

## WHO ARE 'WE'?

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While we are very good at analysing how anthropology creates various others such as the 'natives' or the 'locals', we are less adept at rigorously analysing how we create and recreate 'anthropologists'.

—E. Ben-Ari, 'Colonialism, Anthropology and the Politics of Professionalisation'

This collection interrogates a fundamental but neglected concern in sociocultural anthropology: the articulation of or tacit belief in a collective disciplinary identity, and its relationship to anthropological knowledge and practice. Although anthropology's long-standing 'romance with alterity' (Ntarangwi 2010: xii) has been subject to extensive critical scrutiny, the same cannot be said for presumptions of affinity *between* anthropologists, which, we contend in this volume, are equally instrumental in shaping ethnographic knowledge. As we argue below, the implicit sense of an anthropological 'we' that pervades a great deal of current writing and practice is not only a literary trope but also an epistemologically, morally and politically freighted device that has profound social and theoretical connotations. Yet its influence as such is rarely remarked upon; for the most part it has either remained invisible or unproblematically conflated with a vague image of 'Western' society as a homogenized foil to depictions of 'otherness'.

Our volume seeks to fill this lacuna by exploring how 'we' are imagined and invoked in settings across the global landscape of anthropology, from the anglophone mainstream to various smaller,

less influential disciplinary environments. The questions that it poses are: who do 'we' anthropologists think 'we' are? How do our real or imagined affinities with disciplinary and other collective identities shape our methods, theories and analyses? What sorts of 'we's are produced by our scholarly interactions, methodological dilemmas and engagements in the world? Can a discernible anthropological 'we' even be said to exist? And, perhaps more challengingly, what is becoming, and can become, of this 'we' (or 'we's)?

The answers to these questions may seem deceptively simple, particularly for readers already steeped in the postmodernist and post-colonial critiques of the 1980s. These were instrumental in drawing attention to the oppositional quality of much Euro-American anthropology, to the ways that anthropologists often made, and still make, 'an easy living through setting up negativities' (Strathern 1988: 11) between quintessentially 'Western' concepts and various (usually non-Western) ethnographic particularities – between, for example, Western commodity logics and non-Western gift economies, Western individualism and non-Western 'dividuals', or Cartesian dualism and non-Cartesian holism. However well-meaning or heuristic, such dichotomies are premised on, and also reproduce, an assumption of radical difference between 'the West and the rest', one that facilitates the 'double movement' characteristic of much Euro-American anthropology: 'first, and more conventionally, "familiarizing" otherness; second, and more recently, exoticizing sameness' (Restrepo and Escobar 2005: 104–5).

In many of these debates, anthropologists' membership of either Western society or, more encompassingly, a historically Western intellectual framework is frequently taken for granted. Indeed, as we shall shortly argue, it is precisely anthropologists' affinity with a presumed Western readership – and, crucially, their capacity to transcend its ethnocentrism – that lends much weight to their scholarship. The point that we wish to make, however, is that simply highlighting the imbrication of an anthropological 'we' with a vague image of Western society reveals only part of a more complicated story. For one thing, even those anthropologists who exploit the theoretical cachet of a 'West vs. the rest' approach seldom have an unproblematic relationship with that West. As we explain below, an element of ambivalence, if not outright antagonism, to their 'own' (usually Western) background has frequently characterized the activities of anthropologists, particularly those working within the anglophone mainstream. Another obvious caveat is that despite the global influence of many 'West vs. the rest' theories and concepts, not all anthropologists see

themselves as members of that Western, Cartesian, modern 'we'. This applies not only to anthropologists in non-Western contexts, where the lines of alterity and affinity may be drawn quite differently, but also to those in Western anthropological centres who do not easily fit into the implicitly white, male, middle-class mould of the anthropological 'we' – or, for that matter, the very people who do. Finally, we suggest that overplaying the centrality of anthropologists' presumed sociocultural affinities can obscure the many other relations and collective identities that go into the making of anthropological knowledge. Anthropologists are also members of organizations, disciplinary clusters, kinship groups, socioeconomic classes and so forth, who may identify with political movements, regional networks or religious bodies, to name but a few possibilities. All these affiliations – these real and imagined 'we's – are, we argue, as constitutive of anthropologists' thought, practice and disciplinary identities as their presumed membership of a Western 'we'.

In sum, this volume posits that it is not enough to simply critique the anthropological 'we' as constitutively and reductively 'Western'. What is needed, rather, is a concerted interrogation of the multifarious imaginaries and practices through which anthropological 'we's are forged, contested and transformed, as well as the (often oblique but profound) implications of those processes for the forms, politics and ethics of anthropological knowledge production. And it is here that our volume aims to make two key contributions. First, by foregrounding the relational entanglements through which anthropology is enacted, we seek to decentre what in many ways remains the prototype of 'the anthropologist': the individual field-worker-scholar; the locus of analysis and creativity who mediates between 'the familiar' and 'the strange' (see below). This figure is invested simultaneously with authority, culpability and responsibility; it is s/he who generates anthropological knowledge, but also s/he who is beholden to rectify its wrongs and shortcomings. Its primacy in contemporary anthropology, however, occludes the many collective and relational elements that also constitute anthropology and that anthropological 'I', from socioeconomic or political affiliations to the actions and expectations of non-anthropological parties. By making visible some of these elements, then, our volume seeks to both unsettle and flesh out that anthropological 'I' and its productions by taking seriously its simultaneous, inexorable and sometimes contradictory 'we-ness'.

Doing so, however, demands a second, broader intervention, one that disrupts prevailing disciplinary models and conventions, more

specifically those embedded in the anglophone mainstream that currently dominates the global anthropological landscape. Built around the figure of the individual anthropologist, these models and conventions both enshrine and reproduce certain normative prescriptions about what 'good' anthropology entails and thus, by extension, *who* can play the anthropological game. Their exclusionary effects are far-reaching and profound. More than marginalizing other anthropological models and traditions, we suggest that they can also eclipse the very voices that anthropologists have sought to take seriously as collaborators or dialogic partners over the last few decades. Part of the reason for this, as we shall suggest below, is that such efforts (however laudable) tend to be incorporative rather than transformative, drawing 'others' into dominant discursive, epistemological and methodological frameworks without necessarily challenging or transcending any of those frameworks.

Against this tendency, then, our volume asks: how might a reimagination of the anthropological 'we' also provoke a reconfiguration of the very parameters and possibilities of contemporary anthropology? How might new conceptions of who 'we' are, what 'we' do and how 'we' do it reshape currently dominant disciplinary templates and conventions? As will become especially clear in Parts II and III, such a move does not only involve expanding existing anthropological spaces but, crucially, shaking them up and reaching across and beyond them towards other spaces, intersections and possible 'we's. To set the scene for these discussions, our introduction, and the volume as a whole, pursue three main lines of inquiry: *revelation*, *destabilization* and *(re) imagination*.

We begin in the next section by *revealing* what we argue has become a hegemonic 'we' in the centres of British and North American scholarship that today tower over the global landscape of anthropology. This 'we' is both intellectual and structural, modelled on the figure of an individual, ambivalent Western scholar constantly pushing against his 'own' society, and shored up by various structural mechanisms and inequalities that striate the contemporary academic world system. Such conditions, together with an ongoing captivation with alterity, have enabled the dominant 'we' to retain its tenacious yet subtle grip on anthropological thought and practice, making it difficult for alternative 'we's and models of anthropology to dislodge those of the anglophone mainstream.

Having laid out this problem, we then move on to examine how it – or certain aspects of it – have been challenged or *destabilized* by earlier scholars, notably advocates of the 'writing culture' movement

and, more recently, proponents of what are variously called ‘world’ or ‘other’ anthropologies. Both constitute important precedents to our project, the first in highlighting the inescapability of the individual anthropologist’s subjective presence as fieldworker and author, and the second in drawing attention to distinctive anthropological traditions and collectives around the globe. While building on these insights, however, our project also departs from them in significant ways. As we shall later explain, our aim is not simply to make room in existing anthropological spaces for the inclusion of ‘other’ voices; neither is it to showcase a plurality of potentially incommensurate anthropologies and anthropological collectives. Instead, by thinking through the question of who ‘we’ are, we seek to reach across anthropological spaces, to enter new ones and, in the process, to *reimagine* and transform existing forms and spaces of contemporary anthropology.<sup>1</sup> We shall return to these three strategies towards the end of the introduction. But first: some groundwork.

## Revelation

### *Tracing the Anthropological ‘We’*

This section looks critically at a particular disciplinary ‘we’ that, we argue, has long occupied a privileged slot in anglophone anthropology as the locus of revelation and knowledge production. In this capacity, it not only serves as an ideal model of disciplinary identity, but is also embedded in highly mobile theories, concepts and analytical frameworks that, for both historical and contemporary reasons, consistently spread to various global centres of scholarship, thereby shaping their parameters and terms of debate. Rather than undertaking a comprehensive survey of the intellectual genealogies of this mainstream – a task that would, in any case, be over-ambitious and unhelpfully reductive – we shall illustrate our point by juxtaposing two key moments at opposite ends of anglophone anthropology’s history: Bronislaw Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), and the ‘ontological turn’, which has electrified anthropological debates in recent years.

The closest thing that modern anthropology has to a ‘mythic charter’ (Stocking 1992: 218), *Argonauts* laid out in didactic detail what Malinowski called the ‘proper conditions for ethnographic work’ (1922: 6). At the centre of this enterprise stood the figure of the ‘Ethnographer’, a ‘scientific specialist’ (ibid.: xv) who, unlike his arm-chair-bound predecessors, engaged in long-term, intensive fieldwork

so as to ‘grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, . . . *his* vision of *his* world’ (ibid.: 25; italics in original). Such first-hand experience, however, was only part of Malinowski’s larger agenda. What added potency to the ‘ethnographer’s magic’ (ibid.: 6) was his unique ability to mediate between the ‘natives’ and the reader to whom the book was consistently addressed – ‘we Europeans’. Discussing Trobriand canoes, for instance, Malinowski wrote:

We Europeans . . . accustomed to our extraordinarily developed means of water transport, are apt to look down on a native canoe and see it in a false perspective – regarding it almost as a child’s plaything, an abortive, imperfect attempt to tackle the problem of sailing, which we ourselves have satisfactorily solved. But to the native his cumbersome, sprawling canoe is a marvellous, almost miraculous achievement, and a thing of beauty. . . . (Ibid.: 105–6)

Here, an assumed cultural, historical and philosophical affinity between writer and reader was harnessed, if only to reveal its ethnocentrism and non-universality. This approach both highlighted and sharpened the profound otherness of the book’s ethnographic subjects, while advocating – publicly, at least (cf. Malinowski 1967) – a more sympathetic, less high-handed understanding of ‘savage humanity’ (Malinowski 1922: xv) than had come before.

One of *Argonauts’* chief legacies was thus the articulation and valorization of a recursive dynamic that still characterizes much contemporary anthropology, one summed up by the common axiom, ‘making the strange familiar and the familiar strange’. ‘Their’ social and cultural lives were noteworthy not merely for what they were, but for the way they *differed from* and (potentially) illuminated ‘our’ own. It was that contrast between ‘us’ and ‘them’ that gave Malinowski’s ethnography much of its revelatory power and turned his Ethnographer into such a heroic figure – and the basis of an anthropological ‘we’, made up of numerous such Ethnographer-‘I’s – for generations to come.

Malinowski’s self-alignment with Europeans, however, would only go so far. His Ethnographer was emphatically not like ‘other white men’ (1922: 6) – missionaries, traders, officials – who lacked the inclination and expertise to understand native society. Indeed, he insisted that it was by avoiding regular contact with his own kind that the Ethnographer could enter into ‘natural intercourse’ with the natives (ibid.: 7) and gain privileged insight into their lives. Rather than being unproblematically conflated with ‘Europeans’, the Ethnographer thus inhabited a complex epistemological and ethical triangle consisting of himself, his own society and the sociocultural other. In effect,

Malinowski's Ethnographer was an ambivalent European, constantly pushing against what he defined (rightly, wrongly and certainly vaguely) as the preconceptions of his own society. It was this capacity to transcend the conceptual limitations of his background that gave his descriptions of Trobriand society their distinctive strength and validity.

Let us now track forward to the late 2000s and 2010s, and what has recently been styled as anthropology's 'ontological turn' (see, e.g., Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007; Holbraad 2012; Holbraad and Pedersen 2017). Encompassing a diverse body of work, the 'turn' pivots on that perennial anthropological question, which Malinowski answered in his own way, of how to take difference seriously. Pushing against earlier depictions of ethnographic phenomena as culturally specific (mis-)representations of a single reality (Viveiros de Castro 1998), its proponents advocate taking such phenomena at face – that is, ontological – value, as *being* their own irreducible, distinct realities. Earlier incarnations of this movement went so far as to propound that instead of studying different worldviews, anthropologists should think in terms of multiple worlds, or a '*plurality of ontologies*' (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007: 7; italics in original). This ideal of studying and thus bringing into being multiple worlds has since been quietly withdrawn by various advocates of the ontological turn,<sup>2</sup> but not before firing up a whole generation of anthropologists, some of whom have taken up the turn's ethical and methodological call to arms.

Our intention here is not to delve into the many debates surrounding the ontological turn (see Holbraad and Pedersen 2017; Salmond 2014). Rather, what we want to tease out is its enduring ethical and political premise, and more specifically the anthropological 'we' that it implicitly invokes. As Tom Boellstorff notes, the ontological literature never questions the centrality of alterity to anthropology but largely takes it as 'doxic, a pregiven predicate to inquiry' (2016: 391). In this view, the only way to take difference seriously is to approach it ontologically. Such a strategy is not a neutral gesture but a deliberate redemptive act of atoning for the failings of 'us' anthropologists to respect 'our' subjects' alterity. What is thus required, as the closest thing to an early ontologists' manifesto puts it, is a

humble . . . admission that our concepts . . . must, by definition, be inadequate to translate *different* ones. This, it is suggested, is the only way to take difference – *alterity* – seriously as the starting point for anthropological analysis. (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007: 12; italics in original)

Accordingly,

Anthropological analysis has little to do with trying to determine how other people think about the world. It has to do with how *we* must think in order to conceive a world the way they do. (Ibid.: 15; italics in original)

This moral imperative to rejig ‘our’ conceptions in order to take ‘theirs’ seriously is a theme that runs through much ontologically inflected literature. Like Malinowski’s writing, it first appeals to ‘our’ shared background – in this case as heirs to a certain anthropological tradition freighted with Western preconceptions – in order to then push against it. But who exactly is this ‘we’ that is so central to the process of ‘ontological breakthrough’ (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007: 12)? On this point, ontological writings are reticent, treating ‘us’ as a self-evident collective comprising both readers and anthropologists at large. A closer reading, however, brings to light a ‘we’ that appears to be in thrall to various modernist or Cartesian rationalities, with all the dualisms – nature/culture, person/thing, object/meaning and so forth – that come with them. In short, even though it is never explicitly identified as such, the ‘we’ of the ontological turn is a fundamentally Western one, if not racially or culturally then certainly intellectually (see also Vigh and Sausdal 2014: 69). In this regard, the power of those ‘moments of ethnographic “revelation”’ (ibid.: 1) to engender new concepts and theories rests primarily on what is assumed to be an a priori difference between an implicitly Euro-American anthropologist (or an anthropologist steeped in an implicitly Euro-American epistemological milieu) and the (usually non-Western) others that s/he studies. Without that contrast and the concomitant opportunity for collective self-castigation and redemption, the ontological turn would lose much of its novelty, recursive potential and creativity, not to mention its moral and ethical force.

Two moments, two ‘we’s. At first blush, the ‘we’ of contemporary anthropology could not be more different from the white, male, colonial Ethnographic ‘we’ that *Argonauts* helped to fashion nearly one hundred years ago. And yet, as the above juxtaposition suggests, they are not entirely disparate either. Both are assumed, more or less explicitly, to be Euro-American, or at least to share a set of Euro-American intellectual baggage; both possess a certain critical, detached perspective on their ‘own’ kind out of which their ethnographic and analytical revelations about alterity arise; both entrench a mutually constitutive dichotomy between alterity and affinity at the heart of the anthropological enterprise.



These similarities, we argue, are not coincidental but genealogical, reflecting the pervasiveness of a persistent, often unarticulated sense of collective identity that has evolved within anthropology, particularly anglophone anthropology, over the last century. This identity is best thought of not as a fixed entity but as the relational product of that complex triangle between 'our' own society, 'us' anthropologists and 'them' others that underpinned *Argonauts* and the discipline it helped to establish. Even as the composition of each party and the relations between them have shifted, this triangle has remained an important space through which anthropological theory, practice and self-identity have been shaped and negotiated. It is a space in which pushing against, criticizing and even rejecting 'our' own kind has become as instrumental to ethnographic thought and practice as the interactions between anthropologists and 'others'. Here, the revelatory insights afforded by the ambivalent (Euro-American) ethnographer's encounter with (non-Western) alterity are turned into and upheld as the privileged ground of theoretical breakthrough.

It is worth clarifying a few things at this point. First, by positing the existence of this hegemonic disciplinary 'we', we are not downplaying the very real heterogeneity and scholarly fragmentation that has long existed within and beyond the anglophone mainstream of anthropology. Neither are we suggesting that all anthropologists working within these traditions were or are necessarily white, male, Cartesian, middle-class etc. individuals who actually conform to that template of the (neo-)Malinowskian Ethnographer. Having come of anthropological age in Cambridge, where images of what are conversationally and only half-jokingly termed 'the Ancestors' gaze upon staff and students in the main seminar room (recently christened the Edmund Leach Room), we are acutely aware of the vastly divergent biographies, ethnic origins, religious and political affiliations and other different characteristics, not to mention the scholarly spats, that could and can still be found across the anthropological spectrum.

Finally, we are not arguing that there is a clear and unbroken line between the Malinowskian 'we' and that of the ontological turn, or that these two moments can in any sense stand for the whole of anglophone anthropology. Rather, our point is that this 'we' needs to be understood as both a trope and an analytical device that is historically, politically and, increasingly, ethically Western in its constitution. What it generates is an enduring and encompassing *disciplinary* persona with its own orientations and sensibilities that, through a series of historical and other quirks, has come to dominate

the anglophone mainstream of anthropology today. In this capacity, it has been adopted, shared and in many ways universalized by disparate anthropologists across the globe, regardless of their national, ethnic, cultural and other origins – with constitutive implications for their conceptual and theoretical projects.

More than being adopted by individual practitioners, however, this anthropological ‘we’ is associated with a whole set of structural and institutional conditions that, by upholding a certain model of ‘good’ anthropology, it simultaneously helps to undergird. In this way, it also helps to perpetuate long-standing intellectual and structural inequalities within the dominant centres of anthropology and its wider global landscape. In the next section, we thus turn to the structural and disciplinary bases of anthropology that sustain that textual and theoretical ‘we’: institutions, global political economy and international models and benchmarks of ‘good’ anthropology.

### ***Economies, Structures and Politics of ‘We’-Production***

#### *Institutional Structures*

A study of the ‘we’ of anthropology cannot be bracketed off from its social constitution, in other words the question of *who* this ‘we’ is and *is not*. For one thing, such an omission would be profoundly un-anthropological. Moreover, we contend, the question of *who* gets to occupy privileged positions in the anthropological community has important implications for the benchmarks and forms of knowledge that get produced and perpetuated within it.

Anthropologists in the anglophone mainstream have undertaken the study of class, gender, race and domination in ‘other’ places right from the inception of the discipline, through sub-fields such as the anthropology of kinship or economic anthropology. Yet, until very recently, they have not turned an ethnographic gaze onto their very own practices as members of university anthropology departments.<sup>3</sup> This was a point made by Hugh Gusterson in his presidential address to the American Ethnological Society, in which he called for anthropologists to undertake their own ‘homework’ in order to shed light on the changing nature of the public university under conditions of neo-liberalism (Gusterson 2017). The need for such ‘homework’ is borne out by a spate of new publications that have begun to demonstrate, through both quantitative and qualitative research methods, that the Western university system in general remains dominated by male, white and middle-upper-class scholars, many of whom are drawn

from a familiar handful of elite universities (Kawa, McCarty and Clark 2016; Ahmed 2017; Savonick and Davidson 2017).

Brodkin, Morgen and Hutchinson, for example, draw on statistics and surveys to demonstrate how anthropology departments in the United States remain 'social spaces that are white owned' (2011: 545). They argue that cultural and discursive praxis, as well as a racialized division of labour, lead to the creation of 'internal others' in departments marked by gender, race and class, thereby ensuring the constant reproduction of US anthropology as what they call a 'white public space'. Likewise, a recent exploration of 'the intersections of race and class for women in academia' (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012) features interviews with forty women of colour, many of whom recall struggling to overcome deeply embedded presumptions of their incompetence as they worked through the hiring, promotion and tenure-track processes and negotiated relations with students, colleagues and administrators. A similar portrait is painted by Sara Ahmed (2012, 2017) in her groundbreaking work on the exclusionary effects of race, gender and class in higher education. Her discussion of diversity and institutional inclusion moves beyond statistics and online surveys to outline the daily practices that allow for universities in the United Kingdom to reproduce themselves as white male spaces. In her description of how diversity gets done – or rather undone – within seemingly progressive universities, and how institutions clone themselves by hiring and supporting people who do not disrupt the 'white surround' and can easily 'fit in', it becomes clear how universities and departments create their own 'we's' (Ahmed 2012: 23–50).

To be clear, our argument is not that only Western, white, middle- and upper-class males have internalized the problematic alterity/affinity dualism outlined above. This problem, we suggest, is prevalent across much of the discipline, regardless of its practitioners' identities or locations. As Dipesh Chakrabarty (2007) notes in *Provincialising Europe*, the task at hand is not related to a place in the world called 'Europe'. Rather, the intellectual project we need to take on is one of questioning anthropology's inheritance of the post-Enlightenment European intellectual tools of thought that many anthropologists, regardless of our location, carry with us. What we wish to underline in this section, however, is that the political economy of knowledge production as well as the generally conservative social composition of anthropology departments make such a project of transformation and critique much more difficult.

Like Ahmed, we argue that gender, race and other forms of exclusion cannot be bracketed off as mere 'problems' of diversity or

prejudice. Rather, we contend that these exclusions have a significant role to play in the continual production of anthropological work that is quick to notice alterity in its subject matter while assuming affinity among its fellow practitioners. A recent critique of the construction of a normative anthropological community in the United States offers an initial vantage point on this process. Navarro, Williams and Ahmad (2013) argue that the difficulties faced by women of colour in academia – long documented and publicly bemoaned – have only intensified in recent years, and note an enduring anthropological silence on the issue. Like us, they wonder ‘whether anthropology’s inability to think beyond dualistic differences and allow for internal diversity may be at the root of some of the difficulties faced by WOC (women of colour)’ (ibid.: 445). They highlight a deep-seated problem with which this volume also grapples: the fact that, as a discipline founded on the binaries of subject/object, anthropologist/native, desk/field – or foundational theories of alterity and affinity – anthropology remains fixated on the notion of the Other being found in the (exotic) field. Accordingly, they argue, ‘the discipline continues to rely on the assumption of a white, male researcher venturing into the unknown as the neutral anthropological position’ (ibid.; see also Ntarangwi 2010). In this intriguing respect, it would seem that there is something specific to the form of othering that occurs within anthropology departments. While some critics attribute this to the inherently Orientalizing and colonial nature of the discipline (e.g. Nyamnjoh 2011), we argue, with Navarro et al., that it also draws sustenance from the manner in which anthropology has always been predicated upon notions of alterity, which in turn feeds back into its own self-composition.

Navarro, Williams and Ahmad (2013) noted that they felt the need to publish their article in a prominent journal like *Cultural Anthropology* in order to push the issue of women of colour in anthropology into the mainstream, as well as to move the discussion beyond the many ‘confessional conversations’ they regularly had. Similar motivations apply to us – women of colour hailing from Singapore and India respectively, who earned our PhDs at and now work within the overwhelmingly male, white, alterity-centred landscape of British anthropology. Like our peers, we learned to adopt the Malinowskian persona of the ambivalent European and the methodological, analytical and rhetorical conventions, sensibilities and baggage that came with him. Yet, as we later discovered through our own series of confessional conversations, we were also dogged by a persistent, if often inarticulate sense of alienation from this ‘I’ – and the ‘we’ to

which it spoke – that was routinely invoked in seminars, meetings and theoretical trends. These conversations gave rise to the workshop that inspired this volume, but they are merely a starting point. As noted above, our ambition is to interrogate the persistence of a ‘we’ in the global landscape of anglophone anthropology, a persistence that requires political and intellectual work – including a genuine democratization and diversification within anthropology departments in Euro-American universities – to be overcome. What is required, we believe, is a foundational transformation of current analytical and theoretical frameworks, many of them built around binary modes of thinking (Navarro, Williams and Ahmad 2013: 447), and the practices and senses of affinity and complicity that they undergird. One way of doing so is by throwing into question the model of ‘good’ anthropology that is enshrined by the anglophone mainstream and that structures the forms, qualities and inequalities of anthropological conversations across the globe.

### *Global Inequalities and the Question of ‘Good’ Anthropology*

In August 2012 three leading academic publishers – Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press and Taylor & Francis – decided to sue Delhi University. The lawsuit was directed at a tiny photocopying shop nestled in the Delhi School of Economics, or D School, as it is fondly called. The shop was accused of copyright violations and piracy due to its practice of photocopying large sections of books that were on D School’s reading lists. It is through course material, thus acquired, that generations of Delhi University (and, indeed, all other Indian universities’) students have acquired higher education given the woefully sparse public libraries and the exorbitant costs of books and journal articles. The lawsuit set off a series of events, including a campaign called ‘Save the D School Photocopying Shop’, a letter of protest signed by over three hundred international academics, the wide circulation of critical commentaries, the formation of an Association of Students for Equitable Access to Knowledge (ASEAK), and even the production of a YouTube jingle on the lawsuit.

This case – which D School won in the Delhi High Court on the grounds of equitable access to intellectual goods – draws attention to the persistent inequalities between the global North and South and the manner in which they play out in the international field of anthropological knowledge production. It exemplifies a simple but often overlooked point: the fact that the ‘we’ of anthropology is largely a product of global inequality, wherein the majority of the world (particularly

the global South) does not possess the resources (such as access to journals or books) that would allow it to speak back to or unsettle this 'we'. The continued dominance of the anthropological 'we' is possible not just because of its epistemic hold on and foundational centrality to the discipline, but also because this discipline continues to be practised in increasingly smaller numbers of 'Western' institutions. This is not to suggest, of course, that no seminal scholarship has emerged from the global South. D School, for example, boasts globally renowned anthropologists such as J.P.S. Uberoi, Andre Beteille and Veena Das as students and teachers. However, for the most part, scholars from the global South do not possess the material resources, networks and cultural capital to publish in high-prestige outlets – be they journals or books – and neither is their work cited with the same frequency as that of authors within the anglophone mainstream. The result of this is an incipient marginalization of such scholars that, over time, becomes chronic.

Again, these problems are not confined to anthropology. Ahmed (2017) has documented the citational politics of academia whereby women of colour are systematically dropped and excluded from chains of citation. Wellman and Piper (2017) have worked through a database of articles in leading humanities journals over the past forty-five years to show that authors with PhDs from Yale, Harvard, University of California-Berkeley, Columbia University, University of Chicago, Cornell University, Stanford University, Princeton University, Johns Hopkins University, and Oxford University wrote 2,837 of 5,593 articles. They note the tight correlations between academic prestige and patronage in both publishing and recruitment in the top twenty universities of the world, all of which are based in Europe and North America.

What these studies document is a persistent global imbalance in who gets to write, speak and represent that which counts as 'high-prestige academic knowledge' and that, as we argue, comes to constitute the global anthropological mainstream. While this problem has received minimal attention within anglophone centres, it has been flagged by several important works to have emerged on 'other' anthropologies in recent decades (more on which below). Many of these works seek to lay bare and thus destabilize the epistemic and political dominance of the 'centre' or 'core' of the 'academic world system' (Kuwayama 2004: 9) – that is, the forms of (mainly anglophone) anthropology chiefly associated with the United States, Britain and, to a lesser degree, France (e.g. Buchowski 2012: 29; Gerholm and Hannerz 1982; Mathews 2010: 53; Restrepo and Escobar 2005;

102).<sup>4</sup> These centres' disproportionate power and influence vis-à-vis their peripheries (Gerholm and Hannerz 1982) is commonly remarked upon. Whereas the peripheries tend to adopt the centre's languages (i.e. English), theoretical models and other knowledge practices in order to survive, those at the centre can easily get by with minimal awareness of the peripheries.

Such chronic 'asymmetrical ignorance' (Restrepo and Escobar 2005: 115), however, is only the tip of the iceberg. A more deep-seated problem is the way in which specific theories, methodologies and stylistic devices developed at the centre have become universalized and extolled as epitomes of 'good' anthropology. Many readers will be familiar with this model, which is enshrined in the submission guidelines of major international (read: mainly Anglo-American) anthropology journals, and pithily summarized by the first issue of *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, the newest big-hitter in this arena:

HAU is a call to revive the theoretical potential of all ethnographic insight, wherever it is brought to bear, to bring it back to its leading role in generating new knowledge. . . . The challenge we pose to our fellow anthropologists is therefore to produce ethnographically grounded, theoretically innovative engagements with the broadest possible geographic and thematic range. (Da Col and Graeber 2011: vii)

Characterized by a fine balance between theory and ethnography (usually of alterity), healthy doses of reflexivity and recursivity, and a constant urge (or at least claim) to innovate, this ideal of 'good' anthropology is the historically specific product of the anglophone genealogy that we discussed earlier. In this capacity, however, it has been elevated to the status of a universal benchmark of anthropological merit (see Wellman and Piper 2017).<sup>5</sup> Conversely, scholarship that does not fit that mould is often deemed inferior or less valid, a point illustrated by Kacper Pobłocki's discussion of Western anthropologists' dismissive attitudes towards their Eastern European counterparts (2009). Drawing on specific cases, he reveals how Western anthropology's 'theoretical fetishism' and obsession with 'intellectual discontinuity' (2009: 239) has blinded its members to the particular histories and insights of other anthropologies, while cementing a value system that privileges theory above all else and treats 'positivism' or 'lack of "theoretical content"' as signs of 'backwardness' (ibid.).

Similar arguments are made by Gordon Mathews (2010) and Michał Buchowski (2012), who discuss the often subtle but formidable means by which dominant anthropological modalities are guarded and perpetuated by 'gatekeepers' (Mathews 2010: 54). Critiquing the

international peer review system, Mathews argues that regional variations in ethnographic foci, the uses of theory, and styles of anthropological writing and analysis are not always recognized by dominant Anglo-American journals, which, 'like anthropological publications across the globe use referees who essentially share their own values and discursive norms, shutting out, to some extent, those who do not share those values and norms' (ibid.: 54). Conversely, Buchowski's critique of University College London's Marie Curie PhD studentship reveals the caveats of academic inclusivity. Citing its stated mission to 'avail gifted and promising students from eastern and central Europe of the training which will allow them to be as competent and competitive as their western counterparts', Buchowski reflects:

Thus, it was implicitly assumed that if Eastern European students want to become real anthropologists and as good as their Western peers, they have to be trained in the metropolitan anthropological tradition . . . Despite its otherwise commendable goals, this conviction can be read as a case of Categorical Orientalism: post-socialist subjects can be redeemed only if properly trained and transformed into the Western 'us'. (2012: 30)

And so, we return to the anthropological 'we'. As Buchowski's comments suggest, debates about 'other' anthropologies are in many ways debates over what 'defines anthropological citizenship' (Ntarangwi 2010: 16). This is not just a question of who 'we' consist of, but, equally crucially, *how* that 'we' is defined and *who* determines its membership. And it is here that the connection between anthropology's theoretical frameworks, methods, collective identities and 'regimes of value' (Poblocki 2009: 233) is laid bare. Put plainly, the reluctant Western 'we' of the anglophone canon is not merely a theoretical foil to alterity, but the linchpin of a model of anthropology that can only be undertaken by certain people, predominantly metropolitan academics operating in climates of scholarly autonomy whose freedom to theorize and critique is (relatively) unfettered by governmental dictates, political obligations, fieldsites on their doorsteps. It is no coincidence that such ideal conditions are most closely approximated at specific, mainly Western, academic centres.

Put differently, the ostensibly universal paradigm of 'good' anthropology that continues to structure the academic world system is built around a particular 'we' whose theoretical, methodological and socioeconomic attributes tend to reinforce each other and the structures in which they operate. This vision of who 'we' (ideally) are exerts a strong grip on the anglophone imagination, serving as both an imagined community of peers and the model for what is



effectively the elite tier of anthropological citizenship. Anthropologies and anthropologists that deviate from this model – among them the indigenous activists, applied ethnographers and ‘native’ scholars who participated in our workshop and this volume<sup>6</sup> – are often too easily relegated to the lower rungs of citizenship or excluded from it entirely. These processes of global ‘othering’, we suggest, are direct offshoots of the same altering tendencies that have generated institutional ‘others’ within the dominant centres of anthropology. What we are looking at, then, is a set of nested inequalities that, far from being removed from the process of anthropological knowledge production, are in fact intimately linked to it.

Although this volume is, to the best of our knowledge, the first concerted attempt to pull together the intellectual, structural and political conditions of anthropological ‘we’-production, the problems that we have just raised are not all novel. As we shall now explain, several of the issues that we interrogate here have previously been tackled in different ways and to different ends by various anthropologists. In order to appreciate the distinctive contribution that our collection seeks to make, then, it is worth pausing briefly to consider the precedents on which it builds, chief among them the reflexive ‘writing culture’ turn of the 1980s and the emergence of ‘world anthropologies’.

## **Destabilization**

### ***Unsettling the ‘I’: Reflexive Challenges***

Much of the groundwork for this volume’s reflexive agenda was laid by a series of developments in the 1970s and 1980s, which culminated in what became widely termed the ‘writing culture’ movement. This movement extended a number of thorny questions that had begun to be posed by postcolonial scholars from the 1970s and 1980s – questions, notably, about who speaks for whom, how they speak and on what basis. As groundbreaking works like Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979) made uncomfortably clear, it was no longer possible for historians, anthropologists and other scholars in the West to discuss the ‘other’ without a careful self-examination of the lingering prejudices and power structures embedded in their own thought and society. The corollary to this was a concomitant challenge – issued, for example, by the Subaltern Studies collective (1980s) – to the capacity and authority of Western scholars to describe and speak for others. While not itself immune to criticisms of its representational practices (see, e.g., Spivak 1988), the subaltern school, like much

postcolonial scholarship, played a critical role in destabilizing the epistemological and authoritative edifices on which earlier depictions of cultural and historical otherness were built. Constraints of space prevent us from delving into these epochal developments, but the point we wish to underscore here is that these constituted an important first step in rendering the anthropological 'we' open to scrutiny and contestation.

This process came to a head in the 1980s, when the critical insights of postcolonial scholarship merged with those of postmodernism, poststructuralism and feminism to culminate in what is now widely known as the 'reflexive turn' in anthropology. While rooted in certain North American quarters, this movement bundled some of the questions and problems listed above into an overtly self-reflexive critique of the practices and politics of anthropological representation. James Clifford and George Marcus's edited volume, *Writing Culture* (1986), which trained anthropologists' critical gaze onto 'the poetics and politics of ethnography', marked a key moment in this turn. Examining what it identified as the principal act of the ethnographer – writing – the collection claimed to signal the crumbling of anthropology's earlier, dominant ideology of 'transparency of representation and immediacy of experience' (ibid.: 2). Disavowing previous objectivist claims to be able to represent empirical realities in the field, Clifford argued that ethnography could only ever produce partial truths due to the inherent situatedness of the anthropologist, her subjects and thus the complex, dynamic relationship between them. Accordingly, he and his colleagues argued, it was now vital to acknowledge ethnography's 'artisanal' nature (ibid.: 6), the fact that ethnography was not a transparent account of some objective reality, but a fiction (ibid.), a representation (ibid.: 7) in which 'natives' also participated as interlocutors.

Underpinning this programme was a specific brand of ethnographic reflexivity that acknowledged the subjectivity of the anthropologist and the power that she exerted in creating – that is, in writing – ethnography. Since then, the act of making explicit the 'I' or the authorial position in anthropological writing has become *de rigueur*, with the ethnographer usually outlining her or his race, gender, age, class, linguistic skills, caste, regional background and/or personal history, and sometimes relating a little anecdote to account for how and what they write. This (putatively) full disclosure of facts is assumed to demonstrate how the ethnography is inevitably partial, profoundly mediated by who the author is. In place of the proverbial fly on the wall, we now have the ethnographer as a fully formed person in flesh

and blood with particular sociological characteristics and historical baggage.

If postcolonial and subaltern writings forced anthropologists to confront questions of who wrote and spoke about whom, the reflexive turn made it imperative for them to address questions about who they (individually) were, and how that shaped their fieldwork and writing. To a limited extent, our volume builds on all these projects by asking similarly reflexive, critical questions about the 'we' of anthropology, about how who 'we' (think 'we') are shapes the way 'we' think, write about and even speak for 'them'. However, we also depart from them in a few significant ways. First, our focus is less on interrogating the anthropologist's subject position – the authorial 'I' – than on dismantling the assumption of a shared anthropological community – the 'we' – that is ostensibly made up of all these 'I's, and with which the self-reflexive 'I' imagines itself to be in conversation. While locating the individual anthropologist is an important act, the implicit assumption that there is a collective anthropological community which these 'I's equally belong to, share with and contribute to is, as we suggested above, riven with problems. What is required is a different form and level of reflexive scrutiny than prevalent 'writing culture' conventions allow for.

Second, we argue that despite their best intentions, 'writing culture'-based reflexive projects often fail to challenge the fundamental epistemological parameters of the anglophone mainstream from which they emerged and in which they continue to dwell. The recursive turn is, as Clifford put it, a turn to discourse, to 'a cultural poetics that is an interplay of voices, of positioned utterances' (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 12). In this respect, it revolves around the craft of ethnography, styles of writing and dialogic experimentations, with the added ethical question of who gets to participate in this enterprise. In response, it advocates further discourse and dialogue, but this time with the inclusion of previously repressed or excluded native voices in the ethnographic text. As Mahmut Mutman (one of our workshop participants) muses in his critique of 'writing culture', this entails a 'new "diplomatic" strategy of representation in which this [native's] voice is *marked* as such' (2006: 161; italics in original). Yet, he adds, 'this attempt to repair the exclusion fails to interrogate the very demand that the "other" should speak up – a conventional anthropological/ethnographic demand' (ibid.).

What reflexive/'writing culture' approaches thus enact, Mutman argues, is a 'recuperative strategy of representation' (2006: 161) that advocates the inclusion of 'other' voices *on anthropology's own*

terms, that is, through discourse and writing, and through the universalization of all truths as 'partial' (ibid.: 157). Put differently, these approaches have made it *de rigueur* for 'us' anthropologists to make room for 'them' *within* our existing epistemological and theoretical frameworks, but without necessarily changing those frameworks or reaching beyond them towards other discursive or non-discursive spaces and possibilities of interaction. In order to become heard or visible, then, our subjects (like the Eastern European anthropologists mentioned by Buchowski) have to become like 'us', or, at the very least, learn to speak 'our' language. This process, however, leaves untouched both the theoretical and institutional 'we' of the anglophone mainstream and the fundamentally discursive models of anthropology that 'we' continue to reproduce, now less as ambivalent Malinowskian Europeans than as self-reflexive 'manager[s] of partial truths' (ibid.: 165). But what would happen if this model, its analytical conventions, its implicit 'we's and its parameters of inclusion were shaken up? What if, as the contributors to Part II of this volume ask, 'we' tried reaching across different epistemological and experiential spaces and doing anthropology through different 'we's on different terms?

We shall return to these questions shortly. Before doing so, we turn briefly to another important precedent to this project: various attempts over the years to highlight the existence of 'other' anthropologies.

### **'Other' Anthropologies, Anthropological 'Others'?**

At the time of writing, universities from Cape Town to Oxford are being animated by 'decolonizing' movements, such as 'Rhodes must fall' and 'Decolonise the University'. Older iterations of this need for decolonization and reinvention of knowledge practices in the university are evident not just in Asad's (1973) famous volume on anthropology and the colonial encounter, but also in calls to mainstream 'other' or 'world' anthropologies. In December 1968, for example, there was a feisty discussion by Indian sociologists and anthropologists in the journal *Seminar* on what they termed 'academic colonialism', in which they called for an expunging of the discipline's colonial knowledge practices, both intellectually and institutionally. Most famously, J.P.S. Uberoi derided the 'jargon of international anthropology' (1968: 120) and questioned forms of foreign 'collaboration' that were upholding Western forms of financial and intellectual dominance even as he made a call for '*swaraj*' or autonomy in the workings of the academy in India.

This early work drew attention to the same epistemic problems with anthropology that postcolonialism and postmodern accounts have also tackled head-on. But in the last three decades, the notion that there exist multiple anthropologies around the world has also begun to receive serious attention, with collections such as Gerholm and Hannerz's issue on 'The Shaping of National Anthropologies' (1982) and Fahim's *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries* (1982) constituting some of the earliest discussions on the theme. Their initial focus on nation-based traditions (e.g. Vasavi 2011) has since broadened to include discussions of regional anthropologies (e.g. Mathews 2015; *Social Anthropology Forum* 2015; Uberoi, Sundar and Deshpande 2007; Vermeelen and Roldán 1995; Yamashita, Bosco and Eades 2004), 'anthropologies of the South' (Krotz 1997), 'peripheral' (Cardoso de Oliveira 1999) or 'other people's' (Bošković 2008) anthropologies, 'indigenous' (e.g. Tengan et al. 2010) and 'native' (e.g. Ohnuki-Tierney 1984; Kuwayama 2004) anthropologies, as well as the more pluralistic, democratizing notion of 'world' anthropologies (Restrepo and Escobar 2005; Ribeiro and Escobar 2006). This period has also seen the establishment of several bodies, each with its own politics and agendas, dedicated to what the World Council of Anthropological Associations (WCAA), for example, describes as 'worldwide cooperation and communication in anthropology' (<http://www.wcaanet.org/>).<sup>7</sup>

While varying substantially in their scope and agendas, such projects are united by two common aims. First, and most obviously, they draw attention to the distinctive compositions, knowledge practices and theoretical and political concerns of different anthropological collectives, many of which, such as various traditions of ethnology, folk studies and sociology, do not style themselves as anthropologies in the North American and British sense. In so doing, they also complicate the over-simplistic postcolonial depiction of anthropology as 'an "extended arm" of the colonial endeavor' (Bošković and Eriksen 2008: 4), showing how anthropological knowledge in these milieus is shaped by myriad intellectual, political and other circumstances that are often bracketed out of mainstream theory-making.

An edited volume on anthropology in East and Southeast Asia (Yamashita, Bosco and Eades 2004), for example, reveals a number of historically and politically specific influences on the discipline's 'indigenization' in the region, among them its ambivalent relationship with colonialism and the West, its linguistic dilemmas and its imbrication with national(ist), regional and ethnic politics. It shows, among other things, that 'the inward-looking nature of much Asian anthropology'

stems in large part from the priorities of government funding agencies, which are 'primarily interested in the contribution that anthropology can make to nation-building and development' (ibid.: 15), and that there are complex differences between 'native' and 'indigenous' anthropologies, which produce distinct kinds of scholarship for diverse audiences. Similarly, a collection of twelve biographical essays on the founding figures in the history of Indian sociology and anthropology from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century provides another important vantage on what it describes as an 'anthropology in the East' (Uberoi, Sundar and Deshpande 2007). The collection 'seek[s] to give a specific twist to the recovery of disciplinary history by exploring, in and through the lives and writings of their subjects, the linkages between knowledge, institutions, and disciplinary practice' (ibid.: 5).

Second, in highlighting anthropology's global multiplicity, these discussions also underscore the situatedness and particularity of the anglophone mainstream, thereby opening it up to the sort of critique and destabilization that this volume also undertakes. The above section on the definition and universalization of 'good' anthropological models in the anglophone mainstream offer salient examples of this; indeed, it is no coincidence that many critics cited in it are either contributors to 'world anthropologies'-related projects or themselves situated on the 'peripheries' of Euro-American centres (or a combination of both). Their efforts can be read in conjunction with a smaller but important body of work produced by non-Western anthropologists that, not unlike this volume, seeks to 'anthropologize' the anglophone mainstream and its relations with its internal and global 'others'. For example, Mwenda Ntarangwi's 'African ethnography of American anthropology' lays bare those aspects of US anthropology that 'dominant tenets of reflexivity' (2010: 3) often occlude – among them the race- and gender-inflected interactions that take place in universities, classrooms and conferences, and the sorts of relations, knowledges and, crucially, anthropologists that they produce. Another salient example is the work of Japanese anthropologist Takami Kuwayama, who, in an intriguing exercise of 'ethnographic reading in reverse' (2004: 87), reinterprets Ruth Benedict's classic ethnography of Japanese society, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), as a 'self-portrait of Americans by using the radically different culture of Japan as a mirror' (ibid.: 88).

By exposing and critiquing the global hegemony of the anglophone mainstream, these myriad 'other' voices have cumulatively paved the way for a reimagination and transformation of the anthropological 'we'

and the models and conventions bound up with it. While acknowledging their seminal influence, however, we also sound a few cautionary notes. First, we argue that it is not enough to simply showcase the existence of multiple anthropological ‘we’s, a potentially ‘auto-provincializ[ing]’ (Bošković and Eriksen 2008: 3) move that risks creating ‘new centers of power and cartels of exclusion’ (Ntarangwi 2010: 137) or ‘mutually incompatible national [and other] projects’ (Yamashita, Bosco and Eades 2004: 20). Neither is it enough, as the ‘world anthropologies’ project advocates, to cleave open a pluralistic, heteroglossic space of ‘global anthropological scholarship’ (Ribeiro and Escobar 2006: 5) in which diversity and incommensurability can thrive – although that certainly is important. Although we share this project’s utopian (ibid.: 23) desire to enlarge the horizons of anthropology, we contend that its emphasis on pluralism risks glossing over the many, often uneven interactions, commonalities and overlaps that have long been found *between* anthropologies and anthropologists. Moreover, by focusing on a plurality of voices we also risk losing sight of the alterity/affinity dichotomy that remains at the beating heart of the anthropological mainstream. While we agree that the project of highlighting and bringing centre stage ‘other’ or ‘world’ anthropologies and traditions is critical, our volume thus takes a slightly different path. Rather than further foregrounding anthropological diversity, our aim here is to *reach across* multiple anthropological spaces and traditions, to spark new connections, alignments and possibilities in order to reimagine who ‘we’, and anthropology, could become. The next section expounds further on this agenda.

## **(Re)imagination**

### ***Where Do ‘We’ Go from Here?***

In this final section, we ask how the process of revealing and destabilizing the anthropological ‘we’ can precipitate a reimagination and transformation of that ‘we’ – and thus of anthropology. Importantly, our aim is not to simply jettison or replace the hegemonic ‘we’, although we are keen to raise critical awareness of its ubiquity. Rather, we propose forging a novel, self-transformative form of anthropological scholarship that opens up the space for a new kind – and diversity – of ‘we’s. In this, we draw partial inspiration from scholars like Ntarangwi and Kuwayama, who, while critiquing existing anthropological hegemonies with unflinching candour, also seek to forge new and productive modes of anthropological practice and

scholarship that entail different kinds of 'we'. Such proposals are not just equalizing but expansionary, endeavouring in their own ways to enlarge anthropology's global parameters of inclusion, belonging and visibility. What we wish to pick up on here is not so much their individual programmes for doing so, but their shared impulse to reach across spaces in order to expand, reimagine and transform them.

The contributions to this volume enact this project of reaching across spaces and reimagining and re-presenting the anthropological 'we' in three main ways. In Part I, Isak Niehaus and David Sneath revisit the works of three prominent 'ancestors' of British anthropology: Malinowski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown and E.E. Evans-Pritchard. In a series of excavatory moves, they delve beneath the surface of these scholars' now canonical writings to reveal the complex dynamic between their scholarly outputs, their individual subject positions and, far less examined, their involvement or identification with various collective affiliations. Opening the collection, Niehaus discusses Malinowski's and Radcliffe-Brown's engagements with the state and funding bodies in apartheid South Africa between 1919 and 1934. He shows how, despite their apparent similarities – both 'cosmopolitan European intellectuals . . . united in their rejection of social evolutionist dogma' – their actions were shaped by their contrasting political opinions on race and segregation, as well as their divergent attempts to negotiate their identities and responsibilities as public intellectuals vis-à-vis the colonial government. In the process, they produced significantly different kinds of anthropology and stances on 'the native question'. Niehaus's analysis complicates the dominant depiction of anthropology in this period as a straightforward 'handmaiden of colonialism' (Asad 1973). While acknowledging the discipline's imbrication with colonial structures of power, he also highlights how different individuals navigated those structures in their own ways, resulting in 'sharp political differences' that mitigated against the emergence of a collective disciplinary 'we' in South Africa.

Malinowski also features in Sneath's chapter, which reinterprets his and E.E. Evans-Pritchard's classic ethnographies through the comparative lens of 'aristocracy'. Sneath argues that these anthropologists' respective visions of the Trobriand Islanders and the Nuer were informed, on the one hand, by the then-prevalence of the notion of 'kinship society' as a hallmark of alterity, and, on the other, by their personal senses of affinity with what were essentially the equivalents of aristocratic classes and ideologies in their fieldsites. Intriguingly, he suggests that these senses of affinity indelibly shaped their field-work relations and ethnographic findings, which, he argues, largely



reflected an elite perspective. Yet, in a further translational twist, both Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard then recast their findings in the more conventionally alterizing idiom of kinship, then widely seen by their disciplinary peers as the organizing principle of classless 'primitive' societies. But what would emerge, Sneath asks, if these now-canonical descriptions of 'holistic social systems' were reinterpreted in more familiar, less comfortably 'other', terms as 'political orders'?

Both Niehaus's and Sneath's chapters grapple with 'our' disciplinary inheritances at one of the centres of the academic world system – British social anthropology. Together, they constitute a critique from within, revealing the fragility and specificity of the theoretical and ethnographic edifices that structure its disciplinary identity and practices, showing how its 'ancestors' individual scholarship was indelibly shaped by their political, class-based and other affinities. Although Niehaus and Sneath reach different conclusions about how who 'we' (think 'we') are determines the character of anthropological knowledge, they complement each other in revealing how 'our' theories and concepts always bear the imprint of wider historico-economic pressures and relations, as well as individual biographies. In this respect, conversations between past and present anthropological scholarship are also conversations between different 'I's and 'we's, each entangled in the world in specific ways.

If Part I reimagines the canon by reaching back across time and beyond the scholarly boundaries of early twentieth-century anthropology, Part II reaches across different contemporary spaces of praxis and knowledge-making to reimagine the anthropological 'we' in ways that do not pivot on either the anthropological 'I' (mentioned earlier) or a clear dichotomy between alterity and affinity. Katherine Swancutt's chapter is built around an ethnographic film set in Southwest China (2016) that she co-created with her Nuosu ethnologist interlocutors. Like Niehaus and Sneath, she too foregrounds the indelible 'we'-ness of the anthropological 'I', in this case by inverting the romantic trope of the anthropologist as shape-shifter and examining how her interlocutors – native anthropologists, ethnologists and cinematographers among them – took pains to craft her professional persona for specific ends. Crucially, rather than simply incorporating Nuosu voices into existing anthropological spaces, Swancutt lays bare the (often hidden) processes by which the documentary team collectively produced and sustained an 'anthropological imaginarium', 'assembl[ing] each other through creative acts of alterity-making and affinity-making', and 'co-produce[ing] unique imaginaries that potentially shape their worlds and those of their audiences'.

As a reflexive exercise that transcends the individualism of earlier postmodernist critiques, Swancutt's chapter powerfully demonstrates how anthropologists (native and otherwise) can be transformed by their efforts to reach across different epistemological and other spaces, while also creating new spaces and imaginaria in the process. Her chapter raises a further important question: what happens to the anthropological 'we' when conventional lines between alterity ('them', subjects, cultural others) and affinity ('us', anthropologists) cannot easily be drawn? Although the blurring of such lines has been reflexively discussed in relation to individual 'native' anthropologists (e.g. Narayan 1993), much more could be made, we suggest, of the ways in which anthropological practice and scholarship – usually individual in tone and form – are generated or indeed cross-cut by myriad other divisions and allegiances.

This is a point fleshed out by Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal's chapter on indigenous film in Latin America, which attends to both the benefits and the very real pitfalls involved in reaching across spaces, particularly – as has long been fashionable in anthropology – when claiming affinity with 'marginal' others. Anthropologists, she writes, often laud the emancipatory potential of indigenous media in Latin America, using it to challenge the alterizing tendencies of dominant modes of ethnographic authority. Yet, such challenges – which arguably reflect these anthropologists' own political affinities and ambivalent relationships to disciplinary hegemonies – also risk pigeonholing a whole range of agendas and practices as 'indigenous', thus further essentializing their creators as exotic 'others'. Critiquing anti-hegemonic initiatives such as 'anthropologies of the South' and 'world anthropologies' for their over-optimistic focus on building collaborative bridges, she argues for a simultaneous recognition of the *chasms* that also characterize 'our' engagements with other 'we's beyond anthropology.

Ty Tengan takes a more hopeful view in his meditation on the Oceanic 'we'. Like Zamorano Villarreal, he highlights the stubborn persistence of alterizing frameworks in his reflections on Indigenous anthropologists' efforts to 'unsettle any stable notions of a "we" in Oceanian anthropology'. Drawing partly on personal experience, he notes how, upon entering the academy, indigenous anthropologists continually encounter both institutional and intellectual 'blockage' – 'specifically in the ability and right to freely move from "one being to another" and assert the copresence of multiple ontologies in the practice of Indigenous anthropology'. But rather than responding antagonistically towards a white, Western 'other', Tengan invokes Epeli

Hau'ofa's writings on 'Oceania as a place of expansive possibility', and calls for the creation of a more inclusive 'we' that can 'account[t] for the Indigenous and the anthropological together'. Crucially, this move does not involve simply embracing difference and plurality, but a commitment to reaching across spaces. As Tengan puts it:

It is precisely through tracing the intersections and divergences of Indigenous and anthropological genealogies that we (Indigenous anthropologists and allies) remain active and present in the field, committed to redefining and reshaping a decolonial future for the discipline.

By focusing on the diverse ways in which the contemporary anthropological 'we' is composed, shaped and enlarged through anthropological engagements with/in the world, the chapters in Part II thus push us to re-envisage collective disciplinary identity as consisting of more than just the sum of its individuals. Following on from this, Part III offers two distinct contemplations on where these processes could take 'us'. Gey Pin Ang and Caroline Gatt's jointly authored chapter is itself the product of their ongoing collaboration as a theatre practitioner/scholar and an anthropologist/theatre practitioner respectively. Through an account of their mutually transformative experience of working together, they argue that ethnographic collaborations offer one way of taking alterity seriously, not as a clear-cut dividing line between 'us' (anthropologists) and 'them' (others), but as a means of allowing anthropology to differ within, and from, itself. Central to this is a notion of the anthropological 'we' as heterogeneous, as defined not by its genealogy, 'its alignment with predetermined and rigid criteria', but by engagement and 'affinitive or associative relations', which can in turn produce 'anthropological artefacts that bear little resemblance to ethnographic texts and narratives'. Producing and engaging with them, however, demands a commitment to decolonizing prevalent anthropological parameters of knowledge and inclusion, and to experimenting with ways of 'crafting anthropology otherwise'.

Like Swancutt's and Tengan's contributions, Ang and Gatt's chapter offers an example of how the anthropological 'I' can be decentred, rendering it permeable to various 'we's, 'I's and other elements that are always co-present in anthropological practice and theory (Chua 2015). By making visible such complex intersections of alterity and affinity, their chapters point to some ways in which dominant models and parameters of anthropology can be unsettled and even displaced. A similarly disruptive process is advocated by João de Pina-Cabral, who calls for an 'ecumenical' response to the

very real heterogeneity of anthropological 'we's. Criticizing recent anthropology's obsession with 'hypostasizing diversity', he calls for a re-acknowledgement of the world as an 'ecumene' or 'dwelling space of intercommunicating humans'. The 'ecumenical anthropology' that he proposes has the dual effect of dissolving the 'imperial hegemony of the Western "we"' and making room for a diversity of anthropologists, while simultaneously reaffirming anthropology's long-standing mission of explicating the human condition. The 'we' of anthropology, he argues, should consist of both a 'community of information' and, more broadly, membership of a shared humanity to which it is historically and morally committed.

While propounding quite a different vision to Ang and Gatt of where 'we' should go from here, Pina-Cabral sketches a similarly expansive, transformative aim: to 'ope[n] up the path for wider and wider dialogues, broader and broader ecumenes'. Such contrasting visions, however, are not limited to Part III or to Mwenda Ntarangwi's penetrating, reflective Afterword. As we hope will become obvious, each chapter can be seen as foregrounding specific 'we's, understandings of anthropology and hopes for what 'we' – and anthropology – could become. And this is precisely the point of this volume. By putting disparate views and, more unusually, styles and modalities of anthropology in dialogue, we have sought to create a space not just of plurality but of connection and overlap, in which it is possible to think through, play with, contest, but – crucially – neither stifle nor reify difference *within* anthropology.

By this, we are not rehashing the familiar liberal argument that anthropologists need to make more room in existing spaces for a plurality of voices to proliferate, important though that ambition is. Rather, our central point is that we need to shake up and transform *those very spaces*, partly by laying bare the ways in which they frame, extol, include or exclude different kinds of voices, and partly by reaching *beyond* those spaces in order to enter, connect with and co-create other spaces of thought, practice and possibility. In other words, it is by interrogating the relationship between the hegemonic anthropological 'we' and its spaces of scholarly and political production that we can begin the vital task of destabilizing and reimagining not only who 'we' are but also what anthropology is and could be.

Such an agenda could not be more timely. Recent years have seen renewed movements towards 'decolonizing anthropology' (Harrison 1991; see McGranahan and Rizvi 2016), the emergence of experimental online spaces, such as Allegra Lab (which 'explores creative ways to fill the "dead space" that exists between traditional modes

of academic publication and ongoing scholarly and societal debates'; <http://allegralaboratory.net/>) and #xcol ('an open anthropological infrastructure for the research of novel modes of ethnographic field-work'; <http://xcol.org/>), as well as the formulation of alternative modes of engagement and discussion, such as the European Association of Social Anthropologist's popular series of conference-based Laboratories (2014–present). Such initiatives both flag the urgent need for disciplinary overhaul and offer distinctive ways of enacting it. Our project, then, can be seen as one further intervention in this contemporary moment, in which the parameters of anthropological thought, practice, inclusion and connection are being reworked. And as we shall attempt to show in this volume, it is by reaching out rather than by merely drawing (others) in that the anthropological 'we' can open itself to transformation, not as a taken-for-granted, exclusionary collective, but as an open-ended question that embodies anthropology's own status as an 'unfinished project' (Pina-Cabral). Such a move is inherently risky and discomfiting, but – as we hope this collection will reveal – also much-needed and potentially transformative.

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### Notes

1. We would like to thank Amiria Salmond, whose contributions to our workshop and conversations with Liana Chua have helped us think through and articulate the idea of reaching across spaces.
2. See Holbraad and Pedersen 2017 and Salmond 2014 for discussions of various programmes of ontologically inflected anthropology, some of which do treat ontologies as objective entities that exist in the world.
3. Anthropologists have, of course, turned critical ethnographic lenses onto the institutional cultures and structures of higher education (e.g. Bourdieu 1988; Gell 1999; Strathern 2000). Most of these, however, have not grappled with the often unmarked gendered and racial inequalities often entrenched in these systems.
4. This does not suggest that such anthropologies are geographically or nationally bounded; rather, we highlight their 'metropolitan' (Hannerz 2008: 219) character as centres of anthropological training and knowledge production whose influence pervades the global terrain of anthropology.
5. Indeed, we are acutely aware of our complicity in this system by publishing in this particular format with a well-known international publisher. We are also conscious that many of the contributors to this volume are based in the hegemonic anthropological centres that we critique (although the original workshop had a much larger and more diverse geopolitical spread). What we are trying to enact is a critique from *within* these centres that, like Navarro, Williams and Ahmad's (2013) critique, seeks to draw mainstream attention to this volume's concerns.
6. Our experience of trying to publish an earlier incarnation of this collection in a top-ranking international anthropology journal is instructive. Strikingly, the pieces that attracted the strongest critiques during peer review were those that deviated structurally, conceptually and linguistically from the standard template of 'good' anthropology articles. Not coincidentally, perhaps, these were mainly written by scholars outside the anglophone mainstream or whose politics and methods may have appeared somehow tangential to the 'pure' scholarship that is usually prized by such journals.
7. Other notable international bodies include the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), which will soon combine with the WCAA to form a single bicameral association called the World Anthropological Union (WAU), the American Anthropological Association's Commission on World Anthropologies (CWA), and the more loosely organized World Anthropology Network (WAN).

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