

# Among the Foreign Correspondents: Reflections on Anthropological Styles and Audiences

Ulf Hannerz

Stockholm University, Sweden

**ABSTRACT** *The interface between anthropology and journalism is drawing increasing attention. Newsmedia foreign correspondents, in particular, are engaged in a pursuit parallel to that of classical anthropology, reporting from one part of the world to another. Yet they work under very different organizational circumstances and relate differently to time and space. Drawing on examples from the work of 'Africa correspondents', the paper discusses the possibilities of personal initiative in reporting. It also notes the role of the newsmedia in shaping public engagements with the world, and comments on the part of anthropological writing in influencing public culture.*

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Indeed it may be true, as the introduction to this collection of essays has it, that what we are doing nowadays would barely be recognizable to our ancestors in anthropology, to Franz Boas or to Bronislaw Malinowski. But with a move that at least Malinowski might have found familiar, let me begin by taking you to one particular somewhat remote locale. You are in Richmond, a small suburban enclave a little to the west of central Johannesburg, South Africa, close to two main thoroughfares. As you turn off Stanley Road at the shop sign of the London Pie Company, and go slightly downhill along Menton Road, you will find Richmond quiet and a bit nondescript. There are some commercial establishments—a couple of car dealers, a computer equipment business, a photocopy and fax service, a liquor store, a small restaurant, and a couple of modest shops selling newspapers and sundry groceries.

That may not sound very promising. Malinowski, after all, asked you, in the introduction to his *Argonauts* ([1922] 1961:4), to 'imagine yourself set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native vil-

lage'—Richmond hardly appeals quite so much to your fantasies. But then in Richmond you also find two buildings, a couple of minutes apart from one another, where a great many of the foreign newsmedia organizations in Johannesburg have their offices. Turning right from Menton at Napier Road, there is the Richmond Square building, with the Associated Press, CNN, *Los Angeles Times*, *Newsweek* and others; continuing Menton down the hill, you come to the rather larger building at 1 Park Road, Menton House, with a conspicuous, large dish on the roof. Some 25–30 media or media-related offices are here. From those two buildings in Richmond, in fact, we all get a sizeable proportion of our news out of Africa.

And that is why Richmond has been one of the major sites in a research project I have been engaged in for some years, a study of the working life of newsmedia foreign correspondents. I would confess that it is a project that I would hardly have thought of even, let us say, twenty years ago. But let me also say that I take some particular pleasure in discussing it in this symposium because Sherry Ortner, somewhat accidentally, had a part in getting me going on it.<sup>1</sup>

I believe it is a project which exemplifies a number of the ways anthropology is at present being rethought and reconfigured. For one thing, it has shown me how the lives of anthropologists and the people in our 'fields' are now often entangled with one another. I made my way to one of my first American informants because he is the brother-in-law of the daughter of an anthropological colleague and good friend, and to another because she is married to someone likewise a friend and colleague. And the young woman correspondent for Swedish television working out of one of those media buildings in Johannesburg turned out to be a former school mate of one of my graduate students.

Yet more significantly, anthropologists and foreign correspondents are after a fashion involved with one another because we are doing similar kinds of work. Like anthropologists, newsmedia foreign correspondents report from one part of the world to another. We share the condition of being in a transnational contact zone, engaged in reporting, representing, interpreting—generally, managing meaning across distances, although in part at least with different interests, under other constraints.<sup>2</sup> How, then, do the ways media correspondents practice their craft in foreign lands compare with the fieldwork of anthropologists? How do the structures within which they operate affect their work? And what do they report, how do they mediate to their audiences the foreignness of foreign news? I have not made a systematic com-

parison between anthropologists and foreign correspondents the main objective of my study, yet the parallels and the contrasts can provide some food for thought.

### **Puppets or Heroes**

What I want to do here is to sketch two aspects of my study of foreign correspondence, and the reflections on anthropology to which it leads me. One has to do with everyday practices of correspondents, the constraints under which they work and the leeway for maneuver and initiative which one may still discern in their professional lives. The other aspect involves the consequences of their reporting for contemporary understandings of the world — and in relation to this, what part anthropology can play in the shaping of a cosmopolitan public culture. I will be concerned, that is to say, with foreign correspondence both as process and as product.

The point of departure for my first set of ethnographic concerns here is a fairly conspicuous gap between two major sets of representations of international news work. One has been with us at least since the 1970s, when awareness grew of the imbalances of news handling in the world. In the vocabulary of the times, 'media imperialism' could readily be understood as one facet of a more general cultural imperialism. The apparatus of global news flow was, and continues to be, dominated by what we then termed 'the West', and now increasingly often 'the North'. At that time, some decades ago, the obvious examples of such dominance were the major news agencies such as Reuters or the Associated Press. As the new century begins, they are still there, although we may have added for example CNN to the conspicuous key symbols of this apparatus.<sup>3</sup> Certainly my study of the foreign correspondents reflects this asymmetry in the global landscape of news: I deal mostly with Europeans and Americans, reporting from parts of the world which do not send out a comparable number of correspondents of their own to report from other places.

The other set of representations of international news work I have in mind consists of the mostly autobiographical accounts of correspondent experiences by the newsmen themselves. This is one of the many contemporary fields, that is to say, where the 'natives' are themselves energetic text producers, and where we as ethnographers have to figure out how to deal with these texts.<sup>4</sup> (I should perhaps distinguish here between two basic types of texts produced by correspondents: those which are primarily news reports, and those which like these autobiographies are of a more reflexive nature, and which have our attention here.)

The autobiographies, naturally, are quite individual-centered; not necessarily particularly introspective, but focused on the authors as men and women of action, making their way past all kinds of obstacles to the never-ending series of trouble spots in the world, perhaps risking their lives in order to witness and report; filing 'the first draft of history' before they leave for their next assignment.

The gap I have in mind, then, might be described as one between foreign correspondents represented as puppets and as heroes. In the heavily macro-oriented accounts of media imperialism, the individuals who would be its flesh-and-blood street-level representatives at the outer reaches of the news-handling apparatus hardly become visible, but by default they can only be understood as willing, anonymous, exchangeable tools. In the autobiographies, in contrast, the individuals tend to be strong. They may portray themselves in scenes where there is both competition and *communitas* among peers, but the wider structure is not present in any conspicuous way. This is not so unlike the depiction we have of foreign correspondents in popular culture, such as in numerous films. And one could add that the news media organizations contribute to the maintenance of the heroic motif themselves, through individual-centering prizes such as Pulitzers, or whatever are their counterparts in different countries.

Clearly we are facing here the classic question of how to strike the proper balance between structure and agency. I am reminded, too, of Sherry Ortner's formulation in her classic 1984 paper about that political-economy perspective in anthropology, also of the 1970s, which tended to see dominant structures as if arriving on a ship on the sea, but which did not quite go ashore with them to mix with the folks there. I think the view of media imperialism has often worked out a bit like that. What I have wanted to do in my foreign correspondent project, for one thing, is to fill in the details of the conditions ashore—the ecologies of reporting; the diverse networks of more or less local relationships in which correspondents find themselves; and the patterns of collaboration, competition and divisions of labor which organize their daily activities, formally or informally.

Thus I have been curious about the kinds of partnerships which evolve between correspondents who prefer each other as company when going on reporting trips, and about the relationships between correspondents and local 'fixers', in some ways reminiscent of the multifaceted links between anthropologists and their assistants in the field. I have explored the sometimes curious and often obscure passages of news in roundabout ways between news

agencies, electronic media and print media, which sometimes offer convenient shortcuts in correspondent work but which also generate tensions and backstage satirical comment. And not least have I been concerned with the implications of career patterns and with the spatial organization of foreign correspondents. In which ways does it matter to reporting that some correspondents spend more or less a lifetime in a single posting, while others are rotated every three years or so, between countries and continents? When large parts of the world get only brief visits by correspondents, described on such occasions as 'parachutists' or 'firemen', and only when there is a crisis to cover, how does this affect our world view?

I started out by saying that a large part of our news about Africa comes from these two buildings on the outskirts of Johannesburg. But of course, it is not local Richmond news. (In fact, the point is that by local standards very little happens in Richmond, which is why the news organizations relocated there a few years ago, escaping from the violence and discomfort of central Johannesburg.) Richmond is rather an observation point, and a place where news is selected, assembled and processed. Newspeople from different parts of the world stationed in Johannesburg may spend considerable time there, but it is also their base for excursions elsewhere in South Africa, and in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Indeed, the denizens of the two buildings are in many cases 'Africa correspondents', responsible for reporting to their organizations on most of the continent, between the Sahara and the Cape of Good Hope. I should admit now that such job descriptions as 'Africa correspondents,' or for that matter 'Middle East correspondents' and 'Asia correspondents,' had a part in provoking my interest in foreign correspondence. No doubt, my early spontaneous reactions to the suggested continental reach of some newspeople had much to do with the habitual assumptions of anthropologists about the rooting of expertise in local personal experience; assumptions related to our preoccupation with fieldwork. But if the economics of the news business is such that even quite sizeable and strong media organizations will spread their correspondents only very thinly across the surface of the world, just how does a journalist handle the responsibility of reporting from a continent, or some very large chunk of it?

### **A New Yorker in Southern Africa**

The two Stockholm morning papers, *Dagens Nyheter* and *Svenska Dagbladet*, have one Africa correspondent each, operating out of South Africa. So does Swedish radio, and so did Swedish television at the time when I was in the

vicinity. With Leif Norrman of *Dagens Nyheter*, I talked about those weeks in 1997 when the correspondents gathered in Kinshasa to wait for the fall of the despot Mobutu, and about his recent passage through East and Central Africa, mostly devoted to a major story on AIDS, but also taking in an encounter with child soldiers in a private army in northern Uganda; Ola Säll of *Svenska Dagbladet* reminisced over a barbecue dinner about his struggle to find support for a reporting trip to the civil war in southern Sudan.<sup>5</sup> But to get a more extended view of the efforts of one correspondent here, let us meet with Suzanne Daley, Johannesburg bureau chief of the *New York Times* at the time of my visit.

Since the *New York Times* has bureaus in Nairobi and Abidjan as well, Johannesburg is responsible only for Southern Africa. But that still leaves it with eleven countries: South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho, Angola, Moçambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Madagascar and Mauritius. Suzanne Daley also had her husband and colleague in the bureau, and there was some division of labor between them, so that for example she handled Angola and he did Zimbabwe.

Daley, in her early 40s, had been on the metropolitan desk in the New York office of the paper for many years but had wanted to go abroad—her father had also been a foreign correspondent. The managing editor of the *New York Times*, Joe Lelyveld, was himself a former Johannesburg correspondent with a continued strong interest in South Africa, and he apparently felt that in its post-apartheid transition period, this assignment would suit Daley's particular skills and inclinations. It would offer many opportunities to choose her own topics for 'feature stories', instead of being tied up most of the time with 'hard news'.

For Daley as for her foreign correspondent colleagues, reporting on South Africa in this period had much to do with the handling of the past, and with the symbols and patterns of the extended transition. Bishop Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission offered materials for many stories. Daley (1999a) could describe the amnesty application, 4,000-plus pages long, of Eugene de Kock, formerly in command of a counterterrorism unit, now serving two life terms, and another 212 years on top of that, for a variety of offenses. One dispute concerned whether de Kock had smashed a shovel through a suspect's skull before or after he shot him. She could also portray the qualms of an eleventh-generation Afrikaner father over what to teach his children about the heritage of the 'white tribe of Africa'— 'a culture in which covered wagons, German Mauser rifles, Wagnerian operas, Malaysian spices and African cattle all played important parts'— and describe the debate among the staff

and directors of an Afrikaans-language daily whether they should apologize for having abetted the apartheid system; and in another story, a small whites-only town where the inhabitants still dream of an Afrikaner *volkstaat* (Daley 1998a, 1999b).

But then the transition could also sometimes make personal fantasies come real. Enos Mafokate, Daley wrote in another story, had loved horses and riding ever since as a young boy he was given the task of cleaning out stables. He dreamed of being a show jumper, but although he became an accomplished equestrian, he was never in those past days allowed to enter major competitions. In 1992, however, as the international boycott of South African sports had been lifted, he had been invited to accompany the national team to the Barcelona Olympic Games. Riding in the official parade there, Mafokate reminisced, he had smiled so much he locked his jaw. Now, with a few horses of rather diverse backgrounds and characteristics which he has managed to assemble from here and there, he has started a rather improbable enterprise: a riding academy in Soweto (Daley 1998b).

Not all Suzanne Daley's reporting, however, was from South Africa itself. From Angola, where she traveled rather regularly, accompanied by a Portuguese-born photographer working regularly for her Johannesburg bureau, she could write about the huge Roque Santiero market place in Luanda (Daley 1995). The market stretched for more than a mile along the seafront. You could buy toothpaste, resqueezed from discarded tubes into new ones; leopard skins; one destitute woman was arrested for trying to sell her children. The Coca-Cola cans might be made in France or in Thailand, and there were Japanese stereo systems and French champagne. The market, Daley noted, was named after a Brazilian soap opera hero once falsely accused of stealing. This was a joke, since Luandans did not doubt that most of the merchandise was either stolen or smuggled. On another of her excursions to Angola, Daley (1998c) found an American cultural enclave run by Chevron, the oil company—hot dogs, chocolate chip cookies, golf course and all. But American employees were not allowed to go outside the fence, where bandits roamed, and when they went on home leave (four weeks, then back to Angola for another four weeks of twelve-hour days), they were helicoptered to the airport twelve miles away.

When I met Suzanne Daley, after she had been a few years in Johannesburg, her feelings about South Africa were complex. The society still seemed extremely segmented, sorted into little boxes by race and class, with few personal contacts in between—'Afrikaners, English-speakers, Indians, Zulu...' And as a tough New York professional woman, she sensed a great deal of sexism

among whites as well as blacks. Some appeared to assume that when the *New York Times* assigned a woman to be Johannesburg bureau chief, it was an indication that the paper did not think South Africa after the transition was important any longer. But she did indeed feel that she could write pretty much about whatever she pleased, without necessarily checking with the New York office first. Perhaps she was allowed to do this, she thought, because she was so well-connected in the home office. Yet for her part, she clearly did not see herself as a mere puppet in the global news order. And she found the 'size and rawness' of South Africa addictive. In fact she had extended her Johannesburg contract for another year, and she and her husband were talking about another foreign assignment after that, another one with a mixture of countries allowing interesting feature stories. Perhaps the Bangkok bureau would be a good next step?

Actually, it did not work out that way. From Johannesburg, Suzanne Daley moved to the Paris bureau of the *New York Times*, and now she writes about much of Europe from there. Recently she has reported from Stockholm on changes in Swedish alcohol policy, and the history of the relationship between Swedes and drinking (Daley 2001).

### **The World According to the Newsmedia**

I have certainly not spent all my time among the foreign correspondents hanging out in that one Johannesburg neighborhood. And of course, it is also a fact that Malinowski did not really stay put on a single tropical beach either. Tracing at least some of the links in the traffic in sea shells within the Kula Ring, his project was in part one of multilocal fieldwork—something we now see, on a larger scale, as one component in the current renewal of anthropology.<sup>6</sup> Apart from Johannesburg, my project has included more extensive series of interviews with correspondents in Jerusalem and Tokyo, and—complementary to Johannesburg—Cape Town.<sup>7</sup> But then on a more *ad hoc* basis, I have been doing further interviewing in places where I have found myself mostly for other reasons: in New York, Los Angeles, Washington, London, Frankfurt am Main, Stockholm and Hong Kong. Sometimes it may indeed have seemed as if I was approximating the parachutist practices of the foreign correspondents themselves—moving in on a place, getting my stuff together, and then off again, homeward bound or on to the next place. It is not this mobile style of fieldwork in itself that I want to examine next, however, but rather how the reporting of the correspondents and the media shape our views of the world, and how the work of anthropologists might relate to that.



Foreign correspondents would seem to be key players in today's globalization of consciousness. Their reporting for newspapers, newsmagazines, news agencies, radio and television makes up a major part of that flow of information from and about other parts of their world which, for many of us, is a part of the daily rhythm of experience. But how does it affect our stances toward the world?

It is sometimes assumed that the media, and television in particular, can have a role in the growth of a sort of globally extended compassion. When you see dying children on the screen, or emaciated bodies behind barbed wire in some newly discovered concentration camp, you want to do something about it, or insist that some responsible party must take action. But then we are still not really so sure that empathy and activism are what necessarily follows from the experience, by way of the media, of other human beings suffering violence, hunger or disaster somewhere in the world. Another view, suggested by Arthur and Joan Kleinman (1996), would be that suffering, broadcast on a daily basis as 'infotainment', is distorted and thinned out, turned into another commodity. The journalism scholar Susan Moeller has devoted a book to the phenomenon of *Compassion Fatigue* (1999).

And there is yet another possible response to foreign crisis news. As news of the world out there is so often bad news, of conflicts and catastrophes, that world may seem to be above all a place to be wary of. You would prefer to keep your distance, and if people from out there knock on your door, you will want to have nothing to do with them either. In his recent critique of television and journalism, Pierre Bourdieu (1998:8) takes this view: 'Journalism shows us a world full of ethnic wars, racist hatred, violence and crime—a world full of incomprehensible and unsettling dangers from which we must withdraw for our own protection.'

Isolationism and even xenophobia can thus be other reactions to bad news from abroad. I talked about this with Inger Jägerhorn, at the time the foreign news editor of *Dagens Nyheter* (again, Sweden's largest morning newspaper). She said she and her colleagues were aware of this possibility. In her imagery, her paper must make sure to distance itself from a medieval 'troubadour tradition', of wandering about spreading news only of what in Swedish could be the three K's—*krig*, *katastrofer* and *kröningar*, that is, wars, disasters and coronations. With such emphases (although with elections nowadays taking the place of the coronations), the world could indeed seem mostly dangerous and unattractive. There had to be more reporting which portrayed everyday life elsewhere, Jägerhorn said, and which allowed journalists more personal angles and engagements.

In an office in midtown Manhattan, I had a related conversation with Bill Keller, serving for a period as foreign editor of the *New York Times*. Before taking up this position, Keller had been Suzanne Daley's predecessor in Johannesburg. When he came back to New York, he told me, he had been worried about his new duties, not least because it had seemed to him that after the end of the Cold War, Americans were turning away from the world, toward more parochial preoccupations. On his way from Johannesburg, however, he had made a stopover in Paris and met with Flora Lewis, oldtimer in foreign news and commentary, who had strengthened his resolve: 'That's not a demand problem, it's a supply problem'. She had argued that the public would respond to a political leadership and to media which took the world out there seriously.

The question whether people really take an interest in foreign news, and why, or how one can draw their attention to it, is important in the news business, not least in times when economic considerations play a very large part in management minds. The down-to-earth question may be raised whether the high cost of foreign news, especially in the form of a more extensive network of staff correspondents, is really balanced by more readers or advertisement revenue directly brought in by such coverage. For some organizations the answer may be simply, 'No', and thus they seek alternative ways of reporting on the world—or just do very little of it. Yet this could widen this news niche for others. At the *New York Times*, Keller had found that the national edition grew when the local edition did not, and readership surveys for the former had shown that readers liked the foreign coverage since there was little of it in their local papers.

But then the *New York Times* had also been giving some serious thought to its international news reporting. Keller's predecessor as foreign editor, Bernard Gwertzman, who oversaw the post-cold war transition period in his paper, had written an important internal memorandum which pointed to new directions for his correspondents.<sup>8</sup> In the coming period, he suggested, there would be a broadening of reporting from political news to deal more with environmental issues, histories of ethnic friction, and economic developments which might no longer be confined to the financial section of the paper. Not least, however, 'We are interested in what makes societies different, what is on the minds of people in various regions. Imagine you are being asked to write a letter home every week to describe a different aspect of life in the area you are assigned'. Keller made much the same point in our conversation—foreign correspondents should be interested in societies, not only in states.

It seems clear that the kind of coverage of Southern Africa that Suzanne Daley engaged in was in line with such a policy. And it is one toward which, as anthropologists, we may feel broadly sympathetic. Within the limits of a *New York Times* feature story—876 words for the one on the Luanda market place, 919 for that on the riding academy in Soweto—Daley offered glimpses of people and everyday institutions toward which we might also have turned our ethnographic gaze. We might feel that these stories would help her readers get a sense of the people on her beat as human beings, dealing actively with the circumstances of their own lives.

Nevertheless, the sort of concerns raised by the Kleinmans and by Bourdieu must be taken seriously. Again, there is a tendency in news work generally to give priority to the hard news of conflict and catastrophe, and on the whole, the less time or space media devote to foreign news, and the more thinly stretched its network of correspondents is, the more pronounced will we find this tendency. This may work so as to affect the media depiction of regions of the world rather differently. For one thing, although the recent imagery of Africa as a peculiarly troubled region of the world surely reflects some very concrete realities, it may also be rendered more one-dimensional, and in some ways more mystifying, by the organization and the practices of the news trade; for example, by the concentration of so much of the reporting capacity in a few places, of which Richmond in Johannesburg is a striking example.

### **As We Move On: Journalists, Anthropologists, and Public Culture**

It is here that I would like to turn more directly to the question of the present and perhaps future relationship between anthropology and journalism. How should we write, and for whom should we write? Should we as anthropologists aim to be more like journalists, or is there a division of labor, although perhaps one which is not yet fully developed? I should say that Sherry Ortner raised related issues in an essay on classes and generations in the American context a couple of years ago, discussing the relationship between ethnographic inquiry and public culture in a media-saturated society (Ortner 1999a). What I will be more concerned with is public culture in its globalizing aspects, and the possibilities of a renewal of anthropology in that context.

Describing my project to foreign correspondents, I usually try to make the point that I do not intend it as simply an attack on their work and its products. Indeed journalists often have a rather reasonable suspicion that academics are inclined to be critical of news work, and sometimes to forget the implications of such constraints as deadlines and space limits. I have come

away from my research with a great deal of respect for the professional skills and commitments of many of the people I have met. There may be times when we are critical of the ways in which the news media present the world. We should then try to maintain a grasp of what is the nature of news, and a sense of the conditions of its production process. Moreover, we should be concerned with the way that news, with its more or less built-in biases and limitations, interacts with other understandings about the world and its regions. The flow of news, we must understand, becomes variously embedded in other sets of ideas which are part of personal experience or public culture. There are places we have been to, or perhaps even lived in; or we may know people who are from there. We may have learned about some places more extensively in school, or through other kinds of instruction. Another *New York Times* correspondent, Serge Schmemmann, bureau chief in Jerusalem when I was there, said that in preparation for his assignment, he had read his predecessor's stories, but also the Bible. Datelines in the Holy Land surely would sometimes have particular resonances among many of his readers.

The public culture in which news becomes embedded, however, is not simply given. It is also continuously created and recreated. And there is a role for anthropology in this. Much of the time in the twentieth century, as the discipline professionalized, anthropologists grew used to turning mostly inward toward one another, rather than to wider audiences outside the academy. One reason for this was no doubt the success of the university as a twentieth-century institution, which made it possible to seek recognition in large part and most directly among one's peers. Yet I believe that another reason why anthropology as usually practiced in the past century with few exceptions has had a rather limited public impact was that in an age of nation-states, as the twentieth century also mostly was, the expertise and the personal commitments of anthropologists have rather contrarily often involved places outside the boundaries of the countries where they have themselves been citizens. On the other hand, some of the main recent instances I can think of where colleagues have become public figures have involved for example Brazilian or Indian anthropologists who have been practicing 'at home', at least in the sense of studying and commenting on their own countries. (Even the most conspicuous American example of a public figure in anthropology, Margaret Mead, surely drew on her work in Samoa or Papua New Guinea in no small part for the purpose of casting light on facts of life in the United States.) As the world now becomes more like a single place, anthropologists with their knowledge of the variations of human life and thought

may have particular opportunities, and particular duties, on the arenas of a more cosmopolitan public culture.

My own interest in such issues has been provoked during the years of my study of foreign correspondents, I should say, by the current international prominence of a kind of writing which, if it is not precisely in the borderland between anthropology and journalism, seems at least to be somewhere nearby. It may be due to increasing global interconnectedness generally, but no doubt more particularly to the end of the Cold War, that there has been a demand for overarching scenarios purporting to offer a view of what the world is like now, or what it is going to be next. I have in mind writings such as those by Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996) on 'the clash of civilizations', and by Robert Kaplan (1994, 2000) on 'the coming anarchy' (and let us note that here we have an academic and a journalist moving from their different sides into much the same kind of intellectual territory). It is obvious that a fair number of anthropologists have been paying some attention to this genre of writings, and that many are quite critical of them. Yet on the whole, there has been little public response to them by anthropologists, and hardly any attempt to offer full-scale alternative views.<sup>9</sup>

I believe we should give more thought to how we can use the intellectual resources of anthropology better, and develop them further, in order to insert them more effectively into the public culture. For one thing, when those members of the public who are or have been our students read the headlines and see the newsreels which draw their attention to people and events in other parts of the world, we should have done our part in fostering those ideas and habits of analysis which can serve them fruitfully as informed citizens in their encounter with the news. But the public role also extends to our writing, insofar as we may find ourselves reaching out toward new audiences — in various instances, writing in, with, around or against the news; and perhaps doing so also by offering wider and more durable scenarios in which the news stream can be credibly embedded.

Such a concern with the place of anthropology in public culture also touches on the question, now occasionally raised, whether anthropology ought to be more like journalism.<sup>10</sup> I think it is clear that in some ways it should not, and will not be. There is hardly any reason why in any significant part of our work we would have to accept the practical constraints of much newswork, fitting it into so many column inches, or so many seconds on the air. It must also be obvious that to the extent that journalism is event-centered, anthropologists are seldom in a position to compete. By the time journalists pull

out of a news site, having filed that 'first draft of history', anthropologists, in the logic of academic production, may at best be polishing the first draft of a research proposal to a funding agency. Certainly even as we increasingly move back and forth between different temporal slices and frames in our writings, we will mostly be inclined to take a rather longer view.

The possibly desirable similarities are rather of another kind, between one genre of journalism and one style of anthropology. This touches, I should say, on the role of ethnography in our writing. If anything has survived from older anthropologies of the twentieth century, ever since Malinowski, it could be argued, it may be the high esteem in which ethnography is generally held within the discipline. Geertz (1973; see also Luhrmann forthcoming) offered 'thick description' as a term for the standards by which it is evaluated. One may suspect that the relative consensus on the value of rich, fine-grained ethnography is to a degree a result of the inward-turning of academic anthropology. It is a value which comes naturally to the connoisseurship of skilled craftsmen and their apprentices in training. And I do not say that it is a value which has had its day. The fact that foreign correspondents are now asked by their editors to do something as much as possible like it, within the severe constraints of their feature stories, I think, suggests that we are not alone in appreciating ethnography. Perhaps it can sometimes be trusted to express, eloquently and on its own, our doubts about some big scenarios and small soundbites. Yet I suspect that in our contributions to a public culture, where audiences may just be somewhat impatient with our in-house enthusiasms, our ethnography may need to be fitted into more mixed genres.

Sherry Ortner, it seems to me, touches on this as she comments on recent debates over anthropological writing. Twice, in her work on the *Sherpas of Nepal*, she proposes that 'if there is a literary model behind it at all, it is probably the detective story' (Ortner 1999b:19; see also 1989:9). And as in *Life and Death on Mt. Everest* she pieces together highly varied sorts of materials (including her own ethnography) portraying the encounters through the twentieth century between the Sherpas and expatriate *sahib* mountaineers, she exemplifies a type of inquiry along the lines I think we will want to continue to explore. Other recent voices point in a similar direction, and make the parallel I have in mind more explicitly. In an essay on the anthropological understanding of 'the economies of violence', Catherine Lutz and Donald Nonini (1999), suggest that ethnographic work on such topics will have to look like 'fine investigative journalism', in its skilled combinatorial use of a wide range of sources of knowledge. Hugh Gusterson (1997:116), drawing

on his research on nuclear weapons scientists, also argues that ethnographers will increasingly engage in a style of 'polymorphous engagement' which, apart from participant observation, may include a wide assemblage of other approaches, including both 'formal interviews of the kind often done by journalists and political scientists' and 'extensive reading of newspapers and official documents'. I would add that we will often find multi-site fieldwork fitting particularly well into that style of anthropology, as we prepare to go wherever our lines of inquiry take us.<sup>11</sup>

There are some scholar-journalists out there who contribute importantly to wider understandings of what we sometimes describe as the history of the present. (I would think, for example, about people like Michael Ignatieff, Timothy Gahrton Ash, and Ian Buruma.) They are not anthropologists, and we may not want to emulate them precisely, but they present us with styles of work that are worth thinking about. We may not be prepared to write an obituary here for another set of assumptions out of classic anthropology, about the ways we tell ourselves stories about others; but I think that as we move on, the continued rebirth of anthropology will also involve an increasing diversity in the ways we put things together, for more varied audiences.

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### **Notes**

1. As Program Chair of the Society for Cultural Anthropology, Sherry Ortner invited me to give a plenary lecture at its meeting in Chicago in May, 1994. This was when I had begun to give serious thought to the possibility of doing a study of foreign correspondence, and I decided I might use this opportunity to see what I could get out of some of the correspondent autobiographies I had been reading. The experiment seemed successful enough, I got some useful invitations from members of the audience to use them as intermediaries in contacting correspondents they knew, and was thus additionally stimulated to take the idea further. The lecture has been published as a chapter in Hannerz (1996).

2. 'Studying up' became a well-known figure of speech in anthropology some decades ago, through an essay in which Laura Nader (1972) noted that anthropologists have mostly engaged in studying people less powerful and prosperous than themselves (subalterns we might have said more recently), that is, studying down – the time had come, she argued, to shift the professional gaze. One could perhaps see research on the work of foreign correspondents as a matter of studying up, insofar as the public reach, and possibly the impact, of their reporting is considerable, and certainly greater than that of just about any academic monograph. Yet I am more inclined to see what I have been doing as a case of studying sideways: not so much as a matter of power or rank, but rather as a matter of engaging with a craft which is in some ways parallel to our own. I have dwelt on the idea of 'studying sideways' in one of the earlier publications relating to the project (Hannerz 1998b). See also, for a related conception of studying parallel 'power/ knowledge' structures, Marcus (1997).
3. CNN, it is true, attempts in some ways to cultivate a sense of not belonging anywhere in the world in particular. There is a widely circulating story that Ted Turner, founder of CNN, had threatened to terminate the employment of any staffer who would use the word 'foreign', as in 'foreign correspondent'—nobody among the viewers of CNN should ever be made to feel that he or she lived in a foreign country. Consequently, CNN correspondents outside the USA were 'international correspondents'.
4. Again, in the chapter on foreign correspondents in Hannerz (1996), I drew largely on these sources.
5. Norrman and Säll, I should note here, are among those correspondents based in Cape Town, rather than in Johannesburg.
6. The idea of multilocal or multi-site field studies has been propagated especially by George Marcus (e.g. 1995). Researchers connected with the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University have adopted the idea on a rather large scale, resulting for one thing in a volume where I and ten colleagues discuss our experiences of such studies (Hannerz 2001a).
7. On Jerusalem see Hannerz (1998c), on Tokyo see Hannerz (2001b).
8. The Gwertzman memorandum is reprinted in Zipangu (1998)—a volume published, incidentally, by a group of Japanese diaspora intellectuals who found that the correspondents of the *New York Times* in Tokyo took the emphasis on 'difference' just a bit too far; see on this Hannerz (2001b).
9. I have commented on Huntington's thesis myself, however (Hannerz 1999b), and so has Herzfeld (1997); on Kaplan's 'coming anarchy' and related writings, see Richards (1999). At the American Anthropological Association meetings in San Francisco in 2000, a group of anthropologists also signaled an intention to develop an organized critique of Huntington, Kaplan and other contemporary public intellectuals writing along comparable lines. I might add here that Huntington's argument actually showed up in one of the conversations I have drawn on here—Bill Keller mentioned it apropos his recent posting as a correspondent in Istanbul, at the meeting point between Europe and the Islamic world.
10. Since a number of current graduate students of social anthropology in Stockholm have a journalist background, I have also enjoyed discussing issues of this



kind with them, and want to acknowledge the input of Örjan Bartholdson, Urban Larssen, Åse Ottosson and Per Ståhlberg.

11. For some examples of recent anthropology which in different ways seem to me to entail such an investigative, polymorphous style of research and writing, see Holmes (2000) on anti-modernist nationalism in Europe, Ong (1999) on Chinese transnational life and business, Sanjek (1998) on immigration and ethnicity in New York, and Tambiah (1996) on South Asian collective violence.

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