



Letters

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an experience of what it means to be a person from another culture. Thus film can fill the gap between fieldwork experience and the written word through which most anthropological knowledge is communicated. But apart from that, there remain several other 'modalities of film-expression', as he put it, that offer a useful tool for anthropologists, varying from more descriptive to conceptual or associative modes. The MacDougalls' latest film *Photo Wallahs* is an example of the latter, where disparate scenes are edited together, stimulating a relational mode of knowledge. The audience has to become active in creating connections. Thus film can reach a higher level of abstraction than the immediate physical reality it represents.

Gary Kildea too tries to penetrate pieces of reality in order to extract something that has more universal value, to be expressed through film. In his last film *Valencia Diary*, which had its first European screening at Sandbjerg, he builds the connections between the several separate subjects within the film itself – another solution with the same goal. These were the two most advanced examples at Sandbjerg of an attempt to search for new ways of expressing and producing knowledge, thereby pushing the boundaries of the medium forward, without doing injustice to the dominant realistic tendency of film.

Another rather new set of issues within the anthropological film context arises when people want the anthropologist to help them

to represent themselves, or would like to put the medium to political use. But even in these cases the fact remains that the film-making process in itself adds knowledge that would have escaped attention otherwise. Barbara Luëm brought interesting material from her fieldwork in Western Polynesia, trying to reach a compromise between her research goals and the wishes of the people in Tuvalu. When new uses of the medium open up, the limits need re-definition as well. Can you, for instance, combine within one film the etic view of the film-maker and an emic view of participants?

With anthropology opening up towards more subjective approaches, another direction that seems promising could be a 'home movie' approach, of which Linda Jonsen brought a nice example to Sandbjerg, *Camping – or call it what you like*. This brought up the issue of 'the right distance' to the subject, as Marc Piaux called it. Isn't there a risk of identifying too much with your subject in such an approach? Doesn't a 'home movie' approach lack the distance that is needed for analysis? Film literally shows where you stand, but though this might be very close all the time, it doesn't mean that the analytical selection process inherent in making a film has not taken place, but how can this be shown? And should it be?

Tempting pieces of work in progress were shown as well, like Heimo Lappalainen's new series about the Evenki reindeer herders

and hunters of Siberia. But huge disputes too arose at times seemingly splitting up the group, though the constructive spirit would soon return over a nice Danish buffet. Looking for new film strategies means experimenting and thus throwing old conventions overboard, which in turn creates unrest. Michael Mascha's film *Seven Scenes of Plenty* caused much upheaval, for instance. Another film that ventured to use fiction film approaches inside a documentary was the remarkable *La Musica e' Quattro* produced by Dante Olianias. The latter provoked less disputes, probably because the film seemed to maintain more 'naturalness' of the characters, which enhances the illusion of 'authenticity'. But how real is a reel anyway, or paper, for that matter?

This will be the last seminar convened by Colette Piauxt. Peter Ian Crawford and Heimo Lappalainen, on behalf of the Nordic Anthropological Film Association, and János Tári, on behalf of the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest, promised to follow in her footsteps and act as catalysts for the organization of future events which, it is to be hoped, will preserve the intimate and constructive atmosphere of a memorable meeting in Denmark. □

Janine Prins

The author is a Dutch anthropologist from Leiden University, currently being trained as a documentary film-maker at the National Film and Television School in Beaconsfield, near London.

letters

The sin of Onan

You say (A.T., October 1992, 'The great ant-eater's attractions') that masturbation is castigated in the Bible. I am convinced that this is a (culturally highly significant) misinterpretation of the Old Testament text by rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. I for one have no doubt that the Lord punished Onan for his refusal to perform the duties of a 'levirate marriage', i.e., give offspring to his

childless brother's widow. The story of the culturally standardized misinterpretation is, of course, fascinating. □

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Jumping beans

May I submit a small correction to

ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY, February 1993, page 21?

The famous 'jumping-beans controversy' did not involve André Breton and myself, but André Breton and Roger Caillois. As a matter of fact I did not know Breton at that time. □

Claude Lévi-Strauss

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news

CORRECTIONS

There was a misprint in E.A. Hammel's article on 'Demography and the origins of the Yugoslav Civil War' in the February 1993 issue. 40,000 BCE was given as an indication for the European Epipalaeolithic (top of p.9, l.3); this should have read 10,000 BCE. On page 7 col. 2, 'odstare ruke' should have read 'od stare ruke'.

We should also have noted, when publishing Professor Hammel's article, that it was a paper contributed to an invited session 'Towards a comparative demography of cultural replacement', chaired by Alice B. Kasakoff and organized by

the General Anthropology Division and Biological Anthropology Section of the American Anthropological Association, on 5 December 1992 during the Association's Annual Meeting in San Francisco.

OBITUARY

Sir Colin Allan KCMG, OBE, colonial administrator and a Fellow of the RAI, died on 5 March at the age of 71. A New Zealander by birth, he served as district commissioner on the island of Malaita, Lands Commissioner in the Solomons, British Resident Commissioner to the

New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), and Governor of the Seychelles. As a young man he took a university diploma course in social anthropology at Cambridge, presenting as his thesis a study of millenarianism in Melanesia which was widely cited. His obituary in the *Times* (13 March) states that 'Allan understood and sympathized with Melanesian grievances and aspirations, and his special knowledge of land problems, which re-emerged as a crucial issue [in the New Hebrides between 1966 and 1973], enabled him to seek equitable solutions'. In his retirement, Allan