



## **The Secret Lives of Us**

### **Author**

Bell, Sharon

### **Published**

2004

### **Downloaded from**

<http://hdl.handle.net/10072/368666>

### **Griffith Research Online**

<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au>

# **The Secret Lives of Us**

by

**Professor Sharon Bell**

Pro-Vice Chancellor (Equity and Community Partnerships)

**Professorial Lecture**

**Delivered at**

***GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY***  
**Nathan Campus**

22 July 2004



In the decade since (re)joining the academy I have been in the habit of commencing my CV with a statement that emphasises the marriage of creative and academic interests – specifically filmmaking, research in the fields of anthropology and ethnographic film, and tertiary teaching and administration. If recited quickly this sounds credible, perhaps evoking an effortless combination of scholarly and creative interests with academic leadership. On the occasion of this lecture I do not intend to explore the advantages and disadvantages of this more often than not ‘marriage of inconvenience’, but do feel I should start with a confessional statement. This multi-faceted professional profile is no accident. My career has not followed an established path. I embraced geography as an undergraduate, anthropology and motherhood as a post-graduate, ethnographic filmmaking and more mothering as a post-doc, and documentary filmmaking and academic administration in mid-life. As a ‘professor’ I cannot pretend to the academic depth traditionally associated with holding a Chair in a specific discipline. Even in the broad field in which much of my research has been conducted, Sri Lankan studies, I refrain from claiming expertise – I explicitly speak ‘not as an expert but as someone whose life has become inextricably linked with that tiny island’.

In a formal sense I have not practiced nor been employed as an anthropologist since completing my doctoral studies, but anthropology has informed each of the professional roles I have undertaken. It is not surprising then, that in the reflective mode of production demanded by this occasion, pressed to identify the focus of my intellectual journey I find myself returning again and again to the ethnographic experience – the defining experiences that for me inextricably link the academy with the community, the personal with the political. As such this is a public statement of an ongoing internal dialogue – a dialogue that has undoubtedly informed my professional roles and united my rather fragmented scholarly identity. In a text that purports to speak the unspoken about fieldwork, including the difficulties of leaving the field, one contributor poses the question ‘Do we ever leave the field?’ (Stebbins:1991) I pose the question ‘Does the field ever leave us?’

### **The ‘self’ in frame**

In their introduction to ‘an inside view’ of qualitative research that focuses on the inherent problems and challenges in the conduct of field study, Shaffir and Stebbins set the scene quite unambiguously:

Fieldwork must certainly rank with one of the more disagreeable activities that humanity has fashioned for itself. It is usually inconvenient, to say the least, sometimes physically uncomfortable, frequently embarrassing, and, to a degree, always tense...Field researchers have in common the tendency to immerse themselves for the sake of science in situations that all but a tiny minority of humankind goes to great lengths to avoid...For most researchers the day-to-day demands of fieldwork are fraught with feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. The process of leading a way of life over an extended period that is often both novel and strange exposes the researcher to situations and experiences that usually are accompanied by an intense concern with whether the research is conducted and managed properly. Researcher fieldwork accounts typically deal with such matters as how the hurdles blocking entry were cultivated and maintained during the course of study; the emotional pains of this work are rarely mentioned. (1991:1-2)

Perhaps it is the demands, the anxiety and the uncertainty that leave indelible, yet hidden markings on the ethnographer. Exposure of the markings presents a rather difficult task for a number of reasons. Firstly, anthropologists have never been entirely at ease with including the 'self' in frame. The essential conundrum of the ethnographic experience, that it is intensely personal and individualistic and yet designed (certainly in its modernist form) to produce at least generalisable, at best verifiable, data and analysis, is one that has generated heated debate over the past three decades. Dumont (1978:7) has noted the paradoxical consequences that the more 'empathetic involvement' and the more that 'involved sympathy' emerge during the fieldwork experience, the more 'disciplined detachment' is found in the published reports 'under the pretext of objectivity'.

Judith Okely (1992:2) observes that as early as 1973 in a pioneering (unpublished) paper, David Pocock suggested a reflexive examination of anthropologists' texts in the light of their biography. She draws to our attention the fact that fifteen years after Pocock's paper, Ernest Gellner (1988:26) has written against reflexivity 'of the mildest, least personal form found' in Geertz's *Works and Lives* (1988):

My own advice to anthropology departments is that this volume be kept in a locked cupboard, with the key in the possession of the head of department, and that students be lent it only when a strong case is made by their tutors.

Throughout the 80s and 90s as anthropology has undergone a metamorphosis, there has been a continuing joust between proponents of reflexivity and its inevitable autobiographical connotations and those who remain, sometimes vehemently, opposed to such soul searching. Even James Clifford in his promotion of dialogical modes, retains a defensive and pejorative view of autobiography; the former 'not in principle autobiographical; they need not lead to hyper self-consciousness or self absorption.' (1986: 15). Okley argues that:

The anthropologist, imbued with Western notions, is torn between the Tradition of Autobiography as public achievement by lone hero and its antithesis which undermines it. Once autobiography is set up as the celebration of power then its opposite always threatens, namely the loss of power, the loss of face. The confessional, belittled by the canon, then becomes what autobiography is defined to exclude – namely the loss of control. That in turn is invidiously confused with self analysis. So long as the self is rigorously split off and secreted in diaries, then self analysis in anthropological practice is perceived as professional armour. (Okley 1999:7)

She also notes that reflexivity in anthropology has been pejoratively labelled narcissism (Okley: 1992:1) – a reflection of the fine line between reflexivity and self-aggrandisement. The problematic nature of reflexivity is explored in detail by Steve Woolgar (1988:17) who reminds us that 'Once we go beyond the idea of 'straightforward interpretation', we confront a potential vortex of questions about interpretation. The interesting question is where, how and on what basis does one stop asking further questions...'

In contrast, Amanda Coffey (1999:1) contends that 'in considering and exploring the intimate relations between the field, significant others and private self we are able to understand the processes of fieldwork as practical, intellectual and emotional accomplishments'. Anthony Cohen takes the argument for reflexivity even further in his analysis of the inevitability of intersubjectivity in the creation of meaning:

This is not just a problem of eliciting ‘indigenous psychology’, but arises whenever we impute a state and product of mind to other people (within or across social boundaries). It is evoked by questions of ‘symbolism’, of ‘meaning’, of interpretation, of intention and so forth. To declare these out of bounds because of the difficulties of conceptual or verbal equivalence would be to paralyse anthropology. It would be the academic ‘equivalent’ of retreating from society because your closest associates interpret your own behaviour and biography in ways which differ from yours. There is no option for us as social members or as social anthropologists but to proceed from the premise of self. It does not have to be a flabby procedure. Its virtue lies in more than its logical inevitability: it also replicates the process of ordinary interaction, of our lay assumptions that we have understood each other, that we have achieved ‘intersubjectivity’...We have long recognised this as a characteristic of social life. It has taken us longer to recognise it as a necessary condition of anthropology. Now we should celebrate it as our most important interpretive resource. (1992: 237)

Embracing the concept of ‘intersubjectivity’ and speaking from a personal perspective, a further reason I find it difficult to expose the indelible markings of fieldwork, is that the badge of ‘ethnographer’ or ‘anthropologist’ is not one that I have always worn openly. In many ways I think this is because I undertook the crucial *rite de passage* that is fieldwork at a time when anthropology was undergoing a process of critical self-analysis, and when the colonial outposts that were once fertile fields for the anthropologist at large were closing to this particular branch of the academy.<sup>1</sup> When I chose, in the mid 70s, to undertake fieldwork I took the advice of learned colleagues and shied away from the increasingly politically fraught territory of Australian Aboriginal communities. I was unable to gain a visa within a reasonable, or even predictable, timeframe to work in my second territory of choice, Indonesia. Ironically, I subsequently spent much of my time amongst academic and bureaucratic colleagues in Sri Lanka (a place I had never previously visited but the site of my supervisor’s first fieldwork) justifying my presence in their then feisty, isolationist, socialist state.

In addition, as Callaway observes (1999:37) it was mainly women who wrote autobiographical accounts of fieldwork, at least up until the 1960s (most notably Bowen, 1964 and Powdermaker 1967). This suggests to Dumont (with undertones of irony) that women ‘were left with the task of conjuring the impurities of experience...while the men were exclusively doing ‘the real thing’ (1978:8). As a young feminist, I was determined to be doing the real thing. Consequently, my nudging at the established canon took the form (inspired by Shirley and Edwin Ardener, but fresh from the field unaware of the shift towards polyvocality in which some of my peers were engaged) of giving my female ‘informants’ space in my dissertation for their own voices. My first paper on return from fieldwork to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney entitled ‘From Paddy Field to Prose’ (22.3.79) was a passionate plea for the room to employ life histories as a significant part of my analysis. The fear I expressed was:

---

<sup>1</sup> Said’s *Orientalism* appeared in Australia at about the same time as my return from the field – 1979.

‘...not that my data is inadequate and cannot be woven into theoretically abstract arguments; but that the process of communication, in particular the process of written analysis, will inevitably lead to this abstraction at the expense of discussion of the more intimate detail of the fieldwork experience and the all important relationships with particular individuals...

I went on to raise the question of ‘why anthropologists, even though their field methodology may have been biased towards the use of key informants and relied very much on life histories of individuals, have not used life histories as a method of presentation of data?’

I understood very little about anthropology, and even less about the knowledge hierarchies of the academy – my colleagues were infuriated by my proposal:

...Such papers were (and I presume still are) a critical test for the doctoral student of Anthropology. This is a time to ascertain not just the intellectual strength of the candidate, but to judge how they have come through (and indeed whether they have come through) the 'rite de passage' that is fieldwork - and whether the student might be welcomed into the anthropological fold.

It was summer, the Reading Room of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. The characteristic mustiness of that room on that warm day was pervasive...The senior male members of the clan gathered - at that time all the senior members of the clan were male. My subject, I thought, was not controversial - the impact of the British rubber economy on the position of women in southwest Sri Lanka. My delivery was earnest, committed (even passionate)...bordering I suspect on youthful arrogance.

The response was disastrous. Not only did my colleagues not appreciate my paper, many were angry, some furious. Did I not understand, they interjected, the nature of scholarly research, nor my role as a doctoral student to place one small building block of knowledge on the wall that is the established canon? Obviously I did not. (Bell 1998:330-331)

No wonder for the next few years I wrestled quietly with the transition from paddy field to prose and was not tempted to share the experience of fieldwork with colleagues, let alone allow it to infuse the narrative of my dissertation, nor indeed my documentary films, except at the margins. Even though I structured my doctoral thesis and one of a series of Sri Lanka films<sup>2</sup> around the life histories and the personal narratives of four individual women, in both text and celluloid I am only occasionally evidenced in frame, speaking the language (albeit as a five year old as one old woman friend graciously informed me after a year in the field.)

---

<sup>2</sup> During this period my partner Geoff Burton and I made a series of three documentary films funded by the University of Sydney and the Australian Film Commission. *The Sri Lanka Series* drew on three very different communities: *Four Women* (based on the rural village of Kanewala); *Fishermen of Duwa* (based on a community of then migratory fishermen from a coastal village north of Colombo); and *Dancers were only allowed to dance...* (based on a low-caste village of drummers and dancers).

## Conjuring the impurities of experience

In late 1987, as a thirty-something but by then (she thought) worldly-wise documentary filmmaker at the government film unit Film Australia, I began to negotiate my first, what I would now label 'community partnership'. With white Australia's bicentenary 'celebrations' looming, the Sydney inner-city Aboriginal radio station, 88.9 Radio Redfern, was poised to be a crucial focus of protest. As a regular listener, Radio Redfern had been on my mind for some time as a potentially positive 'public' window on the inner-city Aboriginal community – the community that mainstream media at that time was portraying (*déjà vu*) as a dysfunctional, violent 'no-go' area for non-indigenous members of the community. The 'partnership' did not start well. For reasons that are now not entirely clear to me, perhaps a vain attempt to retain contact/status with the anthropological clan into which I had recently been initiated, my difficulties are recorded for posterity in an article in a departmental newsletter:

It was in a café in Glebe that I first confronted [Aboriginal activist] Gary Foley about the idea of a documentary on Radio Redfern...I didn't intend a confrontation. I had been working as an 'ethnographic' filmmaker in the cloistered confines of Film Australia in leafy Lindfield for two years...Film Australia management was nervous – the project was perceived to be politically dangerous. Tales of 'encounters with Foley' were plentiful in the otherwise lifeless corridors. He had been an outspoken member of an Australian Film Commission Aboriginal Advisory Committee and had reportedly suggested that most of Film Australia's production facilities should simply be handed over to Aboriginal filmmakers. The stunned management now had visions of Foley planting bombs under editing machines. But a 'thinktank' gave Nugget Coombes the opportunity to announce that it was very obvious that 1988 would be the year of the Aborigine. Radio Redfern suddenly gained management interest...

I thought I was well prepared. I had run over possible responses to Foley's arguments and objections. I knew what to expect. I even admired his aggressive posturing. I knew the history. I could recite the atrocities and detail the injustices. If I was an Aborigine, I told myself, I would be equally angry, equally bitter, equally rude. How, I often contemplated, would I behave towards my oppressors if, like many Aboriginal women, my children had been taken away from me? (I was almost oozing empathy.)

Foley stayed only a couple of minutes and said little before he walked out. Something along the lines of not needing white, middle-class filmmakers and their shit. (Thank God he didn't recognize me as an erstwhile anthropologist!) I spluttered on about what a struggle I had had with management to get the project off the ground, how important it was for Radio Redfern to reach a wider audience, my plans for Aboriginal involvement in the production of the film etc.

It made no difference – he'd heard it all before. I was yet another white who had enjoyed too many opportunities, essentially exploiting a position of power and, despite verbalising ideologically 'correct' motives, ultimately furthering my career. If I was really committed to the Aboriginal cause, Foley argued, I and other white filmmakers would refuse to accept finance for films dealing with Aborigines. At this point in time, and until there were genuinely equal

opportunities for Aboriginal filmmakers, such projects should not be undertaken by anyone supportive of Aboriginal people.

I tried to keep my anthropological cool as my eyes stung and I choked on my coffee. Experience told me to analyse his position, look for the hidden agenda, read the situation calmly, eliminate emotion.<sup>3</sup>

The meeting with Foley had shaken me, but not my resolve. I thus faced one of the most difficult professional decisions I have ever had to make. On the one hand it was fairly easy to argue that, at that time, if I did not proceed with this project the funding would not flow to Aboriginal filmmakers. An important historical and cultural event would therefore not be documented from the point of view of the indigenous participants. Moreover, if I did not proceed, other, perhaps less well-intentioned, dare I say, less sensitive, non-indigenous filmmakers would (and indeed did<sup>4</sup>). I also felt it was quite legitimate to question to what extent Foley's views were representative of the Redfern community – a community I already knew to be highly factionalised.<sup>5</sup>

From a more self-interested perspective I was painfully aware of the need to save face. I had recently been 'promoted' from assistant in ethnographic film to the role of director – which meant that there was an expectation that I would generate, and successfully realise, engaging, hopefully commercially successful, documentary films. I had also spent a great deal of time and energy convincing Film Australia management that their fears were unfounded (in fact based on unspoken racist assumptions) and that I was confident of Aboriginal co-operation and support.

Encouraged by other Aboriginal associates I convinced myself that, even if I was not occupying the moral high ground, the only possible pragmatic decision was to proceed. With the agreement of then co-ordinator of Radio Redfern, Tiga Bayles, we entered into a contract that was designed to safeguard Radio Redfern's rights at all stages of production – from pre-production through to publicity, marketing, educational versions, storage and access to film footage. Two and a half decades on I can hold this up as a model for negotiating commonly agreed outcomes – one small institutional step forward.<sup>6</sup>

The *Radio Redfern* production process was unproblematic and, at its height, when tens of thousands of people converged on Sydney to protest, a deeply humbling experience for a 'gubba' privileged to be an observer and documenter. My crew and I never ceased to be amazed by the tolerance of everyone at Radio Redfern. They were equally surprised by our perseverance – the filming took place over a period of three months during which most of our waking hours were spent in the tiny Cope Street studio. Of course there were memorably difficult moments, often involving tensions between specific political

---

<sup>3</sup> From S.Bell *Filming Radio Redfern: 'Riding to Success on the Backs of Blacks'?* published in the *Newsletter* of the Anthropology Department of Sydney University, December 1989 and reprinted *Media Information Australia*, No 56, May 1990, 35-37.

<sup>4</sup> The indigenous protests were covered by national and international media. Four Corners devoted a programme to Radio Redfern which, much to the chagrin of members of the community, 'featured' Tiga Bayles as the key 'spokesperson' – a role that, despite his charismatic persona, he assiduously avoided as culturally inappropriate.

<sup>5</sup> In 1972 I had undertaken a seven month study of a group of young Aboriginal residents of Redfern – rather precociously this study was based on 'participant observation', much centred on the then notorious Empress Hotel.

<sup>6</sup> Remarkably, despite the demise of Radio Redfern as we then knew it, the contract is still being honoured by Film Australia, who recently asked me to provide them with contact details for Tiga Bayles regarding requests for access to the 88.9 *Radio Redfern* footage.



interest groups all of whom we were including in ‘our’ narrative: the Radio Redfern mob, the mob at the Aboriginal tent embassy at Lady Macquarie’s Chair, and those who kept their political gaze squarely on the horrors of black deaths in custody. But it was where the personal and the political intersected that genuinely difficult situations arose. In one studio session, shortly after historian Henry Reynolds had visited Radio Redfern with a Four Corners crew, two female announcers caught me in a heated discussion about cultural dominance, exploitation by academics and the burgeoning business of ‘Aboriginality’:

One woman was particularly down on anthropologists and my pulse quickened just slightly when she asked me my views on ‘bloody anthropologists riding to success on the backs of the blacks’. I probably mumbled something along the lines of ‘exploitative bastards’, and survived another day. The words rang in my ears though, and they still come to mind whenever I’m questioning the politics of the roles demanded of me (and that’s quite often).

The documentary was broadcast on national television, has reached international audiences through film festivals and continues to have a life that we could never have imagined at the time. A mutual friend reported that Foley (grudgingly?) ‘approved’ of the final product, but our paths never crossed in the intimate confines of the Radio Redfern studio. There is no doubt that the film’s production was more directly beneficial to my career than to any of our numerous on-screen and off-screen indigenous colleagues.

I still cannot say with complete confidence that to proceed was the ‘right’ decision. However I am confident that it was the employment of the methodology of ethnography, of participant observation, that underpinned the success of this project:

An intensive period of low-key observation gained most people’s confidence. An unhurried approach, a commitment to the subject, the willingness to listen, learn and be told, the desire to remain in the background and not change or direct events, avoidance of ‘voyeurism’ by defining appropriate arenas for filming, respect for people’s wishes to participate or not participate in the filmmaking process, constant patience and humility were, I believe the hallmarks of the production. These qualities made a mob of middle-class whites acceptable to a mob of Koories...it was the anthropological bent in our ways that made us different, even ‘better’.

## **Growing Up Anthropological**

I cannot claim that the sort of reflexivity reproduced above is characteristic of my formative anthropological experiences. When I went to the field for the first time for two years in 1976 my *modus operandi* was, I suspect, little different from my colleagues – I was learning, with minimal prior preparation or direction, to be an ethnographer. I spent several months learning the Sinhala language, I ‘chose’ a village in which to live and work in the (understudied) southwest lowlands of Sri Lanka, I ‘found’ a family who was happy to accommodate me, and later I ‘negotiated’ a house where I could live relatively independently. As long as the local police and the *Grama Sevaka* (Village Headman in the bureaucratic rather than democratic sense) agreed, there was no formal or informal

negotiation with the community I was to study. I was there to observe, to learn and to 'write a book about the women' and then to 'make some films'.

In fact, despite the political tightrope I trod amongst my Marxist colleagues in Colombo, the village I had chosen was delighted to have a foreign visitor in their midst. From their point of view I was there to amuse, as someone on whom to practice rudimentary English, to show a keen interest in the women and the everyday (not expected of foreigners who invariably sought out the exotic), as a potential source of then scarce foreign 'luxury' items (like blocks of Kraft Cheddar, batteries, matches and soap), to talk about the deserts of Australia, to explain why my country is not peopled by ghosts and demons as Sri Lanka is, and, of course, the photos (the copious images that I was to produce in a land without disposable cameras – old Polaroids carefully wrapped in plastic sleeves are still pulled out of cupboards to remind me of 'those days'). I was also to find out many years later, that those to whom I became close expected much more!

When I look back, and it is important to emphasise that I am playing with memories and the capricious processes of recollection<sup>7</sup>, I am taken by the fact that people bothered to devote time to my incessant questioning and welcomed me into every event, every celebration, every crisis. For, in the villager's eyes, I was just a young female without status, except as the 'other':

After it became apparent to people in the village that I was a semi-permanent guest it was easy for them to rationalise this by saying that I must have been Sinhalese in a previous life. Nonetheless I was not Sinhalese. In the village I was [and am] always known as *sudu nona* (the white lady). In many superficial ways I lived as the other women of the village did. I looked after my own house and did my own cooking. I ate rice and curry and bathed at a well. I was not conspicuously wealthy although I possessed the technical trappings of camera and tape recorder. Ultimately though I was very different: often a source of amusement, sometimes concern and sometimes pity.

In the villagers eyes I was young, female, and although married<sup>8</sup>, much of the time I was alone, and childless, which made me an anomaly. Personally I knew that in many crucial respects I was far removed from the life of the village. Although my research grant was not large, I never suffered the economic uncertainty that plagued most of those with whom I lived. Although I followed national politics at election time, I knew my future career was not dependent on the success of a particular party at the polls. Although I was told that my world was now populated by a variety of supernatural beings, many of them malign, I never experienced the real fear of possession nor the anxiety associated with displeasing the dead. (Bell 1986:5-6)

---

<sup>7</sup> Robins (1995:204) reminds us that memories lack the stability of geological strata, but rather need to be seen in terms of an active past-present relationship.

<sup>8</sup> I had married as an undergraduate but like many students in the early seventies was caught up in the feminist debate about the questionable role of the nuclear family. On the bookcase of my student share house the O'Neill's book *Open Marriage: A New Lifestyle for Couples* (Avon: 1973) had a prominent place, just as it did in influencing how (some of us) played out our lives and relationships.

Most people in the village did not, and do not, know my name yet they were, and are, intensely interested in when and what I have eaten, my weight (then too thin, now too fat), my children (why did it take so long and why were you so old when you had them?), my mother (is she still alive?), and my horoscope (you still do not know exactly what time you were born, it cannot be, contact your mother and find out immediately!) There remains little interest in what I do, (I simply work at the university) but a huge amount of interest in my comings and goings: then from the village to Colombo, now to and from Australia.

Then, as now, beneath the ethnographic façade lie the impurities of the fieldwork experience: ‘finding’ a village was hellishly difficult (I had absolutely no idea as to how to go about this crucial task when I landed in Sri Lanka<sup>9</sup>); gaining any sort of independence of movement frowned upon (especially by middle-class villagers who were busily protecting the virginity of their daughters); any hint of privacy impossible (young women should never be alone); surviving without electricity or running water, not so much arduous, as unbelievably time consuming; the ‘wet’ (southwest monsoon – only once as it was too wet, too thunder-storm dark, too hot to do anything productive); political curfews induced fear when there was no television or reliable radio news; and there were no telephones to alleviate intense loneliness and anxiety (except through a complex process at the local post office, requiring all the skills at one’s disposal to negotiate a remarkable post-colonial bureaucratic legacy). No wonder there were constant bad moods (on my part), impatience when I should have been grateful for the watchful gaze of my neighbours, frustration at being fed yet again despite pleas that I have just eaten, or disinterest in sickly warm soft-drink and stale packaged cake (the purchase of which was likely to impact severely on my host’s finances) demanded by the rules of Sinhalese ‘short-visit’ hospitality, and of course despair that the real ‘work’, the ethnography, was not progressing at the pace I had imagined it should.

None of these dimensions of the field experience appear in the written or visual documentation of that time – as with my colleagues these ‘impurities’ were relegated to field diaries, to letters home, or simply mentally stored for later reference. In fact, one of the most significant challenges posed by the documentary film footage of this village in which close to half the population were struggling to subsist from day to day, was that the beauty of the natural environment translated on celluloid to a lush, tropical paradise, masking the economic poverty. The images of the physical environment fail to convey the discomfort, just as the warmth and humour of the women camouflage the desperation and frustration of their circumstances.

Margaret Kenna, reflecting on field experience on a Greek Island that spanned a twenty year period from the 1960s observes:

---

<sup>9</sup> In those days we were ‘prepared’ for the field in an avuncular sort of way, with minimal linguistic skills, strong recommendation that we should complete the short course on tropical medicine, instructions to situate (read build/procure/insinuate) ourselves at the epicentre of our chosen society, dispense cargo and even modern drugs with appropriate confidence and authority, and return from the field as experts. (Bell, S. 2003:...)

For an anthropologist, first fieldwork inevitably involves making a fool of oneself, facing up to apparently overwhelming difficulties, and unravelling clues which lead to some sort of satisfactory explanation and so it is no accident that it is the experiences of the novice which are so easily represented by standard fictional genres: the funny story, the fairy tale, the detective puzzle. Incidents of my 1960s fieldwork ('the night the well overflowed', 'how a hen pecked my bottom') have become set pieces to be retold to friends in Britain or in Greece, or used as illustrative anecdotes in lectures. Thinking carefully through these comic yarns later often revealed additional or alternative meanings to the incident, as well as showing that the stories trivialised an experience which was then humiliating or painfully damaging to my self-regard, but which can now be understood, excused and forgiven from a position of greater experience and confidence. (1992:147-148)

Like Kenna I also recognise the resort to set pieces that enhance rather than deconstruct the mythology of fieldwork. My first letter from the field to my supervisor began:

I've now been in sunny Sri Lanka for two weeks. I've been bitten by bed bugs; eaten alive by mosquitoes; suffered from diarrhoea; chewed betel; enjoyed a marvellous meal of baked crab at the Rodrigo's home; attended a Sinhalese wedding (the marriage of the daughter of a Supreme Court judge – held at the Colombo Holiday Inn!); eaten curry and rice at the Pagoda; been swimming at the Otter Aquatic Club (the Sinhalese equivalent of the Colombo Club?); endured countless rides on unbelievably crowded buses and trains; become fond of hoppers and string hoppers...I thought these might be some useful indicies on which to base judgement of my progress [we hadn't invented KPIs in the 70s].

I have since developed the more convincing repertoire of 'the night I believed there was a devil at my door'; 'strategies to avoid possession by The Black Prince'; 'the day of the gem rush'; and more recently 'my house as secret meeting place for insurgent leader'; or 'the night I believed we were being attacked by terrorists'. Each one of these events is culturally significant, but equally significant in the re-telling in that they are, just like the early signifiers I chose to communicate week two in the field, stories of incorporation, of the ethnographer as 'one of them' (in this case mentally, psychologically and politically) rather than just the 'other'.

Most telling of all in such archaeology of memory, is the maintenance of the fiction of geographical and professional isolation. In my account of fieldwork I quite 'frankly' discuss the nature of my relationships with the women who are the 'subject' of my research:

As I was incorporated into village life I came to know people as individuals, not just 'informants'.

In the later stages of fieldwork I spent most of my time with a small number of close female friends and their families. I had come to know most of these women very well and I could identify with them and understand, partially at least, the nature of their lives. Discussions with these women were most often informal and spontaneous, but I also collected detailed personal data with a view to writing a series of case studies. It is these women, some articulate and

some reticent, who communicated to me what it means to be a woman in such a village. From others I gained data, from these women I gained understanding. (Bell 1986:13)

Following the trope employed by traditional biographies that have typically described extraordinary (usually male) individuals' solitary struggles arguably generating impoverished stereotypes, myths, and images (Chadwick & de Courtivron (1993: 7-11), inclusion of 'self' in the frame continues to omit (except perhaps in a brief acknowledgement note) the influence of 'significant others' who are primarily located outside the frame of the immediate ethnographic experience – those with whom one interacts through necessity, through new or continuing professional relationships, or in my case, creative relationships.

Again as Kenna observes (1992:155):

...when visiting Athens to collect my grant and buy supplies – feeling like a country bumpkin with my dialect words and island accent, I regarded what went on in banks, offices and scholarly circles as irrelevant to my fieldwork concerns.

### **Significant Others**

Although when I speak about my first fieldwork experience I speak as if I lived alone for two years in a rural village, the reality was very different. I soon learnt that if I was to survive this experience I needed to connect regularly with colleagues who shared interests and values – and who spoke English, enabling conversation to move beyond the superficial banter of village interactions. It was also important to be able to mix socially with people who weren't averse to a woman enjoying a cold beer! The village in which I lived was about an hour and a half from the city, so on weekends, or when I was desperate, I could travel to Colombo and be with friends who shared my passion for cinema. At the risk of being patronising I should explain for those who are not familiar with this part of the world, that the Colombo intelligentsia are a world away from their village cousins. My colleagues in Colombo were incredibly urbane. Despite the fact that draconian currency exchange regulations at that time made international travel almost impossible, the older generation had studied at the London School of Economics, tastes in film were strongly informed by the French New Wave, lack of ready access to Western popular culture meant that my friends were far better read than I, they participated in local theatre that was based by and large on translations of Western classics, and everyone was passionately involved in politics.<sup>10</sup>

In fact it has been my close relationship with a group of academics, filmmakers and politicians in Colombo that has shaped my continuing involvement with Sri Lanka. These colleagues were instrumental to my early research, in particular in the education they provided on volatile national politics, and as facilitators of my broader exposure to, and understanding of, Sri Lankan culture.<sup>11</sup> I have in the past wondered why I felt guilty about my Colombo excursions and close relationships, why I believed these were taking me away from the ethnographic experience, from the pursuit of 'informants', when in fact

---

<sup>10</sup> Almost all had been participants or in some way implicated in the 1971 'youth insurrection'.

<sup>11</sup> S.Bell (2000) *Running in the Family: An exploration of violence and art in Sri Lanka*, *Sinhala Pravada*.

they were deeply enriching it. There were obviously aspects of the ‘anthropologist as lone hero’ that I had discarded, but there were assumptions about ‘doing the real thing’ that were more difficult to dismiss<sup>12</sup> -- even in a context where national politics were played out in the village as they were following the 1977 national election:

No sooner had people begun to come to terms with the ramifications of the change of government than a new national crisis developed. Post-election violence evolved into communal violence between the Sinhalese and Tamil populations. Curfews were imposed in several northern parts of the island and vague radio announcements left villagers to speculate about what was happening: ‘there have been outbreaks of looting in distant parts of the areas under curfew and certain persons are attempting to capitalise. The public is warned not to be misled by rumours.’ Within a day Tamil shops in towns close to Kanewala were closed and an island wide curfew was proclaimed: ‘a precautionary measure to stop the spread of violence’. An atmosphere of panic soon set in and villagers rushed to local shops to stock up with provisions. Young men in Kanewala set out on what could only be described as ‘witchhunts’ for Tamils.<sup>13</sup> Some talked of taking planes to Jaffna to fight. I began to sense that the rapid spread of such hostility and aggression reflected the villagers’ (especially young males’) high level of dissatisfaction and frustration. Contrary to expectations (of the young at least) the change in government had not dramatically altered people’s circumstances. (Bell: 1986:10-11)

What I did not know, and could not have guessed, despite experiencing the rapid spread of post-election violence, was that over the decade following my fieldwork, Sri Lanka would sink into a state of civil war culminating in the late 80s in the *bhisana kalaya* (time of terror)<sup>14</sup>. As Sri Lanka morphed into a culture of violence my struggles to translate my ethnographic experience into prose would be rendered insignificant, and I thought irrelevant, in comparison with my Colombo colleagues’ efforts to avoid assassination. During this period hundreds of politicians, government officials, intellectuals, academics, and students were murdered while thousands more, including most of my friends and colleagues, fled to other countries or moved into networks of ‘safe houses’. Moreover, in this climate of fear people who had been involved in passionate public debate fell silent:

---

<sup>12</sup> Helped significantly by extortions from my supervisor to ‘place less emphasis on your personal contacts in Colombo...In any case I feel that the need for intellectual (read academic) stimulation will diminish when you get into the major intellectual problem of what is going on in a restricted area. (correspondence 10.1.76)

<sup>13</sup> Even though there was only one family of Tamil descent in the village. The closest concentrations of Tamils were in the neighbouring towns of Panadura and Horana, and on the large rubber estates there were some resident Tamil labourers.

<sup>14</sup> The ‘war’ in the north and east which pitted the Sinhala majority against Tamil nationalists (the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam – LTTE) was a shocking conflict that by the mid-90s had claimed over 60,000 lives. It was also a war that provided the justification for political repression, extraordinary police and defence force powers, media censorship, and during the late 1980s generated a reign of terror and counter terror by Sinhala extremists in the south of the island that left a further 40,000 dead and thousands of others disappeared. This terror was primarily driven by the Deshapremi Janatha Viyaapaaraya (the Patriotic People’s Movement, a front for the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna – People’s Liberation Front) with the state responding with equal terror and intimidation. This was a period during which state terrorism, state sponsored gangs of killers operating with seeming impunity and armed death squads of ‘patriots’ eliminated the possibility of any type of democratic activity.

...in a society that had been avidly interested in politics, where in every home, in private or public gatherings, in the press, in journals, in buses or trains, the main subject of conversation had been politics, by the late 1980s, suddenly went silent. No one dared to talk; no one expressed a political opinion, not even among friends.

(Obeyesekera: 1999, 46)

In an effort to make meaning of those early ethnographic experiences I find the metaphor of fieldwork on a fault-line extremely useful. I just happened to undertake fieldwork at a time when the discipline of anthropology was undergoing metamorphosis:

A profound rupture occurred in the mid-1980s...New models of truth, method, and representation were sought. The erosion of classic norms in anthropology (objectivism, complicity with colonialism, social life structured by fixed rituals and customs, ethnographies as monuments to a culture) was complete. Critical, feminist, and epistemologies of color now competed for attention in this arena. (Denzin & Lincoln 2000: 16)

Simultaneously, the tiny island that was once known as a paradise in the Indian Ocean was 'overtaken by the harsh reality of being a case study in conflict formation and mismanagement, where the much talked about paradise is clearly lost.' (Perera 1998:1) Tambiah contends that it is because the political parties have by and large 'failed to build reliable, systematic integrating structures between themselves and the local level,' that the national political elections generate 'a cycle of soaring expectations and bitter disappointment' as ruling parties change position and fail to deliver on their promises. It is therefore no accident that Sri Lankan national elections serve as occasions for manifesting as well as generating ethnic and insurrectionary violence. (1992:181)

### **The Political becomes Personal**

It was in this political context in 1988 that one of my 'Colombo friends' Vijaya Kumaratunga, screen idol and emerging political leader, was assassinated. Vijaya's death, and the ongoing violence in Sri Lanka, reawakened in me a sense of ethnographic impotence. A decade previously in the village I had often wished I had some practical skills or knowledge that would actually help the people who so generously shared their lives with me. I naively wished I had studied medicine or agriculture – even veterinary science would have been useful. Now I felt guilty. I had done very little to engage with the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka. Although I had made the mandatory return to the village in 1985 to show off my two sons (I was a real woman after all<sup>15</sup>) as my sons were so young I had taken a deliberate decision not to put their lives nor mine at risk by travelling to Sri Lanka during the late 80s. I didn't re-engage in a serious way with Sri Lanka until the ground was relatively safe after a change in government that brought Vijaya's widow Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga to power in 1994. This, together with the release of the official government commissioned report into Vijaya's murder made it possible to develop a new documentary – initially *Vijaya's Story* but later *The Actor & the President*.

---

<sup>15</sup> In Sri Lanka spinsters are traditionally despised and barrenness is considered a bad omen.

My own experience in making *The Actor & The President* was at one level an exploration of a cultural and political change that I struggled to understand. At another level it was a simple emotional journey that others have been on before me – the vain attempt to make meaning of a friend's death: 'First it was somebody's somebody. Then it was a friend's friend. Then it was a friend. It goes on and on. I am overwhelmed with Sadness...'<sup>16</sup>

Although, like *Radio Redfern* the production of *The Actor & the President* was based on negotiated agreement with, and eventually the participation of the key players, in this case the President and her minders, there was a very different dynamic at play – this was if you like 'community engagement' but it was definitely not a partnership. Firstly, I was telling this story as an 'insider' – this was in part my story, about my friends and the way their lives had so unpredictably unfolded. Secondly, as a public figure the President was, to be honest, 'fair game'. Although for security reasons access to Her Excellency was difficult to obtain, we only ever sought access to the President in the public sphere. Apart from anything else we were acutely aware that the documentary could too easily become a vehicle for the President's own political agenda so we carefully avoided suggesting any right of veto. Since the completion of the documentary we have heard that the President is not entirely happy with the finished product.<sup>17</sup> For some time I was puzzled by this as I firmly believe that the film, rightly or wrongly, paints the President in an extremely positive light – feedback from audiences confirms this. But there was an element of telling this story, of time travelling, that sits uncomfortably with the President. In order to attempt to recreate, not just the circumstances of the time, but the emotional impact of Vijaya's assassination, we chose to only include interviews with Vijaya's closest friends and colleagues. This quite unintentionally linked the President to people with whom she is no longer close, to some who are now harsh critics of her policies and to political positions that she now finds untenable.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, I am not the only one to have been captivated by Vijaya, and it seems, strangely committed to telling and retelling his story. Each year on the occasion of the anniversary of his death there are numerous commemorative newspaper articles and the government broadcaster Rupavahini compiles a documentary celebrating his life and times. I ask myself have I been caught up in Sri Lanka's collective infatuation with this one time screen idol? Was I, as a strident young feminist, dismissive of a man I knew to be charming but also an egotistical womaniser? Why, 16 years since his assassination does he remain so much part of my Sri Lankan experience?

Mindful that we were less easily seduced by 'fame' in the 70s and 80s than in the latter decades of the 20th century I will set aside the notion of collective (and personal) infatuation. What then did/does Vijaya represent that has ensured the collective mourning of his death and his increasing symbolic significance? One might speculate that Vijaya represents a time of trust that, if it did not actually exist in Sri Lanka, certainly is believed to have existed. Vijaya was perhaps perceived to be capable of restoring (the

---

<sup>16</sup> Artist Anoli Perera on the occasion of the assassination of Dr Neelan Thiruchelvam, a moderate Tamil politician and international human rights activist and close friend, who was killed by a suicide bomber whilst travelling to work in Colombo in 1999.

<sup>17</sup> Even though the President was sent a fine cut she did not make any comment on the proposed content.

<sup>18</sup> In fact one of the interesting responses of the Sri Lankan diaspora in Australia, amongst whom Vijaya is still revered, has been to express surprise and discomfort when given the opportunity of 'revisiting' Vijaya's politics, very strongly premised on the importance of achieving a negotiated political settlement with the LTTE and devolving power to political regions. In the 16 years since his assassination politics on both sides have polarised and become increasingly intractable.



concept of) a society based on trust; a society in which, just as in his cinema films, essential good triumphs over evil.

Vijaya also presented as an inspired, and inspiring young politician who was, and is, popularly believed to have had the capacity to radically reshape his country's destiny – he represented promise in a time of desperation. The fact that his political potency was never really put to the test in the formal role of government, or even opposition, means that his reputation remains untainted. He was never forced to make the pragmatic, or worse still politically expedient, decisions that all those (including his widow) in political leadership positions in parliamentary democracies face.

There is no doubt that Vijaya's life and death is a cultural window that prompts reflection and warrants analysis. The irony, as someone who once repudiated the value of anthropologists focusing their gaze on myths, rituals and cultural symbolism, in favour of the everyday, the pragmatic, the material, is not lost on me. Vijaya it may be argued was 'not a victim but a symbol'.<sup>19</sup>

### **Postscript: Does the Field Ever Leave Us?**

The perceived 'power' of the ethnographer to design the nature of the fieldwork experience is, in reality, more often a process of managing, and attempting to make meaning of, unfamiliar and therefore seemingly chaotic circumstances. John van Maanen has observed that the dynamics of fieldwork do not always entail the development of relationships that suit the fieldworker's needs:

Fieldworkers do not want to become close to just anyone, but rather want to count amongst their associates the more open, knowledgeable, comfortable, good-natured, well-placed, and articulate members of the organization. The fact is, however, that informants probably select the researcher as much as the researcher selects them. (1991: 36)

One of the early, and more significant hypotheses that emerged from my Sri Lankan fieldwork was the importance of relationships of dependency as a survival strategy for poor village women and their families:

The data from Kanewala suggests that for many women (especially those from poor households) incorporation into the wage labour force does not represent a straightforward involvement in capitalist work relations. The shift is not a simplistic one from 'family centred exploitation of individual women to industrial centred exploitation of women as a category'. (Brown 1975:35)  
Rather, the women become involved in work relations that are pre-capitalist in

---

<sup>19</sup> This phrase is drawn from the work of Nayananda Wijaya Kulatilaka who had been, as a young man, a participant in, and a victim of, the violent 1971 JVP insurrection. In 1972 Nayananda was 'betrayed by a comrade' and was held in remand for almost two years by the C.I.D. in Colombo. (Gronney: 1999:13) During this time, and throughout his lengthy trial Nayananda used his art to express his feelings and to record aspects of the brutality of the environment in which he was confined. His series of pastels on paper depicting the rape of Prema Manamperi at Katharagama, bearing the inscription 'not a victim but a symbol' powerfully express the desire to overcome political and sexual impotence. (ibid, 26) Nayananda's view on the collective amnesia (even denial) that surrounds the violence of the 80s is that people continue to live in fear of speaking out, despite the changed political circumstances and mood.

form...Such a context of dependency on and obligation to the employer may even be carried over to urban employment that is totally divorced from the relations of the village. Thus women will work for low wages under poor conditions and once again will even accept the responsibility of covering their employers' potential losses.

With the constant negative threat of unemployment and the positive advantages attached to a patron-client relationship (such as provision of loans, assistance in times of need etc) no overt coercion is necessary on the part of the employer to maintain such relationships...It seems then that the exploitation of lower class women's unpaid labour remains the most persistent and that their pre-capitalist obligations are perpetuated even under a capitalist mode of production. (Bell 1981: 18-19)

When I 're-engaged' with Sri Lanka in 1996 it was not only Vijaya's story that has ensured that the field has never left me. Whilst in Colombo to negotiate with the President permission to shoot the documentary on her late husband I and my partner were greeted by a young woman in her mid-twenties who, somewhat to our surprise, referred to us as 'mother' and 'father' – we had been 'adopted' by Priyanthi, the little girl we had known as our four year old neighbour in Kanewala. Whilst in the village her mother, Chandrawathie, had made us stringhoppers (rice noodles) on a regular basis, but she generally refused payment. When Chandrawathie wrote to us in Australia to tell us that her husband, the local exorcist, had died, we had begun supporting her three children through their school years. I was slow however to realise that I was playing out exactly the sort of relationship of dependency that I had identified 15 years earlier:

Dependency and obligation are typical of a wide variety of relationships in the village, from the demanding, sometimes exploitative ties between rich and poor to the close, usually affectionate ties between parents and their children...All villagers are apt to call on the ideology of kinship and the associated moral obligations of kin when it is to their advantage to do so. Just as the villagers are able to conceptualise the village in terms of inequality, so too are they able to conceptualise it in terms of equality and the obligation to share resources. (Bell 1986: 148)

Malcolm Crick argues that the 'relations between ethnographer and informant are more accurately seen, perhaps, as mutual exploitation' (Crick 1991:176) I wonder whether it might be that ethnographers are more actively involved in the establishment (and exploitation) of complex relationships of dependency, even if they do not do this consciously, and even if they cannot predict the longevity nor the repercussions of such relationships. On their part, those with whom we engage outside the academy, whether they be Sinhalese villagers or urban Aborigines, have a much greater awareness of the value of their intellectual property than we have generally given credit.

It was recently suggested to me that as such community partnerships, such engagement, is demanding, time consuming and often fraught with difficulties – is it not easier for the academy not to engage? I have been privileged in that 'engagement' has been at the core of my professional relationships as an anthropologist and a filmmaker. In the most simple terms, my intellectual journey has been about 'others knowing others' (Fowler & Hardesty 1994). The emotional journey is not straightforward, but it is the intellectual journey that makes the trip worthwhile. In the words of Julie Marcus:

Aboriginal voices speak, but they too, are rarely heard. There are still many who must speak through ethnography and must therefore exist only as representations of themselves over which they have no control. It is therefore important not to abdicate the anthropological task of analysis. The only possible justification for the production of images and representations of other cultures and peoples lies in the attempt to produce some form of cultural critique...narratives, texts, selves and others are produced and reproduced through the politics of domination, one to which race and gender remain central. (1992: 114)

This takes us back to the question of hierarchies of academic knowledge. In retrospect, after twenty-eight years I think I am beginning to understand something about the complex politics of 'others knowing others' and the nature of the ethnographic experience. Following Fowler (1994) I am also mindful that this account has been one sided as those with whom I have interacted, who have made their mark, who have given me their images, are not participating in this 'dialogue'.<sup>20</sup> The markings are indelible but exposing them is, like the best documentary, just another form of 'the creative treatment of actuality'.

---

<sup>20</sup> Many of those with whom I have had close relationships are no longer living.

## References

- Ardener, S. (1975) *Perceiving Women*. London: J.M. Dent.
- Bell, S. (1979) *From Paddy Field to Prose*. Unpublished Paper.
- Bell, S. (1981) Women and Wage Labour: The Impact of Capitalism in Southwest Sri Lanka, *Symposium on Rural Development in South Asia, Intercongress IUAES*, Amsterdam, April 22-24.
- Bell, S. (1986) *Women and Wage Labour: The Impact of Capitalism in Southwest Sri Lanka*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Sydney.
- Bell, S. (1990) Filming Radio Redfern: Riding to Success on the Backs of the Blacks? *Media Information Australia*, No56, May 1990, 35-37.
- Bell, S. (1998). Reinventing Chatwin's 'The Songlines' for the Screen: Scholarly or Creative Process? in Bigelow J. *Our Cultural Heritage*. Occasional Paper: 20, Papers from 1997 Symposium of The Australian Academy of the Humanities. Canberra: The Australian Academy of the Humanities.
- Bell, S. (2000) Running in the Family: An exploration of violence and art in Sri Lanka, *Sinhala Pravada*.
- Bell, S. (2003) Writing (Research) Culture in *Re-searching Research Agendas: Women, Research and Publication in Higher Education*, in Groombridge, B. and Mackie, V. (eds) Proceedings of the Australian Technology Network - Women's Executive Development (ATN-WEXDEV) 2003 Research Conference, Perth: Learning Support Network (13-22)
- Bowan, E.S. [Bohannon, L.] (1964) *Return to Laughter*, New York: Doubleday.
- Brown, C.A. (1975) Patriarchal Capitalism and the Female Headed Family, *Social Scientist*, Vol 4, No. 4/5, 29-35.
- Callaway, Helen (1992) Ethnography and Experience- Gender implications in fieldwork and texts in Okely, Judith and Callaway, Helen eds. *Anthropology and autobiography*, ASA Monographs 29, London: Routledge (29-49)
- Chadwick, Whitney and de Courtivron Isabelle (1993) *Significant Others*, London: Thames and Hudson.
- Clifford, James and Marcus, George (1986) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Coffey Amanda (1999) *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the representation of Identity*, London: Sage.
- Cohen, Anthony P. (1992) Self-conscious anthropology in Okely, Judith and Callaway, Helen eds. *Anthropology and autobiography*, ASA Monographs 29, London: Routledge (221-241)
- Denzin, Norman and Lincoln, Yvonna (eds) (2000) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Dumont, J.-P. (1978) *The Headman and I*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Fowler, Catherine (1994) Beginning to Understand: Twenty-Eight Years of Fieldwork in the Great Basin of Western North America in Fowler, Don and Hardesty, Donald (1994) *Others Knowing Others: Perspectives on Ethnographic Careers*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Fowler, Don and Hardesty, Donald (eds) (1994) *Others Knowing Others: Perspectives on Ethnographic Careers*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Gellner, E. (1988) Conscious Confusion. Review of Works and Lives, by C. Geertz. *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 22 April:26.

- Growney, Peter. (1999) *Nayanananda*. Ratmalana: Print-Inn.
- Kenna, Margaret E. (1992) Changing places and altered perspectives – Research on a Greek island in the 1960s and in the 1980s in Okely, Judith and Callaway, Helen eds. *Anthropology and autobiography*, ASA Monographs 29, London: Routledge, (147-162)
- Obeyesekere, Ranjini. (1999) *Sri Lankan theatre in a time of terror: political satire in a permitted space*, Colombo: Charles Subasinghe & Sons (Put) Ltd.
- Okely, Judith (1992) Participatory experience and embodied knowledge in Okely, Judith and Callaway, Helen eds. *Anthropology and autobiography*, ASA Monographs 29, London: Routledge, (1-28)
- Perera, Sasanka (1998) *Political Violence in Sri Lanka: Dynamics, Consequences and Issues of Democratization*, Colombo: Centre for Women's Research.
- Powdermaker, H. (1967) *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*, New York: w.w. Norton and Co.
- Robins, Timothy. (1995) Remembering the future: the cultural study of memory in Adam, Barbara and Allan, Stuart (eds) *Theorizing Culture: An interdisciplinary critique after postmodernism*, London: UCL Press.
- Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Shaffir W.B. and Stebbins R.A. (eds) (1991) *Experiencing Fieldwork: An Inside View of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja (1992) *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Van Maanen, John. (1991) Playing Back the Tape: Early Days in the Field in Shaffir W.B. and Stebbins R.A. (eds) (1991) *Experiencing Fieldwork: An Inside View of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Woolgar, Steve (1988) Reflexivity is the Ethnographer of the Text in Woolgar, Steve (ed) *Knowledge and Reflexivity: New Frontiers in the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Sage.