway line, uttered by a drunk.

Not surprising, then, that so many anthropologists have been wary of attempts to popularize their discipline. They do not want to see their laborious efforts misused in a way which brings little credit to themselves, to their collective endeavour, or to the people they study. They have no desire to observe the crude ways their finely wrought concepts, generated in an academic environment, are transmitted to an alien audience. Not for them the populace applauding their ideas for non-scholastic reasons.

There is an additional reason, however, for this wariness towards the popular: career prospects. Kudos—and prestigious professorships—are won by those who make theoretical advances, not by those who play to the gallery. And for those budding lecturers who are not aiming so high, but merely for tenure, it is safer to confer quietly with colleagues and to produce learned volumes which can only be
appreciated by the few than to run the risks of pandering to the public. Lévi-Strauss only wrote *Tristes Tropiques* because he thought he had failed as an academic. Though he had spent ten years working on the material for *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, there had been little reaction to the book in Parisian circles. As he feared, when his travelogue was published, some of his peers were not pleased; among others, Paul Rivet, director of the Musée de l’Homme, refused to receive him.

The assumption underlying this sort of culturally snobbish behaviour is that academics should restrict themselves to academic work, and not concern themselves with ‘lesser’ matters (Grillo 1985:15). Learned research is ‘pure’ and worthy of respect. Work on themes with popular appeal is considered close to sullying oneself, rarely deserving more than contempt. Better to remain within the cloisters than to go forth and dirty one’s fingers, unless of course one is going to fashionably exotic settings. This attitude is not new. Andrew Lang (1936 [1907]:12, 14) was able to praise Tylor’s *Primitive Culture*—‘never sinking to the popular…[i]t never ceases to be interesting’—but could only manage to speak of his peer’s successful introduction to the discipline, *Anthropology*, by calling it ‘a piece of vulgarization’ (original emphasis). A similar attitude is evinced in the (most likely) apocryphal reply made by Marrett in response to a junior don’s comment that he had committed a factual blunder in his popular work, *Anthropology*: ‘Uhh!’ the distinguished academic replied, ‘Can’t expect truth for a shilling!'

One consequence of these condescending attitudes is that the very topic of popularization has been ignored as much as the activity is looked down upon. Yet just because putting the word across to a non-academic audience may not be considered ‘the done thing’ by many does not, under any circumstances, mean that we should scorn it, either as an anthropological practice or as a subject of investigation. In fact, precisely because it may not be ‘the done thing’ may well be the best reason for doing it. Anthropologists are supposed to examine ideologies rather than reproduce them. This issue of popularization is especially pertinent today because of the postmodernist challenge to the traditional structure of the discipline (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988). These critics of the conventionally accepted question ethnographic authority and underline the irreducibly literary nature of ethnography. They call, among other things, for the creation of plural texts, the recognition of the need for reflexivity, the realization of the subversive potential of anthropology. According to their
interpretation, the boundary between art and science is blurred, ethnography is an interdisciplinary product, and the production of ethnographic texts is a problematic enterprise.

What is so surprising, however, about their work is their focus on canonical texts to the exclusion of anything which smacks of the popular. Though keen to expose, and so help to undermine, the hegemonic strategies of the anthropological elites, they have overlooked the renowned texts by which the discipline is known beyond its boundaries. Popular texts might be popular, but they are still constructed texts and ones, moreover, which test the relation between anthropology and literature in ways the exclusively scholastic refuse to consider. The postmodernists’ disregard of this corpus is curious because, for those who wish to heed their clarion call for the blurring of genres and the democratization of our subject, it is necessary to point out that a plenitude of examples already exists, as we shall see. Ironically, postmodernists, in bypassing popular works of anthropology, have reinforced some of the very attitudes which they take such pains to question. By neglecting these works, they have failed to challenge radically the reigning hegemonies. Instead, they have helped to perpetuate them; or rather, they attempt to replace them with another—their own.

The rapidly changing nature and ever-increasing degree of contact between peoples around the world would have forced a rethinking of the discipline, whether or not certain anthropologists had collectively constructed postmodernism. The concept of a culture as a clearly bounded entity is by now too patent a fiction to be maintained. No present-day fieldworkers can write about peoples without knowing that their words will be read by the indigenes, if not today then in the near future. As the number of graduates continues to rise in both the developed and the developing worlds, the once-privileged status of the intellectual (a status partly based on rarity) declines, as does the authority that went with the position. This increase in numbers broadens the ethnic and sexual base of the anthropological constituency, transforming it in the process. The old clubbishness is going. Members of previously under-represented groups increasingly speak up. In this context of constant flux and self-questioning, reflexivity and the search for appropriate modes of expressing contemporary realities do not appear as options. They are perceived as necessities.

At the same time, anthropologists are also being challenged by changes within academe: the rise of new technologies, cutbacks in
funding and faculty budgets, an increase in student loads, and, in the United States, the introduction of computerized exams with a consequent reduction of the discipline to memorized lists of exotica. A shift in students’ interests heightens this sense of flux. Kinship loses its place as a central subject of great theoretical import. Fieldwork away from ‘home’ becomes not the rule but tends towards the exceptional. In North America, some departments of anthropology shrink or disappear. ‘Cultural studies’, drawing acknowledged inspiration from the discipline, continues to rise and rise, without apparent limit. Its sustained success comes to be seen as a threat to the very existence of anthropology.

These changes, both global and parochial, force anthropologists to consider how the knowledge they produce can be made accessible to a wider and perhaps different group of listeners. In the process they come to realize that the space between the academic and the popular is not a one-way street but an arena of voices where each may inspire the others. As the example of Ruth Benedict’s *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* shows, that space is potentially one of productive dialogue rather than patronizing monologue. Popular anthropology need not be a downmarket derivative of ‘the real stuff’. It is not a cheapened version of a high-quality product which has been allowed to ‘trickle down’ (a patronizing metaphor of treacly hierarchy). It is an integral, contributory part of the discipline, broadly conceived. It may be as serious-minded as academic anthropology. Indeed, at times, it may have loftier aims, a successful popular book helping to influence the attitudes of many while a run-of-the-mill ethnography may solely add to the lengthening bookshelf on ‘the X’. This is not to devalue expertise but to recognize its different types, and the particular contribution each can make. The overly scholastic, who sneer at popular style, fail to appreciate that their own discourse is merely one variant, and that each has integrity within its own frame. The unattractive consequence of all this is that anthropologists who stubbornly resist the issue and the lessons of popularization face the prospect of marginalizing themselves, ultimately to their own detriment. Unless we are prepared to take seriously the power, place and meaning of popular anthropology, we may lose the ability to negotiate our intellectual position in the world at large.

On all these grounds, the study of popular anthropology is not peripheral but focal. For exactly who and what has become popular when, how, in what ways, for what reasons, and to what effect, are all themes which starkly illuminate the nature of the anthropological
enterprise, its reception, its institutional development, and its possible futures. Hence this book.

We chose not to strait-jacket the discussion by imposing a singular definition of popularization. The ‘academic’ and the ‘popular’ are not rigid categories. They are fluid, multifarious terms whose meanings have changed as the discipline has evolved. They are only presented as a dichotomy in the rhetoric of self-interested players who wish to stake out their own position and polarize the opposition. (For examples of this strategy in other disciplines, see Dolby 1982; Gieryn 1983.) Our object is not to further binarism but to promote plurality. Instead of prescriptively confining the object of our interest, we wished contributors to explore the diversity of the topic and give some idea of the terrain that might be covered: its audiences, its foci, its styles, its varieties, its publishing contexts, its possible perils.

In a broad sense, there are as many different ways to ‘popularize’ anthropology as there are audiences for it. Besides the general book-reading public, we might list policy-makers (Hinshaw 1980), development consultants, management trainers (Chapman 1994), impresarios of corporate initiation ritual (e.g. Rae 1995), academics in other disciplines who wish to adopt ethnographic techniques (Chambers 1987:313), artists whose knowledge of anthropology informs the vision of the world they project (Cowling 1989; Rhodes 1994:177–92; Weiss 1995), viewers of television (Singer 1992; Banks 1994), nationalist politicians (MacClancy 1993; Efron 1994; Dubow 1995), advocates of sexual plurality (e.g. Bornstein 1995; Spencer 1995), folklore revivalists (Chandler 1993:9, pers. comm.), socialist theorists (Trautmann 1987:251–55), Neopagans, New Agers and Modern Primitives (Jencson 1989; Vale and Juno 1989; Grant 1995), Neoshamans (Atkinson 1993:322–33; Vitebsky 1995), first-year students (James, in this volume), style analysts (e.g. York 1994), novelists (e.g. Huxley 1936; Cartwright 1993; Dooling 1995), nutritionists (Easton, Shostak and Konner 1989), and teachers of modern languages who want their students to do some ‘fieldwork’ during their study year abroad (Street 1992b). Furthermore, different styles of anthropology practised by the anthropologists of different nations may well produce variant ways of popularizing the discipline.

We have tried to represent some of these diversities within this volume but, like the editors of any collection, we were limited by the people we knew, the people we heard of, and the people we were able to contact and who responded positively. One restriction we felt forced to impose from the very beginning, in order to ensure
that speakers might address overlapping issues, was a concern with literary forms of popularization. This is not to imply that we think the popularization of the discipline via other established media—such as museums (Karp, Kreamer and Lavine 1992) and television (Jenkins 1986; Ginsburg 1992; Turton 1992), multimedia, or new computer technologies less important or revelatory—but simply that the study of these modes of disseminating knowledge deserves books in its own right. There was not space in the original seminar series and conference to investigate adequately the issues they raised, so we excluded them. Though the resulting book does not represent in a comprehensive manner the diversities of popularization, the range of papers published still gives some idea of the potential breadth of the topic. Our aim, after all, was not to compile a definitive volume but to stimulate an overdue debate.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF POPULARIZATION**

From the very beginning of an anthropology recognizable as such to modern anthropologists, its practitioners were concerned with popularization. But the chronicles of its evolution in the three main centres of modern anthropology—Britain, the United States, France—are revealingly different. For that reason, I trace each separately.

The Ethnological Society of London, founded in 1844, made its sole object the promotion and diffusion of ethnological knowledge. It held both special meetings, where ‘popular’ topics were discussed, and ordinary meetings, at which ‘scientific’ subjects were debated in more technical terms and to which women were not admitted. John Lubbock, president of the Society in the mid-1860s, wrote both of his books, *Pre-historic Times* (1865) and *The Origin of Civilization* (1870), in such a clear, engaging prose that they were extremely successful and reached a remarkably wide audience (Riviere 1978: xiv–xvi). A breakaway organization, the Anthropological Society, founded in 1863, gained over 500 members within the first two years of its existence, embarked on an ambitious publishing programme, and even put out a *Popular Magazine of Anthropology* (Stocking 1987: ch. 7). Its dynamic president, James Hunt, also established an ‘Anthropological Lecturing Club’, whose object was ‘to diffuse a knowledge of Anthropology amongst all classes of society’.

These pioneers, whether styling themselves ‘ethnologists’ or ‘anthropologists’, had a broad conception of their subject as one
embracing prehistory, archaeology, physical anthropology and the study of the customs of contemporary non-urban peoples, in both the West and beyond. However, the ruling groups of both societies tended to come from different backgrounds, to have somewhat different goals, and to rely on different sources of information. Most leading members of the Ethnological Society, who came from dissenting middle-class families, upheld liberal, humanitarian and utilitarian ideals, and maintained the utopian belief that the sustained efforts of education and science would result in a better society. Darwinian evolutionists, they drew upon archaeological and ethnographic data in their endeavour to elucidate historically the single common origin of all human groups (ibid.). In contrast, James Hunt and his clique were conservatives who came from marginal positions within more traditionally established social backgrounds. Polygenists keen to detail the supposedly fundamental differences between the races of humankind, they stressed the value of physical anthropology. Unlike the ‘Ethnologicals’, these heterodox Tories were quite prepared to win popularity by being extreme, using anthropological theories as direct support for their political views and provoking discussion on controversial issues: cutting back funds for African missions, defending the brutal suppression of the Jamaican Rebellion of 1865, and arguing against female emancipation (Rainger 1978). However, Hunt’s club incurred increasing debts and its membership began to decline. After his death in 1869, the new president of the ‘Anthropologicals’ agreed to compromise and, in 1871, the two societies amalgamated into ‘The Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland’, which the old ‘Ethnologicals’ soon came to control.

All the members of the fledgling Institute were either gentlemen amateurs, or professionals engaged in other areas of scholarly or scientific activity. None of them regarded themselves as ‘anthropologists’ but as intellectuals who occasionally studied anthropological themes: Lubbock was a natural scientist, politician, financier and social reformer; Maine was a professor of jurisprudence and a colonial administrator. Those whom we may regard as the first true anthropological professionals only emerged in the last decades of the century, from the small group of full-time paid curators entrusted with the care of ethnographic collections.

At that time in Britain, self-education was an accepted means of upward mobility among the middle and upper working classes, and museums were the most successful centres for the popularization of
academic knowledge (Van Keuren 1984:172). Ethnographic curators, who had to compete against the attractions of travelling shows of exotic peoples staged by entrepreneurs and at least one anthropologist (George Catlin), were keen to justify their positions by claiming that their institutions provided ‘rational amusement’, and that they were visited by members of all social classes, and especially by a large section of the working class (Altick 1978:268–87; Street 1992a). To that end they tried to make their collections as accessible as possible. The curators of the Horniman Museum in London, for instance, held a regular series of lectures open to the general public and took great pains to make explicit the rationale behind their selection and display of material. Public demand was so great that, within a few years of opening its doors, the Horniman was receiving over 90,000 visitors a year (Coombes 1994:113, 154). This initial cohort of professionals also assisted in the presentation of anthropological materials in national and international exhibitions, which were then, like museums, a major means of popular education and the largest of which could attract tens of millions of visitors. For example, in 1908 Haddon organized the anthropological section of the grand Franco-British Exhibition and supervised a display on comparative religion in the London Missionary Society exhibition ‘The Orient in London’, writing an erudite introduction to the handbook for its ‘Hall of Religions’ (Haddon 1909; Coombes 1994:204).

Tylor in the 1870s and Haddon two decades later furthered the name of their subject by writing and reviewing for a variety of major periodicals and by lecturing widely (Quiggin 1942:115–21; Leopold 1980:19). To this end they were assisted by the prolific Andrew Lang, whose articles and reviews in the press and prestigious journals generated great general interest in anthropology, and, more indirectly, by popular British authors of the period whose novels made contemporary anthropological theories ‘deeply actual’ (De Cocq 1968:127; Street 1975). Haddon, who lacked tenure for much of his life, also wrote several popular books. His bestseller, *Evolution in Art* (1895) gained wide attention because leading art historians saw it as a challenge, which deserved reply, to their view of art as a work of individual, inspired genius.

As the title of that work suggests, Victorian and Edwardian anthropologists were able to sell so many books and to fill lecture-halls so easily because they contributed to one of the great public debates of their time: the status and practical consequences of evolutionary theory. Lubbock’s brand of evolutionism, with its euphoric
ideas on the advantages of ‘scientific’ anthropology and the future of humankind, was ‘very congenial to many of his contemporary readers’ (Riviere 1978: xlii). Tylor proclaimed anthropology to be a ‘reformer’s science’ which could be employed, among other ways, to identify illiberal survivals fit only for elimination. Pitt Rivers, arguing from an opposite political position, thought an anthropology museum laid out on evolutionist lines would demonstrate the necessity of gradualistic change and so help to dissuade workers from heeding the calls of revolutionaries (Van Keuren 1984:187). These evolutionist anthropologists were all aware of the great role their discipline could play in the running of the Empire. As Henry Balfour, first curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford, argued, ‘the proper understanding of native races and their relationship to each other is a matter of vital importance to us, if we are to govern justly and intelligently the very heterogeneous peoples who come under our sway’ (Balfour 1904:13). But the repeated attempts to convince the British Government to create a Bureau of Anthropology or to fund the training of colonial officers came to nothing. Similarly, though the criminological work of anthropologists such as Cesare Lombroso influenced popular culture and informed political debate, the Government chose not to implement its findings (Pick 1989). For British anthropology to survive, it had, for the time being, to rely on the support of fellow academics and on the indirect benefits of public interest.

Some anthropologists of this period classified their work as either ‘technical’ or ‘popular’, but the distinction between these categories was usually negligible. Though some of their writings might assume more knowledge on the readers’ part than others, almost everything they wrote could be understood by any informed person of their time. Their discourse, after all, was the same as that of their educated contemporaries. Giving public lectures or writing books did not involve any gross oversimplification of complex theories or tortuous translation from some erudite dialect. To that extent, the promoters of the discipline were not so much concerned with popularization (in the sense of being a distinctive practice markedly different from contemporary scholastic endeavour), as with dissemination of their ideas and materials to increase people’s acquaintance with the subject. Of course, some Victorian anthropologists were much less popular than others, partly because they did not present their arguments in an effective manner. Who today remembers, for instance, the work of Charles Staniland Wake (Needham 1967:xiv), a learned, imaginative anthropologist yet one who only wrote for
readers almost as knowledgeable about kinship and marriage as he, and whose prose, compared to the attractive clarity of Tylor’s, is stilted and unrewarding?

In several ways Sir James G. Frazer marks both the highpoint and the endpoint of the historical period that I have related so far. Frazer marks the highpoint, for he remains today the most famous, and certainly the most financially successful, of all British anthropologists. His books are still in print and his influence astonishingly widespread: his ideas have made themselves felt in almost every area of the humanities and the social sciences while, within literature, Conrad, Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Synge, Lawrence, Iris Murdoch, Saul Bellow and Norman Mailer are only the most illustrious among the generations of writers indebted to him (Fraser 1990). Indeed, given his effect on the content, structure and rhetoric of twentieth-century novels and poems, one literary historian has gone so far as to argue that The Golden Bough is ‘in a very real measure, responsible for the form and shape of modern literature’ (Vickery 1973:120; also Manganaro 1992). By the 1920s it had become essential reading for anyone with claims to an education or a critical attitude to life; hundreds wrote to its author thanking him for opening their eyes and changing their lives (Howarth 1978:131; Ackerman 1987:3).

Frazer marks the endpoint, for he was the last prominent member of those generations of anthropologists who tried in their writings to establish a closeness between themselves and their readers. In contrast, Malinowski’s contemporaries and students wished to bracket off their ethnography as a professionally distinct form of intellectual exercise which, by using their experience of fieldwork as a legitimating device, created simultaneously a distance between themselves and their readers, and a closeness between themselves and the societies they studied (Strathern 1987). Lubbock, Tylor, Frazer and their peers spoke as though from their armchairs, to people who were in a similar position. Malinowski and his peers spoke as though from the village hut, to people who had never been in a similar position. Yet the number of anthropologists was still so low that those of the interwar generation, like their predecessors, had to write their books with both academic and non-academic audiences in mind. To that extent the functionalist ethnographies of the 1920s and 1930s may be regarded as works of ‘popular’ (i.e. relatively non-technical) anthropology.

Frazer’s career also marks the transition from a broad conception of anthropology, produced by well-educated amateurs and museum curators, to a more fragmented form of the discipline, produced by
tenured academics who specialized in one of its branches: most social anthropologists studied the behaviour of present-day peoples, most physical anthropologists studied the biological dimensions of humankind and their evolution. Prehistory and archaeology became separate disciplines, ones of marginal interest to most modern anthropologists. The leading proponent, and most skilled promoter, of a self-defined modern form of social anthropology, one marked off from historically related intellectual endeavours, was Bronislaw Malinowski. Since evolutionism was by then falling out of popular favour (and with its decline went much of the market for anthropology), Malinowski was much concerned with ways of making his new brand of the discipline known to the general public and of winning respect for it within intellectual circles (Firth pers. comm.; Malinowski 1967:160). In the process of attempting to achieve these aims he would aggrandize himself to an extent that has yet to be equalled by a modern British anthropologist.

On returning, jobless, from fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, the unknown anthropologist tried to establish his reputation—and make a little money—by writing a readable book acceptable to a commercial publisher. Shortly after *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) was published and he had gained the financial security of a permanent lectureship at the London School of Economics, Malinowski diversified his attempts to spread his name beyond the confines of his chosen discipline. In 1923, his essay ‘On the Problem of Meaning of Primitive Language’ was appended to Ogden and Richards’s highly successful *The Meaning of Meaning*, so bringing his work to the attention of, among others, philosophers, linguists, psychologists and literary critics (Leach 1965:35). Almost immediately afterwards, Malinowski made his bid to revise Freud, by using the evidence of his Trobriand material to question the supposed universality of the Oedipus complex (Stocking 1986). Though orthodox Freudians summarily rebuffed his challenge to their position, his controversial endeavour gave him an immediate entree to the intellectual left-wing circles of London social life, where he soon made his mark. His views became slogans of progressive morality and education, and won him influential friends, such as Bertrand Russell and Julian Huxley. Havelock Ellis became an especial friend (Russell 1929: ch. 2, 1968:195–6; Mitchison 1979:54; Leach 1965; Grosskurth 1980:380; Firth 1981:114).

Malinowski’s main anthropological competitors at this time were the diffusionists, centred around Grafton Elliot Smith who held a
professorship at University College London. Elliot Smith, keen to raise public support for his approach, was an assiduous correspondent to *The Times* and prestigious weeklies on matters diffusionist; edited a series of books entitled ‘In the Beginning of Things’, mainly written by academics, aimed at the popular market; and managed to attract a number of colonial administrators and cadets to his courses (Kuklick 1991). In order to counter Elliot Smith’s attempt to win disciplinary supremacy, to broaden acceptance of his kind of anthropology, to gain funding for his students and for posts, and to improve his chances of enlightening government policy towards colonized peoples, Malinowski began in the late 1920s and 1930s to preach the pragmatic benefits of his functionalism (Symonolewicz 1955:49; Strenski 1987a:42–69), even if it meant moving away from the immediately popular:

> More and more modern anthropological research is being directed to such aspects of human civilization as economics, education, law, demography, hygiene and systems of nutrition, which are apparently commonplace and drab, but nevertheless fundamental...This change of front in anthropological research is mainly due to the fact that, like every other science, anthropology has had to show its practical utility or become disqualified as an idle mental game.

(Malinowski 1934:xvii–xviii)

To that discipline-saving end, Malinowski contributed to nonacademic periodicals a host of articles which trumpeted the virtues of anthropology and its usefulness for the solution of moral and practical quandaries: he was particularly concerned about problems of sex and marriage, and of social change, especially in Africa (Firth 1988:35; Stocking 1991:53, 60). At the same time, and for much the same purposes, he welcomed to his famous LSE seminars a variety of non-academics, such as visiting missionaries, colonial officials, merchants, Africans (most notably Jomo Kenyatta) and the founders of Mass Observation (Robeson 1945:14–15; Delf 1961:99; Murray-Brown 1972:188–9; Huxley 1985:195–7; Berman and Lonsdale 1989:160–1; Kuklick 1991:212). They all felt there was something practical they could learn from the subject.

In the last decade of his life Malinowski maintained his place in the public arena by writing forewords for books by colleagues and associates, not just in anthropology but in psychoanalysis, analytical
Popularizing anthropology psychology and political studies as well; by sitting on the editorial boards of progressive journals such as *The Realist*; and, above all, by employing his anthropological knowledge to argue in numerous public lectures, several popular articles, and one book against fascism and modern warfare.

Malinowski’s efforts paid off. Colonial administrators came to regard the intensive study of peoples under their tutelage as much more potentially pertinent to their needs than anthropometry or diffusionist theories. Indeed, the idea of field work was such a winning innovation that the Rockefeller Foundation stopped funding the research of diffusionists *because* they did not live with the peoples they studied. Instead, together with the Carnegie Foundation and various British colonial and European governments, it financially supported the establishment and underwrote the running costs of the International Institute for African Languages and Cultures. This body, later renamed the International African Institute, was dominated by British interests and provided the grants for a whole host of Malinowski’s students to do fieldwork (Kuklick 1991: ch. 5; Stocking 1992:193–207).

Malinowski’s popularizing efforts also paid off, acquaintance with his fieldwork-backed form of anthropology becoming part of the assumed cultural knowledge of educated Britons. In 1932 Q.D. Leavis referred to her *Fiction and the Reading Public* as an ‘anthropological’ study of English culture; when, five years later, Mass Observation started to recruit assistants, the idea of the need for an ‘anthropology at home’ had already become common (Calder n.d.: 91). Two years before that, Charles Duff, a successful satirist, had chosen to couch his needle-sharp lampoon of the hypocritical mores of suburban Londoners in the form of an ethnography ‘based totally on fieldwork’. According to this intrepid observer, fear was the basis of locals’ morality, money the only religion, birth, marriage and death ‘Important Financial Events’, and artists taboo. The pen-name which Duff gave himself for this sustained piece of irony was Professor V. Chernichewski.

As this back-handed compliment suggests, Malinowski had successfully turned himself into a very well-known figure. By the time of his death, Kluckhohn (1943:208) went so far as to claim that ‘Certainly no anthropologist has ever had so wide a popular audience. Thousands of laymen in many countries came to entertain with fervour the attitude of an anthropology whose methods, purposes and results had at last become intelligible.’ When, in August 1936, he was invited as one of the distinguished guests to the Harvard Tercentenary
Celebrations, Malinowski’s name drew such a large audience to his lecture (on ‘Culture as a Determinant of Behaviour’), ‘that the very large commodious hall filled long before the time scheduled for the lecture to begin, in spite of the fact that Sir Arthur Eddington and other world-renowned scientists were lecturing in nearby halls at the same time’ (Montagu 1942:148).

The majority of British social anthropologists, however, secure in recently founded university posts, did not adopt Malinowski’s general approach. Evans-Pritchard, hegemon of British anthropology from the 1940s on, was not interested in broadening the audience for anthropology. Essentially a very private man not given to Malinowskian excess, he had no wish to make a space for himself in the public arena. His students and most of his peers evinced little desire to occupy that space themselves. Unlike Malinowski, they were not ‘easily drawn into the seductive but somewhat elusive field of reflection’ on matters of public concern (Firth 1981:125). Their research funding assured, through their effective control of the British Government’s Colonial Social Science Research Council, they proceeded to carry out studies which were decreasingly relevant to the requirements of colonial administrators (Kuklick 1991:191). On the whole, postwar British anthropologists, if offered the chance to extend the reach of their subject, preferred to enlighten colleagues in related professions, such as medicine and health. They also showed little enthusiasm for the promotion of the teaching of anthropology in secondary schools, as it was thought that the discipline required students with reasonably mature minds, ones capable of handling fairly abstract conceptions. Otherwise the subject would end up being taught as merely a variant of human geography or descriptive ethnography. For the professoriate of the period it was far more attractive to stage graduate seminars in a Socratic manner than to simplify the subject for schoolchildren.

Until the 1930s, most anthropological articles and books could be read by any educated person with a sense of dedication. But within two decades the language of university-based anthropologists had become sufficiently abstruse and their analyses sufficiently arcane as to bar the majority of readers who had not been trained in the subject. In 1928, Elliot Smith and Malinowski had aired their opposed views in a small book intended for a general audience (Elliot Smith et al. 1928). By the late 1940s, such a book had become almost inconceivable. In this postwar context of disciplinary specialization, where the gap between the scholastic and the popular grew ever greater, writing a book for the extra-academic market was no longer
a matter of choosing the appropriate literary style but had become a testing exercise in translation from one discourse into another. And most anthropologists were not interested in the job, or not up to it.

Since Malinowski had already done the groundwork for his students, establishing the value of a fieldwork-based functionalism at academic, practical and popular levels, they and their peers chose to narrow their vision to an almost totally scholastic one and made their highest priority writing the sort of books ‘which could help to construct the foundations of theoretical analysis in a new mode’ (Firth 1975:3; also Evans-Pritchard 1946). Though they were prepared to give the occasional public address, to speak on the radio when requested (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1951), to teach extra-mural students from time to time, and to produce introductory books when asked to do so (e.g. Beattie 1964; Lienhardt 1964; Pocock 1975; Lewis 1976), they were on the whole far more concerned with developing their own discipline than with imparting the results to a wider audience. (The one, striking, exception was the almost irrepressible Edmund Leach, whose prestigious position, clarity of style and network of contacts enabled him to write for a broad range of popular weeklies.) Haddon (1903:21) might have complained that anthropologists were too little concerned with popular exposition, but most of his successors disagreed. As far as they were concerned, theory was to come first. Popularization could come later.

While social anthropologists were unprepared to popularize their discipline, ethologists were not so reticent. In fact, their books have sold so well that large sectors of the British public now regard the ethologists’ work as being as representative of ‘anthropology’ as that carried out by their fieldworking colleagues. In social gatherings in Britain today, saying one is an anthropologist usually leads to some jokey comment about ‘naked apesters’. What Konrad Lorenz (1966), Desmond Morris (1969), Robert Ardrey (1967; 1976), and Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox (1972), among others, did was to revive the evolutionary paradigm which post-Victorian anthropologists had worked so hard to counter. Oversimplifying their material for the sake of their potential audiences, these biological determinists interpreted social behaviour in neo-Darwinian terms, often tying their evolutionary narrative down with a single explanatory thread: in Ardrey’s case, territory (later, hunting); in Lorenz’s, aggression; in Tiger and Fox’s, ‘biogrammar’. Perhaps the only significant difference between these latterday social evolutionists and their Victorian predecessors was that the former had nonhuman (but
anthropomorphized) primates play the same explanatory role which ‘primitives’ had had to play before.

The reaction to the male-centred and generally conservative tone of these ethological writings came in a series of popular books from academics, such as Goodall (1971) and Montagu (1968), and non-academics, such as Morgan (1972) and Reed (1975). But, as Haraway (1992:127) observes, neither Morgan nor Reed were a match for their credentialled opponents, while Montagu’s prose could not compare with that of Lorenz, Morris, or Tiger. Sperling (1991:14), in a review of the work of these male authors, has claimed that the influence of their models ‘on popular perceptions of the relationships of humans to animals and of the meanings of the gender divisions has been profound’. Yet a public lecturer (Towers 1972) who toured halls in the United States and Britain in the late 1960s found, to his surprise, that most people had read Morris’s *The Naked Ape* purely for amusement and general interest: few appeared to have accepted its reductionist thesis. My own personal experience, as a teacher of social anthropology, is that a high percentage of introductory students, when asked to account for a particular social behaviour, provide biologistic explanations, and it can prove very difficult indeed to persuade them to rethink their approach or to expand their vision. Though the popular fashion for ethology has passed, to be partially replaced by sociobiology, the more popular works of sociobiologists (e.g. Wilson 1975; 1978; Dawkins 1976) appear to have had relatively little specific effect on the public. Rather, they seem to have bolstered, in a general manner, people’s predispositions to comprehend their social lives along evolutionist lines.

The seemingly idyllic situation of British social anthropology changed dramatically in the late 1970s as the Government began to reduce severely its contribution to university budgets and its funds for research (Riviere 1989). One reaction to this threat to the British anthropological community was the creation of voluntary organizations concerned with various forms of applied anthropology, most of which in 1988 combined to constitute the British Association for Social Anthropology in Policy and Practice (Shore and Wright n.d.). But while some British anthropologists have been prepared, in this way, to find new justifications for the continued existence of their discipline, almost none has attempted to broaden its popular audience. The only significant exception here is Nigel Barley (see Chapter Eleven). His lampoons of fieldwork, however, have been as heavily criticized
within the anthropological community as they have been praised beyond it.

By this time, television had become as important as books and articles in popularizing the discipline. According to a recent survey, the most common way that anthropology students become aware of the subject is through ethnographic films and anthropological programmes on television (‘Report on RAI questionnaire’, *Anthropology Today*, February 1990; also Loizos 1980:577). Thus we could characterize the evolution of the popularization of anthropology as a development from primarily visual means—in museums and international exhibitions—in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, by way of predominantly literary means—in books and articles—in the period from 1920s to the mid-1970s, to, once again, mainly visual means—television.

The course of American anthropology over the same period somewhat mirrored that of its British counterpart: a wide-ranging subject, primarily reliant on gentlemen scholars and museum staff, developed into a set of separate but related disciplines run by professionals and based in universities. During the nineteenth century, the premier anthropological institution in the country was the National Museum, founded for the ‘increase and diffusion of knowledge among men’. Its pious curators, who regarded themselves as the moral educators of their visitors, sought to confirm the divine purpose for this world by demonstrating the ordered evolution and diversity of humankind, a message they furthered at World’s Fairs where they were frequently given whole buildings to display their exhibits, and where they were permitted to take anthropometric measurements of the exotic peoples on show (Hinsley 1981; Benedict 1983; Rydell 1984). The ‘tribal villages’ created at these expositions inspired circuses to enlarge their own displays of exotic peoples. The featured attraction of Barnum and Bailey’s 1893–5 show was ‘the Great Ethnological Congress’, an assembly of 74 non-Western people displayed in the menagerie tent (Bogdan 1988:185). Whatever the worthy curators thought of these cheap exhibits, a change in government policy in the 1900s forced them to shift their Museum’s focus from educating the public to entertaining it. In consequence, over the next two decades the role of museums as centres for anthropology began to be overshadowed by the rise of academic departments, whose fieldworkers were financed by research councils and private foundations. The most prominent of these departments was that at Columbia, headed by Franz Boas.
Boas, patriarch of modern American cultural anthropology, was by conviction a progressive, committed both to a rationalistic understanding of the world and to the need to defend the validity of alternative cultural visions of the world (Stocking 1992:97). Opposed to a rigid evolutionism which prematurely classified peoples into distinct races, he spent much of the later part of his career researching into, writing popular articles on, and publicly battling against the racist confusion of physical and cultural attributes. In Britain, it was biologists who led the scientific campaign to discredit racism (Malinowski played only a minor role in its public refutation); in the United States, it was anthropologists, headed by Boas, who led the crusade (Barkan 1992). In the process, Boas educated a sector of the public in the difference between the older, broad-based anthropology and the newer, more narrowly defined cultural version of the discipline which he, his colleagues and their students were propounding.

Though the Boasian message of cultural relativity was promoted by many of his circle (e.g. Herskovits [Merriam 1964; Jackson 1986]) in a variety of newspapers and weeklies, it was spread much, much wider, to almost all sections of the American literate public, by a single book produced by one of his former students. Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* (1934), perhaps the bestselling work of American anthropology, also served to popularize the broader notion of ‘culture’ as not just the ‘higher’ arts but as a people’s whole way of life. Six years later she, as progressive as her mentor, again transmitted some of Boas’s ideas to a wider public in her *Race, Science and Politics* (Caffrey 1989). The pamphlet she produced with Gene Weltfish on the same topic, *The Races of Mankind* (1940), went into millions of copies, and was then made into a film, a comic and a children’s book (Mead 1949:460). Her last book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, another publishing success, was one of the bestselling anthropological works of the postwar world.

It was another of Boas’s students, however, who was to achieve the most extensive, most consistent popularization of cultural anthropology. Unlike her friend Benedict, who was primarily interested in changing people’s values, Margaret Mead was primarily interested in winning, and maintaining, fame. By making each of her books provide an answer to a topical question of current interest and by lecturing from every podium to which she could gain access, she soon achieved her desire. By doing so, the ‘Grandmother of the World’ kept anthropology in the public eye right up to the year of her death in 1978, demonstrating that there was almost no social
problem on which she (and by implication, others in the discipline) could not pronounce.

The number of departments of anthropology in America had already begun to rise in the 1930s, but it was in the postwar decades that they went through a period of spectacular growth. Universities established hundreds of posts, while the National Institute of Mental Health, the National Science Foundation, and, from the 1960s on, the Ford Foundation funded a broad range of research. Applied anthropology, whose heyday had been the war years, languished during this period. Unlike Boas, the leading anthropologists of the postwar years did not believe that the pursuit of rationalistic approaches would almost inevitably lead to social progress; they were less interested in trying to influence contemporary issues of public import than in elaborating the theoretical sophistication of the discipline. But in the 1970s, as the period of expansion came to an end in the universities, as the supply of government funds was cut back, and as an increasing number of practitioners became dissatisfied with an anthropology that seemed primarily turned in upon itself, more and more began to spend their time utilizing their distinctive methodologies to study problems in education, medicine and related areas. Yet no anthropologist with anything like the public stature of Mead has emerged in this period. No one has been able to put the anthropological message across, to a comparable extent, to non-academic audiences. In fact the two most popular American social anthropologists of the last twenty years—Carlos Castenada and Michael Harner (Atkinson 1993:322)—have, unlike Mead, not been concerned with topics such as the relevance of anthropology in the formulation of public policy. Instead they have appealed, through their espousals, respectively, of ritualized drug-taking and neo-shamanism, to those who reject a Western-based rationalistic approach to the world.

The development of the subject in France followed a somewhat different course compared to its evolution in Britain or the United States. In the nineteenth century, learned societies of gentlemen scholars interested in a wide-ranging (but predominantly physical) anthropology were founded whose members, like their Anglo-Saxon counterparts, participated in the establishment and running of anthropological museums, sponsored public lectures, and assisted in, and so helped to legitimate, popular ethnographic exhibitions (Bender 1965; Schneider 1982: ch. 6). However, unlike the British and American anthropologies of that time, which were not seen to
constitute a grave threat to the established moral order, French anthropology was popularly identified very strongly with antiauthoritarianism and anticlericalism. In 1859 Paul Broca was only allowed, after much negotiation, to found the Société d’Anthropologie on the condition that a plainclothes policeman attend its meetings to ensure that the discussion did not move on to seditious or morally outrageous themes. In the later decades of the century, Broca’s intellectual successors blended left-wing politics with evolutionism in order to produce a combative anthropology with which to fight against the forces of reaction and to promote social change (Hammond 1980).

Given these sorts of predecessors, it is perhaps unsurprising that, in 1913, Marcel Mauss (1969 [1913]) and his colleagues were lamenting the lack of interest displayed by the government of the day in funding research or posts; Mauss had argued for the establishment of a Bureau d’Ethnologie on the grounds of its potential theoretical and practical importance (for the efficient administration of French colonies), but his attempts had come to nothing. If official attitudes were to be reversed, it was necessary, Mauss and his peers thought, to popularize the discipline. The contemporary vogue for astronomy among the general public was, to a great extent, due to the popularizing work of the Parisian scientist Flammarion; what was now needed, one of them argued, was a Flammarion of anthropology. Yet, unlike Boas, Mauss and his circle did not try to correct public prejudices about the racist muddling of biological and social factors, and the only exception to this rule, Henri Hubert (Stensken 1987b), buried his work in learned journals.

Shortly after the end of the First World War, Paul Rivet, a physical anthropologist and director of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadero, took advantage of the recent fashionable interest in le primitif (stimulated by the work of Picasso and other Modernists), to raise money for the founding of the Institut Français d’Ethnologie, for ethnographic expeditions, and for the reorganization of his dilapidated, shambolic museum, which he wanted to be a ‘marvellous instrument of popular education’. ‘Let us open the doors of culture’ became his clarion call. The results are plain: the Institut, backed financially by the Minister of Colonies and the governors of several colonial governments, held its inaugural classes in 1925; the first of what was to be a long series of well-publicized field trips started out the following year. The Colonial Exposition of 1931, in which anthropologists participated, greatly stimulated public interest in the subject, and the

Despite the well-publicized efforts of Rivet and his peers, however, a distinctively social anthropology remained a marginal discipline. In 1929 the rather unworldly Mauss had tried to attract Rockefeller money for the establishment of a grand institute of social science, broadly defined; one of its first tasks would be an ethnographic study of Paris which, he thought, would popularize the discipline and the institute. But the Rockefeller directors had regarded his proposal as utopic, and had given their money to a French economist instead (Fournier 1994:547–51). It was not until the 1950s that the government began to create a substantial number of teaching and research positions (Karady 1972; 1981; n.d.)

Though the subject was institutionally peripheral, it was, and has been, kept in the public eye, of at least the educated sectors of the French populace (who study philosophy in their final years at secondary school), partly because many of its practitioners since the time of Mauss and Lévy-Bruhl have regarded its findings as of direct relevance to contemporary philosophical debate. In this century, one version or another of French social anthropology has never been far from the interests of the avant-garde.

The great postwar exemplar of this tradition is Lévi-Strauss, who was prepared to criticize Sartre, was happy to engage in public debate with philosophers, and remains ready to pass general comments on ultimate questions. In many ways a philosophe and moraliste in the true eighteenth-century manner (Crozier 1964; Hughes 1968), his bestselling Tristes Tropiques may be regarded as an extremely skilful weaving together of autobiography, ethnography and philosophical reflection posing under the genre of travelogue. After Sartre’s death, he became the latest intellectual hero and master-thinker of his country (roles unknown in contemporary British or American culture); yet even before then, structuralism had already replaced existentialism as the dominant intellectual fashion (Pace 1986). Some French journalists (see Chapter Seven), however, have criticized Lévi-Strauss because they found his methodology too ‘scientific’ to be of assistance in answering the big questions of their day. Though it is true that he, unlike Sartre, has not offered the educated French public a metaphysics with moral worth, but an ultra-formal method of seemingly limited relevance beyond the laboratoire, and though most intelligent lay persons cannot comprehend the intricacies of his, at times, arcane analyses, the
popular prestige of his structuralism is almost unassailable, while the power of his prose and the brilliance of his vision have been strong enough to attract dozens of budding intellectuals into the discipline. Indeed Needham (1984) has argued that the popularity of Lévi-Strauss does not rely on the content of his intellectual endeavours, but rather on the idiosyncrasies of the man himself:

the ‘poetic’ quality in his writing; his very obscurities can be seen as enigmatic and hence profound; there are intimations of great mysteries, refractions of perennial insights, echoes of oracular utterances. His vision is hermetical, and his writings have prospered because they promise to reveal what is hidden, the occult factors by which human experience is shaped.

(Needham 1984:393)

On this interpretation, Lévi-Strauss, who joined the circle of exiled surrealists in wartime New York, emerges as the Last of the Great Surrealists, whose almost cabbalistic writings ‘evoke a response liberated from the confinements of exactitude and logic’ (ibid.).

**FOCUS**

The reasons why anthropology is popular at any particular moment are various and changing. A central factor is people’s perennial curiosity about ‘the exotic’, a labile, evolving category, which may simultaneously represent the industrialized West both as its hegemonic opposite and as its counter-hegemonic realization, both as an inversion of publicly promoted values and as an example of privately recognized counter-values. ‘The exotic’ is at one and the same time a source of both repulsion and attraction, of both horror and fascination, and, properly presented, it sells. The more fluently written of the mid-Victorian anthropological literature on the varieties of kinship and marriage, for instance (Tuzin 1994), attracted such a wide readership partly because their authors’ accounts of ‘primitive promiscuity’, alternative connubial arrangements, and other such matters helped to satisfy the sublimated sensuality of their contemporaries. Though ‘the exotic’ is historically contingent, some topics seem to have a long-standing allure. Hunters and gatherers in tropical climes have especially intrigued romanticizing Westerners (e.g. Van der Post 1958) who perceive them as living examples of a primal, authentic humanity now irrevocably lost by Euro-Americans. Shamanism, with its appeal of wildness and transgression, has long interested those reacting to
the hierarchies and institutions of more organized religions (Thomas and Humphrey 1994:2).

While the importance of popular interest in the foreign, the wondrous and the strange is not to be underestimated, those anthropologists whose writings have sold particularly well have been above all those who, whether intentionally or not, have been best able to cater to the particular interests of their lay contemporaries. Most of those academics successful in the extra-academic market have been those most capable of dealing, directly or indirectly, in a convincing manner with subjects central to some of the main social, religious and scientific issues of the day. If ‘Where have we come from? What are we? Where are we going?’ are queries raised whenever the answers provided by established faiths seem insufficient, there have usually been some anthropologists ready to formulate new responses, ones of great appeal to large sections of the public.

A key reason for the spectacular success of Frazer was that he was both encyclopaedic of ethnographic data and eclectic of contemporary intellectual fashions. According to Vickery (1973:4–6, 33–4), he wove together the central strands of thought of his age—J.S.Mill’s rationalism, Matthew Arnold’s historicism, and T.H.Huxley’s evolutionary and scientific outlook—with the contemporary passion for classical and other mythologies. By exploring the interrelated ways of the Ancients, rural Europeans and tribal peoples, he simultaneously civilized the apparently savage and subtly savaged the supposedly civilized. At a time when the unchecked forces of industrialization and imperialism were violently changing the nature of British society and its place in the world, at a time when Britons’ conceptions of the rural and the urban, the past and the present, the indigenous and the foreign, the religious and the secular, were all undergoing radical revision, Frazer’s works proposed a learned but readable response to the questions people posed and to the doubts they harboured. Instead of relying on the old verities, he proffered a cultured agnosticism as the only appropriate attitude to adopt in his time. And, just as possession of the Golden Bough had enabled Virgil’s Aeneas to enter the underworld and return, so could Frazer’s book act as a vade-mecum for those who wished to tour the Other and learn from the experience (Beard 1992:223). As the historian of Greek religion Jane Harrison put it, ‘Sir James has a veritable genius for titles…at the mere sounds of the magical words “Golden Bough”, we heard and understood’ (Harrison 1925:82).

The main reasons for Ruth Benedict’s success are formally similar
to those for Frazer’s: she was an exceptional synthesizer and her moral concerns echoed those of an increasing proportion of the population. Writing at a time when (and contributing to the process whereby) anthropology was replacing natural history as a source of scientific moral authority in the United States, she demonstrated the changeability of convention from society to society, and so questioned both the authority of tradition in the America of her day and the degree to which people’s behaviour is inherent. In place of a rigid Victorian morality, whose underpinnings had already been weakened by philosophers, physicists and artists, she put forward a more supple ethics, one based on relative, not absolute values, one where chaos and order could coexist, where self and society could come to a harmonious compromise (Caffrey 1989). Benedict offered her readers, in sum, a moral position from which to judge, and act in, the world.

The Chrysanthemum and the Sword was a bestseller not only in the English-speaking world but also, rather unexpectedly, in Japan itself, as many Japanese thought it an acute, if provocative, characterization of themselves. If the 1987 survey quoted by Hendry (see Chapter Four) can be believed, maybe as many as twenty million Japanese have read Benedict’s book. Even though she never learnt the language nor visited the country, her book sparked off a national debate, which continues to this day, about the nature of Japanese identity. Even though her work, especially her distinction between shame and guilt, suffered in translation, it is still regarded as genuine source material and as a classic which must be confronted by any indigenous scholar wishing to discuss the nature of Japanese uniqueness. In this unforeseen manner The Chrysanthemum and the Sword has become an integral part of the indigenous way of life itself, influencing its trajectory and its members’ conceptions of themselves. It is the first, and perhaps still the only, example of a deliberately popular ethnography being transformed into an ethnographic text of which subsequent ethnographers of the area must take account. It is the clearest instance yet of an anthropological book fomenting dialogue between the populace and the academy, between subjects and anthropologists, between texts and readers.

Like Benedict, Margaret Mead regarded anthropology as a potentially positive force for social change which, properly transmitted, could influence people’s values and beliefs. Unlike Benedict, who was a very shy person, Mead was a particularly forceful personality who was almost always prepared to opine publicly, in an at times very direct manner on matters of general interest, whether it were child-
rearing, disarmament, race relations, feminism, or the drug culture which arose in the 1960s (Gardner 1996). As one of her colleagues put it, She had a fine sense of what was current and was often diligent in thinking about and publishing readable books and articles on what was coming up in the many shifting preoccupations of her lifetime' (quoted in Howard 1984:167). Another portrayed her more sharply as ‘proffering ideas like mannequins in a fashion book, pausing when she recognized that she had touched a responsive chord' (quoted in Grosskurth 1988:65). In Coming of Age in Samoa, Mead contested the notion that adolescence was necessarily a period of stress and strain independent of local cultural conditions; in Growing up in New Guinea she questioned the belief in the natural creativity of children and claimed to have demonstrated that they needed to be given freedom in order to evolve rich ways of life for themselves; in Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies, she argued against the dominant sexual ideology, grounded on a bogus biology, of men as born aggressors and women as naturally passive. While prepared to attack values and practices she disagreed with, Mead was ready to shower praise on some behaviours, ones which many Americans held dear, such as caring and friendship, and she liked to reassure her audiences with optimistic messages, such as that failure was only the inability to think positively (Grosskurth 1988:75). Never a gloomy doomsayer, she transmitted to audiences her unshakeable conviction that any of them could choose to develop themselves in more or less the way they wished, and they cleaved to her belief in their possibilities.

Malinowski never achieved anything like the degree of popularity enjoyed by Frazer, Benedict, or Mead. Though he was prepared to speak out on the radio or in brief articles, in none of his major works did he directly address the moral issues of his day or offer an alternative ethics for a renovated society. Some of his ethnographies, however, did gain a certain renown, or even notoriety, among the more literate members of the public. While Malinowski did win something of a reputation among certain circles as a moral crusader, the primary basis of his popularity seems to have been educated laypersons' interest in authoritative, authentic accounts of the exotic, especially with respect to the varieties of sexual experience. By presenting his potentially sensationalist material in an academically respectable manner, he allowed otherwise respectable people to indulge the more private realms of their fantasies.

Malinowski was himself well aware of the ways that anthropologists could broaden the audience for their books. Introducing Reo Fortune's
Sorcerers of Dobu (Malinowski 1932a:xvii), he stated, ‘The most spectacular chapter of the book, and the one which will attract not only the anthropologist but a wider public, is the account of sorcery, and Dr Fortune has shown a shrewd appreciation of his book’s appeal in choosing his telling title.’ He named his own works flamboyantly: Crime and Custom in Savage Society (1926), Sex and Repression in Savage Society (1927), and, most notoriously, The Sexual Life of Savages (1929). While on a visit that year to the United States, he wrote to his wife: ‘The English edition of my book is sold on the boulevards alongside The Well of Loneliness, Lady Chatterley’s Lover (a porno-gramme by DH Lawrence) and Frank Harris’s My Life and Loves, so that sounds hopeful’ (in Wayne 1995:143–4).

Despite the titillatory promise of its title, The Sexual Life of Savages is in fact an erudite account of Trobriand domestic life. Nevertheless, the book, which was reprinted three times in as many years, quickly generated much controversy. Firth (1981:114) remembered that ‘When people said of Malinowski, “Ah yes, I’ve read his book,” one never needed to ask which book.’ Reviewers for the prestigious British weeklies chose to concentrate, in a tone of astonished scepticism, on the Trobrianders’ ignorance of the biology of procreation and on the local girls’ apparent ability to fornicate freely without getting pregnant (The Spectator 16 March 1929, p. 427, New Statesman 4 May 1929, p. x). The prurient were fascinated by the detailed and explicit accounts in the book of Trobriand sexual behaviour. Others were not so approving. The novelist Elspeth Huxley (1985:195) covered her copy in brown paper so as not to offend visitors to her flat. A Scots writer deplored the fact that his compatriots were more familiar with Trobrianders’ sex lives than with their own history: ‘Of what interest was the Gael without sexual attraction? Only if there arose a Malinowski of the Gael might they shew interest’ (Barke 1936:81).

Robert Graves (Graves and Hodge 1940:92) complained of anthropologists who ‘could not disguise their bawdy relish in the sex habits of primitives’ and who published their reports ‘as refined erotic reading than as stern works of research’. The Governor-General of Tanganyika (quoted in Huxley 1985:255) urged that Colonial Service Cadets should not have to study ‘the eccentricities of remote Papuans, the scars they make on their bottoms and their unsavoury sexual habits scarcely any anthropologist can keep off’.

Malinowski had gone too far, and he realized it. As he admitted, he had fed public interest a little too eagerly: ‘We are enjoying now a surfeit of sex—I alone have to plead guilty to four books on the
subject, two of which have the name “sex” on the title-page. Sex has been emphasized for many reasons, some very good, some rather extraneous’ (1932b:x). In a ‘Special Foreword to the Third Edition' of the book (1932c:xix), he strove to reorient readers by emphasizing that he had wanted the book ‘to be regarded as an achievement in field-work and in methods of exposition…But this experimental and ambitious aim has not, so far as I can judge, received the attention which I wished it to receive.' However, it appeared people were less interested in accounts of functionalism than of fornication. The book continued to sell. Indeed, it is still in print today.

Malinowski's interest in gaining the attention of the public was such that he was, at times, prepared to expurgate his own books. Havelock Ellis was 'really alarmed and shocked' when Malinowski confessed to him that he had toned down certain details—particularly the subject of unpleasant smells—in order not to offend the sensibilities of his readers. In a letter to his friend, Malinowski tried to justify his self-censorship:

I would prefer not to shock. So in my more scientific work, while seeking to say everything necessary to be said in simple bald uncoloured words (avoiding the use of any Latin, which I regard as a most offensive practice), I have always omitted any crude and repellent details which do not seem to me necessary for the comprehension of the matter in hand, while in my personal writings I seek to express the shocking things in a quiet, suave, matter-of-course way, sugar-coating the pill. (Some of my shocking things have never been discovered!) I do not mean that I regard the sugar-coating as indispensable, but merely that I prefer to use it so far as possible. Only, when used, it must not be visible! It seems to me a serious error to show even the slightest consciousness that one is shocking. Any excuse or apology is fatal.

(quoted in Grosskurth 1980:383–4)

Malinowski wanted to educate, not to lose, his public, and so hid the fact that he was hiding anything.

Some anthropologists have gained popularity, not by explaining the course of humanity or the present problems of the West in anthropological terms, nor by writing sexually explicit ethnographies, but by penning personal accounts of fieldwork itself. Anthropology is a peculiar discipline, one in which the researcher is the key instrument of research. Though some have instituted ‘objective'
research methods in their effort to reduce the effects of this individuality, the central tool of ethnography is still the sole ethnographer. Their books are not reports of twiddling knobs to ensure the instrument is working properly but accounts of individuals getting to know other, very different people, in arduous but exotic circumstances. They are meant to be authentic and authoritative, for their authors are supposed to be intellectuals and, now that explorers no longer have anywhere to ‘discover’, they feed an already established public demand (Riffenburgh 1994) for the narratives of heroic adventurers in foreign places. As I argue in my own contribution to this book (see Chapter Eleven), the content and format of successful fieldwork accounts have, like other popular works of anthropology, changed in tune with the development of the authors’ own society. Among accounts of fieldwork by British-trained anthropologists, Laura Bohannan’s Return to Laughter, which presented time spent among exotic Others as a spiritual quest for oneself, was particularly appropriate for her postwar Oxford peers who either filled the ranks of the Christian Union or adopted Being and Nothingness as their Bible. Three decades later the books by Nigel Barley were a timely puncturing of Susan Sontag’s pretentious, sexist and, by then, widely-accepted trope of the ‘anthropologist as hero’. In the United States, the first volumes in Castaneda’s ‘Don Juan’ series appealed to members of the drug culture seeking ‘alternative realities’, especially those which could be entered without undergoing a laborious initiatory period of formal instruction and rational argumentation; his later books, in which women come to the fore, chimed with the rise of feminism (Needham 1985:190–1).

Most books about fieldwork, such as those by Bohannan and Barley, are about time spent in the field, not about the intellectual process of fieldwork itself. Rather than detail what their authors were trying to do there, they dwell lovingly on their protagonists’ experience: the blunders they make, the friendships they forge, the dramas they witness, the self-realizations they come to, the tears they shed on departure. Philippe Descola’s Les lances du crépuscule reverses this trend. As he describes in his chapter, his book is not just another chronicle of tribulations in an exotic setting, but an anthropological whodunit. It represents the fieldwork of himself and his wife as a series of steps by which they slowly came to comprehend, in their own terms, something of the Amazonians they were living with. Deliberately imitating the writers of detective novels, he leaves a trail of clues through his text. When, for example, he comes to interpret shamanic trance, or when
in his account the identity of a murderer is finally clarified, astute readers will already have put together much of the relevant information themselves. At the same time, he portrays the way he and his wife—fellow sleuths on a trail of their own making—continued to sift their confused and ambiguous material until they were able to construct interpretations they found coherent and satisfying. In this Agatha-Christiean mode, Descola provides a new portrait of practitioners: the fieldworker as gumshoe.

**STYLE**

Popularizers have popular style. They are wordsmiths forging phrases of extra-academic appeal, for people who are not paid to read, but who pay to read, in the free time they have available. Their audience cannot be assumed. It has to be won. Like other academics, popularizers employ a rhetoric which they consider appropriate to their readership. But, as Campbell argues in a strongly polemical manner in this volume (see Chapter Two), unlike many other academics they do not confuse the erudite with the dull, nor the popular with the frivolous, and they question the conventionally accepted opposition of the scholarly versus the accessible. As far as they are concerned, obscure, difficult prose is only for those who do not know how to express themselves. Good ideas do not have to be couched in esoteric mannerisms or be burdened with endnotes and other tired emblems of supposed scholarship. As the limpid styles of, for instance, Evans-Pritchard and Godfrey Lienhardt demonstrate, just because one’s prose is fluent and easy to read does not necessarily mean that one’s ideas are thereby any the less serious, subtle or complex. If an idea has any power or any potential, its promise need not be confined only to those who are prepared to struggle through laboured prose. Marrett in his day commented, ‘So long as he who writes on such topics is profuse in facts, vivid in style, and not too technical in language—this last condition being not the least important—he may confidently reckon on a fair sale’ (Marrett 1910:299). Popularization, in other words, is about openness, not about closing the university gates to all those who lack letters after their name.

Part of the reason for Frazer’s remarkable success was his ability to convey his views, without distorting them, in a language free of technical jargon and obscure expression. Preferring eloquent elegy to clumsily formulated dogma, he did not present his arguments in a doctrinaire manner, but skilfully blended modesty of statement
with a grand literary style, one sprung with biblical and Latinate rhythms (Lienhardt 1992:7). The weighty result he leavened with irony, humour and an artful, sustained use of concrete imagery. Frazer, in other words, was not trying to batter his readers with the power of bald logic, but to persuade them with the appeal of his rhetoric (Vickery 1973:20–32). As the record of his sales shows, if he did not always manage to win over his enormous audience, at the very least they were prepared to read his words.

Malinowski, taking Frazer as one of his two main literary models (the other was Conrad), used the same elegiac tone and similarly framed his work as an odyssey into another world with himself as the readers’ expert guide: ‘Let us imagine that we are sailing along the South coast of New Guinea towards its Eastern end…’ (1922:33). Heeding the example of his mentor, Malinowski detailed the landscape and ambience of his exotic island ‘home’ in compellingly vivid terms. ‘I found’, he wrote to Frazer, ‘That the more scenery and “atmosphere” was given in the account, which you had at your disposal, the more convincing and manageable to the imagination was the ethnology of that district’ (Malinowksi Correspondence 25/10/ 1917, LSE, quoted in Thornton 1985:7). His prose, which seldom strays into the highly abstract, is thick with adjectives of colour, tone, feeling and size. He employs what Payne calls a ‘Syntax of Agency’: his preferred tense is the present, and his favoured voice the active; things have not ‘been done’, Trobrianders (and Malinowski) ‘do’ them. As an exotic-yarn-spinner, with a rare tale to tell, Malinowski at times blurs the line between mytho-poetic fiction and what is drawn from actual experience. He also classes his characters archetypically: the indigenes, with their mysterious but explicable ways; the cramp-minded colonial residents, who always get the locals wrong; the Ethnographer-as-Hero, who sets our understanding straight (Payne 1981; Stocking 1983). And, just in case readers failed to observe the correspondences between his style and Frazer’s, Malinowski gave his cleverly crafted work a similarly classical title and even had the great man preface it. He wanted *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* to be seen, in part, as a *Golden Bough* for his times. As he wrote to his wife, ‘May it really be a golden fleece!’ (in Wayne 1995:26).

Many of Malinowski’s academic successors did not approve of his literary style (nor that of Firth’s ‘belletristic’ *We, The Tikopia* [Hocart 1937]). Wishing to regard anthropology as a science which investigated normative social systems, they disliked the romantic streak within his works. Evans-Pritchard (1951:93) branded his
Argonauts as ‘journalistic’, while others thought he contextualized events too widely and detailed them too vividly (Kaberry 1957:85). They were also well aware that the internal unity of his books relied less on logical organization than on his skill as a writer. As Firth acknowledged, Malinowski was not a systematist, rather a representative of a romantic mode of thought who was impatient with ‘the neat verbal definition’ (quoted in Symmons-Symonolewicz 1958). Even he, the most loyal of Malinowski’s students, has described his mentor’s book against modern war as ‘politically naive’ and its philosophical analysis of the word ‘freedom’ as ‘homespun’ (Firth 1988:36). Kluckhohn (1943:211), lamenting the lack of Boasian austerity and of a sustained note of high seriousness in Malinowski’s writings, charged him with being ‘frequently wordy, often flippant, occasionally trivial, pretentious, even cheap’. It was difficult for an anthropologist of Kluckhohn’s temperament to take seriously a colleague who could write in the foreword to one of his major ethnographies:

Let me confess at once: the magnificent title of the Functional School of Anthropology has been bestowed by myself, in a way on myself, and to a large extent out of my own sense of irresponsibility…The only thing which I can claim in extenuation of this act of self-appointment was that it was not done without some sense of humour.

Oh, I am the cook and the captain bold,
And the mate of the Nancy brig:
And the bo’sun tight
And the midship mite
And the crew of the captain’s gig…
(Malinowski 1932c:xxix–xxx)

Trobianders might have remembered Malinowski as ‘The Man of Songs’ (Hogbin 1946), but his successors did not share his taste in ditties from Gilbert and Sullivan, nor did they imitate his irreverent example. These sober characters preferred to remain within their academic confines. Rather than run the risk of detailing the imponderabilia of actual life and of thus being thought ‘impressionistic and subjective’ (Kaberry 1957), they preferred to write ethnographies which were much more analytical, relatively lifeless and totally humourless. The only attempt at a joke Evans-Pritchard (1940:13) ever made in print was to say that after a few weeks of associating
solely with the stubbornly unforthcoming Nuer, ‘one displays, if the
pun be allowed, the most evident symptoms of “Nuerosis”’. Malinowski had wanted to flesh out his accounts and to put blood into his characters. His successors were content to provide a much more dry, skeletal framework, illustrated with filigree-like diagrams of kinship and clan structure. Indeed, the concern with ethnographic formality became such that Evans-Pritchard’s students learnt to write their accounts of individual societies according to a standard format with a set series of one institution per chapter, supposedly to aid a rather mechanical form of comparison. Though Evans-Pritchard did advise his doctoral students freshly back from the field to write their theses like novels ‘with a strong beginning, a solid middle and a good end’, he did not want them to produce evocative representations of the exotic, but dispassionate, formalized, structural analyses tied to a narrative peg. Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa* he crabbed as a ‘discursive, or perhaps I should say chatty and feminine, book with a leaning towards the picturesque, what I might call the rustling-of-the-wind-in-the-palm-trees kind of anthropological writing, for which Malinowski set the fashion’ (1951:96).

Like Malinowski, Benedict employed artistic devices in her prose, mainly because she was deliberately aiming her books at a mass market. The audience she wished to reach was what she called ‘Macy shoppers’: those ‘ordinary’ men and women who, according to her, created a culture. Benedict felt strongly that if she was to move this category of reader, she, a published poet, had to use a literary style which would make the lessons of her book both enjoyable to learn and meaningful in day-to-day experience. She was also particularly concerned about the production and promotion of *Patterns of Culture*. She debated with friends and her editor the merits and demerits of over fifty titles for the book, worried about the colour of its cover, rewrote its blurb several times, insisted that its price be as low as possible, and got Mead to publicize it in conversations and reviews (Modell 1983:208–12).

Mead, whose literary talents were not as great as those of Benedict, was equally anxious that her books should be highly readable. *Coming of Age in Samoa* is set in a seemingly timeless ethnographic present, and written in a patently romantic style, by an apparently all-knowing ethnographer who is not troubled by doubts—and who relegated methodological and historical aspects of her study to appendices. Even in *New Lives for Old. Cultural Transformations—Manus, 1928–1953* (1956), written twenty-five years later and which took historical
change as its central theme, Mead, although by then much more methodologically sophisticated, continued to employ a romanticizing mode and to present herself as an untroubled, omniscient witness: ‘the short tropical twilight’ continues to ‘close down on us’ and there is still ‘bright moonlight, without a ruffle of wind’ (Mead 1956:35, 42). Evans-Pritchard and other British theorists may have disliked the literary expressiveness of her work, but she was less interested in impressing them than her public. To ensure that her readers could always understand her message, she used to lay stress on actual people and recognizable relationships: as she once said to Radcliffe-Brown, ‘For me the most important thing is to study reality—real objects and real events—and to talk about them in terms of abstractions, but not to treat abstractions as though they were realities’ (quoted in Grosskurth 1988:65).

Some popularizers do not only know how to write. They also know how to perform, catching the attention of their audience with the cultivated tricks of their personal style as much as with the power of their arguments. Though Margaret Mead, as Mitchell reveals in his poignant portrait of his former teacher, was a passionate and lively speaker (her advice to those unskilled in the art was ‘Begin with something very startling, prove that it was wrong, say something outlandish, and be alliterative’ [Howard 1984:374]), in her later life she did come partly to rely on patently theatrical props. Cutting a distinctive figure, she would march up to the lectern cloaked in a brocaded cape and wielding a shoulder-high forked staff, which she would stamp if she felt it necessary. Mead revelled in looking like a prophet and well knew the effect her costume had. Fellow anthropologists might carp at such seemingly non-academic behaviour, but that, of course, does not mean that many of the more successful among them are not themselves performers, albeit in a somewhat different, possibly less blatant mode.

Malinowski was similarly not scared of being polemical, and vigorously engaged on public platforms with other intellectuals about the issues of his day. As a shrewd missionary advised Audrey Richards (1943:4), ‘Invite Malinowski to the opening session of a conference: half the audience will disagree with him violently, but the discussions will go with a swing from the start.’ His personal style, however, failed to impress many of his colleagues. If many British anthropologists had little time for popularization, they had even less for someone who acted as his own popularizer. Evans-Pritchard, who praised Tylor for avoiding the ‘stage-making proclivities’ of most of his
contemporaries, thought Malinowski ‘a bloody gas-bag’ (Evans-Pritchard 1951:31; Goody 1995:74). Beyond a reduced circle of disciples centred around his seminar, few were enamoured of Malinowski’s at times extravagant ways. Several were infuriated by his fondness for harlequinade (Lowie 1938:241; Kluckhohn 1943:208; Firth 1957:10–11; Barkan 1992:125). Like the angry critics of Mead who thought that her desire for public prominence led her at times to trivialize the findings of the discipline, they considered that a discipline as worthy as theirs deserved more responsible emissaries to the extra-mural world.

THE VARIETIES OF POPULARIZERS

So far I have discussed only popular works by academic anthropologists who sought, or seek, to reach a wider readership. Yet only a relatively small number of practising anthropologists popularize their discipline. Most have neither the gift nor the inclination, while some are scared that writing a popular work will lead to them being ostracized by their more strait-laced peers. Not surprising then, that a large number of the books aimed at the popular market which deal with anthropology in one way or another are in fact written not by academic anthropologists, but by either: those who, though trained in anthropology, did not remain (or did not remain solely) in academic life; knowledgeable lay persons curious about other ways of life; educated people who have learnt some anthropology and wish to propagate its practice among the populace, or scholars from other disciplines who are perceived as anthropologists by their non-academic readers.

A significant group here consists of those female graduates of anthropology who did not enter the university hierarchy. Okely argues (see Chapter Nine) that one reason why these educated women became popularizers is that they were interested in topics, such as menstruation, sexual behaviour, birth and childcare, which were not generally considered appropriate subjects of academic study until the 1980s. Though there was a considerable popular market for books on these themes, anthropological enquiry being a usefully genteel means of conveying, for example, rudimentary sexual instruction (Bennett 1995:28), there was very little demand within the universities for research into them. Furthermore, since a disproportionately low number of female anthropology students went on to lectureships, let alone professorial posts, the women who
wrote on these topics were most likely untenured. Thus, by producing works for the only market open to them—the non-academic public—these women, already bordering on the margins, tended to confirm in the eyes of their more well-established colleagues their marginal status. In effect, the marginalized were forced to practise a professionally marginal activity: popular anthropology. There they were joined by feminists, such as Germaine Greer, who found in ethnographies some of the material they were seeking with which to question the contemporary Western conventions of sexually appropriate behaviour.

There is also a heterogeneous group of trained anthropologists who have not followed the traditional trajectory of academic anthropology and who would not, most likely, consider themselves popularizers, yet whose writings have served to popularize interest in the subject. Otherwise unclassifiable, independently-minded characters, whose careers cannot be pigeonholed in a conventional manner, such as Michel Leiris and Francis Huxley, fit in here. Leiris entered anthropology via surrealism, studied with Mauss, and travelled with Griaule. Throughout his life he was both a professional ethnographer and a writer, winning distinguished prizes for his volumes of poetry and autobiography. If there is anything approaching a unity to the corpus of his work it lies in his desire to explore the resources of language and, in his own words, ‘to enlarge our understanding of humanity’ (quoted in Jamin 1991:414). He regarded his autobiography as a form of self-ethnography, and his ethnographies as, partly, studies in a rigorous subjectivity. Rejecting the idea that anthropology served any purpose and changed anything, he was only prepared to admit that his writings had ‘helped a few people see things a bit more lucidly’ (in Price and Jamin 1988:170).

Francis Huxley might phrase his work in similar terms. In the course of his life, he has moved from social anthropology—his accounts of fieldwork in the Amazon (1956) and Haiti (1966) are not catalogues of his own tribulations but attempts, through the use of anecdotes, to let the locals ‘speak for themselves’—via the work of R.D.Laing and Lewis Carroll (1976) into illustrated books on the anthropology of religion (1974) and esoteric symbolism (1986; 1990). In the process, he has in some ways followed the example of his uncle, Aldous, in wishing to investigate alternative realities, and that of his father, Julian (who wrote several successful books of popular science), in not wishing to restrict the work of academics to academic readerships. If there is anything common to his work and that of
Leiris, it is a sustained dissatisfaction with a narrowly erudite discourse and with the parcelling off of domains of knowledge within purely scholastic terrain. Unlike Malinowski, Benedict and Mead, these idiosyncratic individuals have not chosen to be popularizers of anthropology for the sake of making the discipline better known and understood; rather, they have not wished to bolster a distinction between the academic and the non-academic. Of course, in doing so, they have indirectly helped to popularize the subject.

Perhaps this is the point at which to mention Patrick Putnam (1904–1953), a Bostonian who spent his adult life on the edge of the Zairean rainforest, where he built and ran an infirmary, a tourist hotel and a reserve for exotic local animals. The main attraction of the area for Putnam and his monied visitors, however, were the pygmies who periodically resided at the camp and whom he hired to stage spectacles of ‘pygmy customs’. Putnam, who had attended classes in anthropology at Harvard, did not popularize the pygmies in print, but he did take financial advantage of their perennial appeal to others. His eccentric status as ‘King of the World in the Land of the Pygmies’ relied on his ability to facilitate their popularization by visiting journalists and filmmakers and the young Colin Turnbull, whom he greatly encouraged (Mark 1995). Such resident anthropologists manqués, though popularly represented as anthropologists, are not so much popularizers in their own right but key intermediaries in the popularization of indigenes by others. They are crucial enablers in the process, rather than manufacturers of the final product.

The more narrow-minded of academic anthropologists look down upon popular works, though their authors are often able to describe certain activities and domains better than their more hide-bound brethren. Ethnographies written by professional practitioners of the genre cannot cover every aspect of a way of life, and those not included may well be described—maybe even, in some ways, better described—by non-academics and amateur ethnographers, such as missionaries (e.g. Leenhardt [Clifford 1982]), white settlers (e.g. Asterisk 1923; Jamin 1979; Young 1992), colonial administrators (e.g. Man 1885; Robertson 1897) and visiting novelists. In the Australian case, for instance (Morphy; see Chapter Eight), the Queenslander Bill Harney, who spent his entire life working with or among the indigenes, portrays in his books something strikingly absent from the texts of most anthropologists: the now-past cross-cultural interface, where Aboriginal men sold their labour to ranchers and Aboriginal women sold their bodies to those with cash, where white workers could see themselves as forming,
together with the Aborigines, an underclass opposed to the cattle barons, police and government officials. In more recent times, the British novelist Bruce Chatwin has written about the modern version of that intercultural border. Since entrance through this nebulous boundary is now negotiated by a variety of Aboriginal ‘advisers’ (a group which includes ethnographers), it is not perhaps surprising that so many Australian anthropologists have criticized his book so much. For they themselves have, for once, been treated as ‘informants’. Instead of studying other peoples, they have been studied, like other peoples, by an outsider, and the process has made them feel uncomfortable. Yet if one aim of anthropology is to portray and analyse the varieties of social practices, then the frontier—a culture of its own—is as appropriate an object of investigation as any other. Just because anthropologists are themselves members of that society is no reason for not studying it. We’re not special.

In my experience and that of several of my colleagues, many people regard the (highly successful) work of scholars such as Joseph Campbell (e.g. 1960) and Mircea Eliade (e.g. 1960; 1964) as eminently anthropological. Though the former is a comparative mythologist, who held a post in a department of literature, and the latter a historian of religions, both fill their books with analyses of ethnographic material. Both employ eclectic methodologies (drawing on, among others, psychology [especially Jungianism], diffusionism and modern social anthropology). Both organize their material according to their own pre-established typologies, take their world as their limit, and display almost encyclopaedic pretensions. For some of these reasons, they might be classed as ‘neo-Frazerians’. Indeed, reviewers of their books have compared the projects of both of them with that of Frazer, while Eliade virtually parrots his predecessor when he states (1960:14) that his ultimate aim is to be ‘our guide upon those far journeys, and...serve as interpreter in our encounters with the most “alien” among the “others”’. Like the present market for The Golden Bough (which is being kept in print in Britain by two separate publishing houses), the main readership for these authors today seems to be New Age mystics and prospective members of that loosely defined movement.

Perhaps one of the most sustained, and potentially one of the most radical, attempts to popularize the practice of social anthropology was that of Mass Observation (MacClancy 1995). Its organizers thought that, by training volunteers to become systematic observers of their own and others’ lives, and by publishing synoptic reports of these
observations, they could help people to empower themselves. But this popularizing endeavour by a team of independently-minded, boundary-blurring researchers, none of whom had received a formal education in anthropology, was not approved of by the majority of British social anthropologists who at that time (the mid-1930s) were primarily concerned with establishing a common set of disciplinary conventions. Many Victorian anthropologists had been keen to promote the practice of ethnography among educated expatriates. Their successors were not so happy to see amateur fieldworkers on their own doorstep. Evans-Pritchard called Mass Observation ‘bilge’ (Goody 1995:74). Its leaders, however, were not out to please the professors but to inform the British public, and they continued, despite academic criticism, to practise and to promote their own (very popular) brand of anthropology. Indeed the organization still continues.

What the examples of Campbell, Eliade and Mass Observation also reveal is the tension between academic and popular definitions of ‘anthropology’. For, while university-based scholars may wish to restrict its application to those texts and practices of which they approve (and thereby indirectly legitimate their own defining position with the anthropological hierarchy), others may wish to use a more plural, less restrictive conception of the term, one which attempts to broaden its membership and serves to accommodate a democratic variety rather than narrow its audience and sharpen a hegemonic singularity. This tension is not new. In 1898, Haddon (1898:v) wrote in the introduction to one of his popular works that ‘my wish is not merely to interest my readers, but to induce them to become workers’. The next year, C.H.Read (1900:9) stated the opposite view in his presidential address to the Anthropological Institute: ‘While it would be doing good work to popularize anthropology, I doubt whether it would benefit anthropology to be popular, as a science.’

**PUBLISHERS**

An account of the popularization of social anthropology with any pretension to roundness would have to include a study of the structure of the publishing industry: what sorts of anthropology can be printed when, where (in books or magazines?), how easily, by what sort of publishing house, and to what effect? Such a study has yet to be carried out (see, e.g. Tebbel 1987; Feather 1988), and all I can do here is to indicate the very barest outlines such an investigation might take.
It was not until well into the 1930s that university presses began to produce books of anthropology. Up to that time, anthropologists had given their manuscripts to commercial publishers, usually ones with a tradition of printing scholarly monographs. Macmillan published all of *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915)—valuing it for the authors it drew to the imprint (Morgan 1944:173)—and all of Westermarck’s multivolume works (1906, 1921, 1926), while Routledge’s stable included Reo Fortune, Audrey Richards and Malinowski. Even as late as 1942, Chatto and Windus were prepared to print such a monumental tome as Layard’s *Stone Men of Malekula*—over 800 pages of small type and intricate kinship diagrams. In the late Victorian and Edwardian period, anthropologists such as Haddon also contributed to the various popular series produced by British publishers, such as the *Harmsworth History of the World*, which purported to be encyclopaedic and ‘scientific’ in the presentation of the Empire (Coombes. 1994:205). In the interwar years, series of pocket books provided anthropologists with another outlet for their abilities, and for gain: Watts and Co.’s ‘Thinker’s Library’ produced shorter books by Elliot Smith, Frazer and Haddon, and reprinted Tylor’s *History of Anthropology* in two volumes; Elliot Smith edited *In the Beginning of Things* for Gerald Howe Ltd.; Kegan Paul, Trench and Traubner included two essays by Malinowski (1926; 1927) and a debate between him and Elliot Smith (Elliot Smith et al. 1928) in its ‘Psyche Miniatures’ series; Nelson had Firth write *Human Types* (1938) for its ‘Discussion Books’. But the war ended production of these series while, by the late 1940s, ethnographies had become so technical and arid in style that they were only put out by university presses and those commercial houses (such as Routledge, and Cohen and West) which maintained a speciality in academic publishing.

Since that time, in Britain and America, anthropologists who have wanted their books to reach beyond a market of fellow academics and students have been hampered by the almost rigid distinction which has arisen, and has been maintained by publishers and booksellers, between specialist and ‘trade’ books, i.e. between books sold by catalogue or in specialist outlets, and books which, while not aimed at the mass market, are intended for a broad readership and sold in commercial booksellers. Which category a book fits into influences the discount offered to its seller, the rate of returns, its shelf life, the budget devoted to its presentation, and the possibility of its author receiving an advance. Attempts during the boom in higher education in the 1960s and early 1970s to cut
across this divide almost all failed. The Penguin ‘Anthropology
Library’, which published paperback versions of basic texts such
as Mary Douglas’s Purity and Danger, closed within a few years,
as did the Paladin paperback series which included works by
Bateson, Roy Willis, and Tiger and Fox. What has been successful
is the paperback series of précised ethnographies, ‘Case Studies in
Cultural Anthropology’, put out by Holt, Rinehart and Winston
since 1961, edited by the Stanford anthropologists George and
Louise Spindler, and designed to meet the burgeoning market of
introductory students in the social sciences. The series, still
expanding, now runs to over fifty titles, Chagnon’s paperbacks on
the Yanomamo (1983) being the most famous, and their heady
mixture of sex, drugs and violence in an exotic setting appealing
strongly to undergraduate audiences.

In the last decade the specialist/trade distinction has become even
sharper, with the virtual end of reviews in the quality press of
ethnographies and academic anthropology, the decline of smaller
publishers, who were able to maintain a foothold in the specialist or
academic fields, and the ascendancy of accountancy and marketing
practices within the larger commercial houses. Books attempting to
overcome this economic divide are now rare, a possible recent example
being Adam Kuper’s (1994) book on the contemporary debates
between biological and social anthropologists, which has already
been bought by an American book club. The only popular series in
which anthropologists are now able to participate are the ‘partworks’
(e.g. Man, Myth and Magic) produced by mass market publishers
such as Marshall Cavendish.

From the Victorian period up to the beginning of the Second
World War, many anthropologists both in Britain and America were
prolific contributors to literary weeklies and monthlies. Indeed, in
the late nineteenth century, the London-based Fortnightly Review
‘published essays by the major sociocultural evolutionists which, in
terms of their content and style of argument, could just as well have
appeared in the Journal of the Anthropological Institute’ (Stocking
1987:325). In the 1960s and 1970s a few British anthropologists (above
all, Leach) did write brief essays for weeklies such as New Society
and The Listener. But both of those journals, and many others like
them, have since folded, and today the only significant outlets for
anthropologists with pretensions to literary journalism are The London
In the early 1980s (see Benthall, Chapter Six) the Royal Anthropological Institute tried to bridge the gap between anthropologists and non-specialists by producing a bimonthly, *Anthropology Today*. The original objective was to produce an anthropological equivalent of *Encounter*, providing an anthropological perspective on contemporary social issues (Houtman and Knight 1995). But the economic risks of distributing the journal through booksellers and newsagents were so great that it is still only obtainable by subscription. As such, its main, present function appears to be informing anthropologists (and some people in associated fields) of some of the sorts of work being done in the name of anthropology of which they would otherwise be unaware. In other words, Benthall introduces us to a further variety of popularization, that *within* the academy of anthropologists.

This rather bleak picture of a cumulative anthropological confinement, a compound of academic practice and the economics of the marketplace, does not apply to the French publishing and newspaper industries. There, anthropologists such as Marc Abélès write regularly for the quality press and have their latest works fully reviewed (see Casajus, Chapter Seven). When Jack Goody, then the professor at Cambridge, visited l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes to give a series of lectures, *Le Figaro* ran a pair of full pages on him and his work for three consecutive days. It is extremely hard to imagine *The Times* or *The New York Times* acting in a similar manner if his Parisian equal came to speak at Oxford or Columbia.

In France, the divide between specialist and trade books is traditionally much less wide, while the continuing contiguity between anthropology and the avant-garde has ensured that all but the most technical of ethnographies may be seriously considered by commercial publishers. Even such an intellectually demanding account as Remo Guideri's *La Route des mortes* (1981) was published by a non-academic press, Editions Seuil. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this almost seamless spectrum from the popular to the most rigorously scholastic is the success of ‘Terre Humaine’ (Casajus, Descola), whose over fifty titles have so far sold more than five million copies. Started in 1955 at Editions Plon by Jean Malaurie, an anthropologist of the Arctic, his aim was not to produce, as in the Anglo—American tradition, a series—one confined to a particular academic speciality or genre of literature—but a ‘collection’ of eyewitness accounts of ways of life by novelists, poets, writers, social anthropologists, and ‘indigenous authors’. In his own words,
While we do publish studies of societies and peoples, ‘Terre Humaine’s’ main originality is to do with the fact that its authors are from very different countries and backgrounds, with a wide range of political commitments and of approaches to human phenomena. These approaches are, in sum, complementary. In my opinion, the writing of first-hand documentary testimony can belong to great literature…. We were the first to put top people and supposedly lower-rank people on the same literary level: Lévi-Strauss and a Turkish primary-school teacher or Russian peasant. We have taken rural thought out of the university museum and folklore studies in which it was bogged down. *Le Cheval d’Orgueil* by Pierre-Jakez Hélias, the autobiography of a Breton peasant sold 2 million copies and was like a clap of thunder in French publishing. To start with, it showed townspeople that peasants were not the idiots they thought them to be, but bearers of a complex thought. And then, every Frenchmen discovered that he had in his father or grandfather some peasant ancestry. The French intelligentsia discovered its own mental, religious and mythic substrate in European peasant civilization. And a number of books in the ‘Terre Humaine’ collection are used in baccalaureate and university courses.

(in Benthall 1987:8-9)

Instead of precariously straddling a well-marked divide, as would be the case for a British or an American editor, Malaurie has exploited the richness of the meeting-place between literature and social anthropology. In the process, he has produced books which can be read for enjoyment by intellectuals, urban-dwellers and schoolchildren.

**THE PERILS OF POPULARIZATION AND THE PRESS**

Books such as Benedict’s *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* and Bohannan’s *Return to Laughter* may be regarded as the ‘quality’ sector of the market for popular anthropology, where academics try hard and conscientiously to communicate to the public some of the lessons their discipline may teach. There is also what we might call a ‘tabloid’ sector to this market, where anthropologists popularize their and others’ work in an unscrupulous, sensationalist manner. Castaneda fits in here, as do Colin Turnbull, Derek Freeman and a whole gallery of unattractive others.

Turnbull’s caricature of the Ugandan Ik, *The Mountain People* (1972), was such a bestseller that it has even been turned into a
ballet (see James, Chapter Three), where the Ik are held up to the public as a dramatic, exotic example of the way poverty can corrode all aspects of moral life. Yet the book is such a throughgoing misrepresentation of Ik ways that they later told a visiting linguist (Heine 1985, also de Waal 1993) that should Turnbull ever dare to return to their land they would force him ‘to eat his own faeces’. It is not too fanciful to suggest that Turnbull, who felt that anthropologists had a duty to popularize their findings because of their unique moral significance (Middleton 1994), wanted to repeat the success of *The Forest People* (1961). This romanticizing portrayal of the Mbuti pygmies as unselfish hunter-gatherers wandering contentedly through the rainforests of Zaire was used to contrast with what he saw as the self-centred and calculating ways of Westerners. It seems that by the 1970s his desire to produce an equally vivid portrayal of a different people, from which another, clear moral message could be drawn, led him to misreport the Ik so grossly that the ensuing controversy destroyed much of his reputation as an ethnographer.

Freeman (1983) is a somewhat different, and in many ways more interesting, case because he criticized Mead’s *Coming of Age in Samoa* on the grounds of ethnographic misrepresentation for a popularizing end, though being guilty of precisely the same himself (Brady 1983; Scheper-Hughes 1984). Both in fact provided an oversimplified account of Samoan life: Mead, for the sake of questioning the simple-minded biological determinism of her time, Freeman, for the sake of lauding a universal, biological ‘maternal instinct’. Perhaps the most important outcome of this debate was the reminder that ethnographers are not the providers of eternal verities, but of partial truths and, unless they can be shown to be culpable of deliberate, gross misrepresentation, cannot be flatly accused of being totally ‘wrong’ or unreservedly praised for being completely ‘right’. In the process, it is the public who are misled, and, once the heat of debate has cooled, left with the awareness that anthropologists may not be as authoritative or honest as many of them would like to claim.

A comment on the Holt, Rinehart and Winston series may also fit into this section on the perils of popularization, as the potential dangers of using these potted ethnographies as class texts are very real (see James, Chapter Three). For in order for each of these accounts to be distinctive, and therefore to sell, authors need to emphasize cultural singularity at the expense of other approaches, such as drawing out the nature of and similarities between social systems among different groups. Thus lecturers, by using these précised accounts of
other peoples as substitute teaching texts for full-length ethnographies, can well end up exaggerating cultural difference for the sake of contrast and argument, as well as typecasting peoples in the process. The Yanomamo become aggressive brinkmen, the Senoi mystical dreamers, the Mbúti peace-loving Greens avant la lettre, and so on. The richness of these various peoples’ ways of lives is reduced to a gallery of stark portraits (Patterns of Culture was criticized in similar terms), as though they constituted a pedagogical exhibition arranged by the course instructor. They have been oversimplified into exemplars of personality archetypes, and their characters transformed into caricatures. In the case of Anthropology Today, the market closed off certain of its options; in the context discussed by Okely, publishers exploited a market eschewed by the academy: in contrast, in the case James provides, the market acts in concert with the academy, to their mutual benefit, and commoditizes cultures in the process.

Some anthropologists are wary of popularization because they are worried about the ways others may use their words. Comments such as those made by one reviewer of Malinowski’s Argonauts would only confirm their fears: ‘The author’s infinitely careful scientific method makes the material he has collected so completely trustworthy that it is possible to use it for all sorts of purposes for which it was not directly intended’ (The Spectator, 16 September 1922). In 1977 two distinguished British anthropologists even declined to contribute to a book, proceeds from which would go to the Royal Anthropological Institute, of recipes culled during fieldwork because they thought styles of cooking could not be transferred from their original ecological setting (Kuper 1977:9–10). The sad truth, however, which must be communicated to such cautious characters as this pair, is that if anthropologists are not prepared to popularize their own work, then others will do the job for them, sometimes to ridiculous effect, as in the tabloids (Peterson 1991), sometimes to nefarious effect, as by political groups (e.g. Gordon 1992). As Campbell so cogently argues, rather than disparaging the press for not always representing them and their work in exactly the way they might wish, anthropologists should praise, in a suitably discriminating manner, journalists’ efforts to publicize fieldworkers’ reports about what is happening, for example, to indigenous minorities in oppressive states, to rainforest dwellers invaded by aggressive gold-prospectors, or to tribals threatened by ill-conceived ‘development’ plans.

Instead of turning away from the fourth estate, anthropologists should use it to inform the public of their work, and of its value,
especially if, in a time of shrinking public funds, they wish their subject to survive. (For a ‘how-to’ guide, see Lepowsky 1994a; b; 1995.) As William Beeman (1987:2), perhaps the only university-based anthropologist who writes regularly for national newspapers in the United States, has argued, ‘The American public is most often led to believe that the prime motivators of human action are economic necessity and threat of force. The position that religion, ideology, or cultural belief could be a comparable basis for human action is not well represented in the press.’ It is, above all, anthropologists who should be able to demystify the actions of individuals whose cultural practices are different to those of the Western mainstream; the most appropriate places for them to do so, in America at least, are on the ‘op-ed’ (opposite editorial) pages of daily newspapers and in journals of opinion. In Brazil, a host of anthropologists, with their own newspaper columns or spaces on radio shows, already act as cultural commentators on the events of the day. It is said that one even accompanied the national football team in a recent World Cup tournament (P.Riviere pers. comm.) To those academics who think such popularizing is not a legitimate activity for intellectuals, Beeman contends that what he is advocating is not popularization but public service. (On a more self-interested note, anthropologists who learn how to work with the media may also end up supplying themselves with the material for their next ethnography—one on the media industry.)

Funding bodies are well aware of the need for researchers to press home their findings. The recently formulated ‘Communications Policy’ of the British Economic and Social Research Council stresses ‘both the contractual obligation upon researchers to disseminate their work and the ethical responsibility to communicate with the people who ultimately provide the money for research—the public’ (ESRC 1994). In this context it is, perhaps, reassuring to note that at the end of a seven-month-long debate conducted in the columns of the AAA Newsletter during 1992, its editor (Givens 1992) could report that not one member of the American Anthropological Association who contributed to the discussion felt that publicity was bad for the discipline. As he dramatically put it, the present predicament that all anthropologists had to face was, ‘Project—or perish’.

What the individual essays in this volume collectively suggest is that anthropologists bypass the topic of popularization at their peril. It is, quite simply, too important an activity for us to scorn.
The prejudiced have regarded popular anthropology as tantamount to descent into the marketplace. Marrett (1910:300) called it ‘that vain thing’. The less blinkered have preferred to see popularization as a complementary practice, related in many different, and some unexpected, ways to more academically conventional pursuits. As the essays collected here demonstrate, there is no hard and fast line separating popular and scholastic work but, rather, a constant intermingling of the two. Some anthropologists may have at times wished to demarcate sharply, for internal institutional reasons, the acceptable boundaries of their discipline, but the efforts of their popularizing contemporaries have repeatedly thrown into relief the essentially arbitrary nature of this line-drawing. Popular anthropology is not some unlikeable, distasteful appendage to the main body of the subject, but an integral part of it.

Some anthropologists criticized the postmodernists’ textual approach to ethnographies as a disengagement from the real world. This kind of navel-gazing might be all very well. But the navel is not very deep and, once its profundities have been checked out, it is time to raise one’s eyes and face the world. The analysis of popular anthropologies as texts is not open to the same censure. For this neglected corpus provides us with a plethora of suggestive examples (generated by or satisfying popular demand) for a renovated, genuinely radical anthropology, one which holds the promise of enabling a more plural, egalitarian form of the discipline. If anthropology is to do more than enrich the common vocabulary (‘rites of passage’, ‘cargo cult’, etc.), then its practitioners need to engage with contemporary realities, in ways meaningful to subjects and readers and which tempt them to participate. At a time when professional expertise is greeted with increased scepticism, and new forms of disseminating knowledge are constantly invented, anthropologists should not cower behind the university walls, but dare to lower the drawbridge.

Arguing from similar premises, Downey and Rogers (1995) call for ‘partnering’ between academics and the popular market they serve, while Grimshaw and Hart (1994:253) extol the potential contribution of ‘the amateur’, ‘a person motivated by affection and genuine commitment rather than by the goals of professional reward and recognition’. Broadening the anthropological constituency by opening our ranks to amateurs does not mean the end to our criterion of excellence, but its renovation and the admission that there may be diverse criteria. Grimshaw and Hart raise the part-time anthropologist W.H.R.Rivers as their standard. The founders of Mass
Observation are an even better choice, for their democratizing programme won mass support and promised to recast the subject in the process. It is from such beginnings that a reinvigorated, authentically popular anthropology could emerge.

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NOTE

1 Like this one.

Some academics, it is true, seem to prefer obscurity, as though in some way it validated the nature of their enterprise. The point was made in a recent discussion between three intellectuals broadcast by the BBC:

Paris [Ernest Gellner said], was ‘the world capital of obscurity. The production of obscurity in Paris compares to the production of motorcars in Detroit in the great period of American industry.’

‘Why, then,’ asked chairman Colin MacCabe, ‘have Foucault, Derrida, Barthes et al. been so influential all over the world?’

‘Because,’ replied the imperturbable Gellner, ‘there is a demand for obscurity.’ At this, MacCabe turned helplessly to Dr George Steiner. ‘I don’t think Ernest means that,’ said the Doctor benignly. ‘I do,’ replied Gellner and rested his case.

(Naughton 1992)

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