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**Between the Tongue and the Teeth:
Conversations with a Cambodian Refugee**

**An Examination of Ethnography's Subject
and Ethnography as Subject.**

by

Michael Ling, B.A.

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

April, 1990

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and Research acceptance of the thesis

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and Ethnography as Subject.**

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Thesis Supervisor

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May 11, 1990.

ABSTRACT.

This document presents a statement on a set of perceived problems in ethnography and one attempt to respond to those problems. The problems themselves center around the issues of what have come to be called "the poetics and politics" of ethnography (cf. Clifford and Marcus, 1986), that is, how can we conduct ethnographic work in a changed and changing world, how can we respond both to the needs of those whose lives we inquire into, and the desires of the ethnographer?

The approach here is to offer a 'document of interaction', the conversations between a Cambodian refugee and an anthropologist, dialogues focusing on the former's life experiences in Cambodia and in Canada. This is prefaced by an examination of the state of ethnography at this point in time.

The central argument revolves around the notion of 'storytelling', and the idea that our academic writing is as much a story, rhetorically styled for a particular audience, as are tales from, say, the West African man-of-words, the Inuit singer, the classical Greek rhetor, a Celtic bard, or a medieval German Bänkelsänger. This argument also emphasizes the importance of providing a forum for informants to tell their own stories, thereby encouraging a practice of 'shared investigation' in the doing of ethnography.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

I have read somewhere that the gestation period of an elephant is a little under two years. Upon careful calculation it seems suitably appropriate that this pachyderm-in-print has taken roughly the same amount of time to come to term.

Such endeavours (theses, and likewise, elephants) are, of course, never conceived, born or nurtured in isolation. Recognizing that fact, I would like to offer the greatest thanks I can to all those who have been simultaneously seeds and midwives:

Mr. Hornig-Yorn, who patiently and generously shared his life stories with me.

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The greatest thanks must go to Joan McEwen, indeed my (far) better-half, whose patience, love and generosity has made it possible for me to be a 'gradual student'. She has had the unenviable task of enduring the moods and crises that are part of such a project. She has also been my editor and emergency computer physician, rescuing me when the machine refused to do what I'm sure I told it to do.

This is dedicated with great affection to my grandparents, Bill and Marjorie Mowat. They lend a willing and attentive ear to my stories, and they enliven me with theirs.

The document that follows is, in many unseen ways, inspired by the work of two writers who, sadly, led all too brief lives. They are Barbara Myerhoff and Bruce Chatwin. The first was a consummate storyteller in the guise of an anthropologist, and the second, an accomplished anthropologist in the guise of a storyteller. Please read them when you can.

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PRELUDE.

I am undecided as to what to call these few words here. A prolegomenon? A foreword? An apology? A warning? Perhaps they are all these things and more.

I will settle for the moment with 'prelude', suggesting, as its musical definition does, an introduction or a preparation for a 'fugue', literally a 'flight', a composition which states an initial theme or subject with one voice, and which proceeds to develop this theme with multiple voices and changes of key. It is often said that a fugue is less a definable 'form' and more a 'procedure'.

This document asks a great deal of its readers, not because of any inherent or contrived complexity in the argument, but because it asks that the reader take part in, (or suspend oneself in) the 'procedure', the 'process', the 'flight'.

Though it is not confessional, this is a very personal document which in effect relates the story of my examination of the state of contemporary ethnography. In a very real sense it is as much a biographical statement about myself as it is a biographical statement of another. The modulations and multiple voices found herein create a decidedly non-linear expression; there is no clear-cut path from beginning to end. But as with any 'flight' it is the diversions and happenings along the way that define the trip, not simply the beginnings and endings.

While it asks much of the reader this document is not intended to be purposely intimidating or unsettling. Rather, it is intended to invite the reader to make of it what they will, and perhaps to see that in the writing and reading of another's biography we come to 'write' and 'read' our own.

It has become cliché - or perhaps it is simply a professional feature of the discipline - for anthropologists to talk about marginality, 'liminality', 'betwixt and between'.

Be that as it may, the title of this document, Between the Tongue and the Teeth, is intended to suggest the many resonances of that theme which have rippled through this work

The phrase comes from a Cambodian saying about marriage, but it also aptly describes the circumstances of being an immigrant or refugee, the geographical and historical conditions of Cambodia (one writer entitled his book on the country, The Land in Between; Williams, 1969), the position of ethnography as a genre between the 'scientific' and the 'literary', the ambiguous status anthropology itself holds in the human sciences. Not coincidentally, it may also aptly describe the ambivalence of perhaps many contemporary anthropological acolytes and elders.

Bdelycleon: "Come, no fabulous tales, pray! Talk of realities, of domestic facts,
as is usually done."

Philocleon: "Ah! I know of something that is indeed most domestic. Once upon
a time there was a rat and a cat...."

Aristophanes, The Wasps.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.

In a technological, scientific and information-saturated society such as ours, it would appear we have a disdain, or at least an impatience with 'stories', 'storytelling', 'the literary' (Girard, 1978:xi). Like Bdelycleon we prefer to "talk of realities". Stories, you see, are 'subjective' and appeal to the emotions, those unpredictable and imprecise parts of the psyche that the rational is doing its best to tame. They are of the domain of the feminine - Cicero, we are told, said they were merely things "done by old wives at work by lamplight" (in Pellowski, 1977:7) - at best perhaps a pleasant diversion or entertainment, but have nothing to do with 'domestic facts', the doing of science, 'real' (do we mean perhaps 'utilitarian'?) knowledge.

Such a society distrusts 'imagery' because it is merely ornamentation, 'metaphor' because it is intentionally mystifying, 'plot' because it is contrived, the 'figurative' because it is whimsical.

And if story, or myth, is considered beyond entertainment or as something central to a society's way of talking about the universe to itself, it is something the Other does. As Girard (1978:xi) suggests, we feel "the type of thinking embodied in literary works is outmoded and irrelevant; it belongs to the concentration camp or the Indian reservation." 'They' are 'oral' societies, 'we' are 'literate' ones. 'They' tell myths, but 'we' do science.

Clifford (1986) suggests we can chart some of the recent history of this prejudice (though, as Aristophanes and Cicero would seem to indicate, its roots are far more ancient) to the seventeenth century, when Western European Enlightenment science chose to exclude "certain expressive modes from its legitimate repertoire".

"The qualities eliminated from science were localized in the category of "literature". Literary texts were deemed to be metaphoric and allegorical, composed of inventions rather than observed facts; they allowed a wide latitude to the emotions, speculations and subjective "genius" of their authors In [a scientific] schema, the discourse of literature and fiction is

inherently unstable; it "plays on the stratification of meaning; it narrates one thing in order to tell something else; it delineates itself in a language from which it cannot be circumscribed or checked....This discourse...is incurably figurative and polysemous" (Clifford, 1986:5-6).

Furthermore, by the nineteenth century literature became "a bourgeois institution closely allied with "culture" and "art", a way of responding to the apparently overwhelming effects of industrial revolution and class society. This further enlarged the rift between what was to be seen as 'science' (ie. in the service of the 'revolution', that is 'progress') and what was to be considered 'art'.

Yet, in anthropology, and more specifically ethnography, our chosen vehicle of both inquiry and expression, this divisiveness has been an on-going point of tension in the careers of many well-known figures. The extent to which ethnography might be an 'art', a 'science', or possibly both, is a question many have addressed.

In the first pages of Bateson's Naven (1935/1958) he struggles with this tension, citing the travelogues of "sensitive writers" like Charles Doughty, and "splendid representations of our own culture in such novels as those of Jane Austen or John Galsworthy" as contributing something to the study of culture that the analytic school (in his case, specifically British Functionalism) could not:

"The artist is content to describe culture in such a manner that many of its premises and the interrelation of its parts are implicit in his composition. He can leave a great many of the most fundamental aspects of culture to be picked up, not from his actual words, but from his emphasis. He can choose words whose very sound is more significant than their dictionary meaning and he can so group and stress them that the reader almost unconsciously receives information which is not explicit in the sentences and which the artist would find it hard - almost impossible - to express in analytic terms. This impressionistic technique is utterly foreign to the methods of science..." (Bateson, 1938:1-3).

As he goes on to say, the scientific approach can outline the "pragmatic functioning" of society but is unable to talk about "emotional tone", "background", or "ethos". The unfortunate consequence of this was, he felt, that no 'functional study' could ever be complete without bridging the two (ibid:2).

Boas said that he would rather have written a good poem than all the books he'd ever written - "to say nothing of a movement in a symphony" - and Sapir is said to have confided to Ruth Benedict that "it is no secret between us that I look upon your poems as infinitely more important than anything, no matter how brilliant, you are fated to contribute to anthropology" (in Diamond, 1986:130). For Sapir himself, a pianist, poet and literary critic, as well as an anthropologist, "art became a medium in which to work out an approach to questions of culture". As Handler (1983:208) notes, "what he came to understand in the practice of poetry, music and criticism became central to his understanding of culture".¹

What, then, has been so unsatisfactory about ethnography? Why has there been such tension concerning the form of the expression? Is it perhaps that we have refused to acknowledge that ethnography is not simply writing up a collection of 'objective' facts, but a style or genre of writing? (see eg. Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Rather than one-to-one accounts of 'reality', perhaps they are 'versions' of reality, 'provisional' stories about our experience? Might the tension be partially a consequence of what Geertz (1988:14) calls "the authorial uneasiness that arises from having to produce scientific texts from biographical experiences"?

Many people are in fact coming to hold this view of ethnography as a kind of fiction. Sperber (1985:34) comments that,

"even though they make a lesser use of imagination and a greater one of experience, ethnographers achieve relevance in the manner of novelists...because the experience of individuals ... contributes to the experience of the reader It is not because of the interpretive generalizations these works contain, it is because they give us an insight into some fragments of human experience...."

And in Geertz's Works and Lives (1988), he takes a close look at the 'anthropologist-as-author', his concern centering on "literary matters" and "how anthropologists write".

Langness and Frank (1978:18-20) note that the ethnographer "is never merely a recorder", that all our experience (as felt and conveyed) is "filtered through the authorial consciousness which is both selective and purposeful". This concern is cogently summarized in a series of questions they pose:

"What is the relationship between anthropological writing and the cultural reality it is intended to convey? How does the experience of an individual observer get converted to "facts" in standard monographs and to "fiction" in ethnographic novels? What are our standards of evidence for a description to be true or real? What, fundamentally, is the difference between an ethnography and a novel?" (ibid:18).

These kinds of questions have become endemic to our era in ethnography. There is an increasing dissatisfaction with, and self-consciousness about the practice of ethnography, again, both as a method and a form of writing (see eg. Geertz, 1988; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fisher, 1985).

Significantly, this self-consciousness is not specific to ethnography, nor even anthropology, but seems pandemic to all disciplines, in particular those which deal with 'society' or 'culture' in any of a number of ways (eg. visual and performance art, architecture, cultural criticism, literature, psychology, sociology; see Trachtenberg, 1985; Foster, 1983).

It is an era that has been described as "post-modern" (cf. Calinescu, 1987; Lyotard, 1984), or, more coyly, simply as "post-" (eg. 'post-industrial', 'post-structuralist', 'post-cultural').²

Briefly, 'postmodernism' seems to identify a loss of faith in conventional authority, that is, the established authorities of church, state, empirical science, in effect Western consciousness itself, a consciousness that held sway roughly from the age of European exploration up until World War Two. In the after-math of World War Two, in which previously-held European colonies, predominantly in Asia and Africa, fought and gained independence, a very different relationship and kind of interaction with the 'Other' ensued.

No longer could colonial authority, and more broadly Western consciousness, attempt to stand unquestioned.

For anthropology in particular this changed encounter has had significant consequences. We have had to question the nature of an enterprise that, emerging from the early colonial encounter, considered it axiomatic and correct to speak for the 'illiterate' (or so we thought) Other, which created authoritative, definitive versions of the Other. We have had to question this enterprise to such a degree that we find ourselves in a great deal of confusion, and an atmosphere of self-doubt and ever-increasing moral and intellectual entanglements. Not the least of our dilemmas are the ironies and paradoxes of doing fieldwork, an exercise that was originally nurtured in, and now rebels against, colonialism in all its varied expressions.

As Clifford (1987:162) notes, "what has become...curious is no longer the Other but cultural description itself".

Or, from Geertz (1988:133):

"This inter confusion of object and audience leaves contemporary anthropologists in some uncertainty as to rhetorical aim. Who is now to be persuaded? Africanists or Africans? Americanists or Native Americans?... And of what: Factual accuracy? Theoretical sweep? Imaginative grasp? Moral depth? It is easy enough to answer "all of the above". It is not quite so easy to produce a text that thus responds. Indeed the very right to write - to write ethnography - seems at risk."

And yet an awareness of the political, historical, social and rhetorical conditions of writing ethnography, this 'self-conscious' stance, need not necessarily lead to some sort of authorial and critical impotence, to "putting the whole world in quotation marks" (Clifford, 1986:25). Instead it may be an opportunity to reassess or challenge our previously held assumptions and methods.

What this crisis of representation might suggest to us is that we must be wary of the content of the representation (how the Other is portrayed), and also the form of that representation (what kind of voice, 'style' we use in that representation). As Clifford and

Marcus (1986) suggest in the subtitle of their book, it is the 'poetics and politics' of ethnography that concern us at this time, that is, questions of expression and power, the content and motivation of that representation. It is, to steal from another subtitle (Marcus and Fisher, 1986), "an experimental moment in the human sciences", a moment that is asking questions about the ethnographer and the conditions of doing this work, as much as about the cultural Other. What this moment should permit us to do is play with the idea of what an ethnography is, and in fact to ask if there is any one definitive form that an ethnography should take?

What it should bring us to is a sincere questioning of the ethnographic enterprise, a questioning of what it is we now seek to know, and have sought in the past. The Other? Ourselves? The Other in ourselves, or vice versa?

Perhaps, it is fundamentally the question of what it means to be human, a simple question but one that implicitly demands we pay as much attention to ourselves in the encounter as to the Other.

If we feel we are no longer in a position to adequately and justly represent the Other, perhaps we should engage them, work with them to produce cultural or personal documents. Sperber (1985:6) describes it as a "sharing of intuitions" which leads to understanding.

One possible strategy in this experimental moment is an often neglected standby in the ethnographic tool-kit, that is, the life-history or personal document method, the putting-together of an individual's experiences and perceptions of self, society and culture.

The life-history strategy has the advantage of being a potential forum for creating a 'dialogue' between anthropologist and - what word might we use? subject? informant? co-author? - that permits, and should demand, a conversation about experience such that the anthropologist is not the final authority, the privileged creator. Rather, the account is an exchange of experience, "an effort to explore the multiple points of view" (Marcus and

Fisher, 1986:58) that go into such a construction, where each party becomes in essence a raconteur.

"There is instead the mutual dialogical production of a discourse, of a story of sorts. We better understand the ethnographic context as one of co-operative story-making that, in one of its ideal forms, would result in a polyphonic text, none of whose participants would have the final word in the form of a framing story or encompassing synthesis" (Tyler, 1986:126).

Can we remove our positivist selves from the notion of fictions and stories as falsehoods? As Geertz advises:

"To argue ... that the writing of ethnography involves telling stories, making pictures, concocting symbolisms and deploying tropes is commonly resisted, often fiercely, because of a confusion, endemic in the West since Plato at least, of the imagined and the imaginary, the fictional with the false, making things out with making things up. The strange idea that reality has an idiom in which it prefers to be described, that its very nature demands we talk about it without a fuss leads on to the even stranger idea that if literalism is lost so is fact" (1988:140; emphasis added).

If we can admit that ethnography is a kind of fiction, a story, we might also be able to look a little more closely at what a story 'does', that is, what kind of relation is developed between the writer(s), reader(s) and the story, the text. As LeGuin asks, "why (do) we huddle by the campfire? why do we tell tales, or tales about tales - why do we bear witness, true or false?" (1981:194).

Calling ethnography 'storytelling' is not simply a rhetorical device, (can we speak this way without being perceived as quaint and whimsical?). Nor is it sufficient that anthropologists write stories (so-called 'regular' fiction), or poems (though that may be eminently desirable). We must see that our reports are stories.

Richardson (1975) takes this approach when he suggests, beyond the usual justifications for being an anthropologist, that is, engaging in science for science's sake, and carefully avoiding socio-political issues, or, engaging in applied science, intent on alleviating

"the pain of transition from primitive-peasant conditions to the complex-modern one", or, engaging anthropology "in the service of the revolution", that there is another option. This fourth justification is that of being "a mythteller, an epic poet [standing] on the fringes of his (sic) society...composing and reciting with skill and passion the human myth...feel[ing] the heat and pull of human effort" (ibid:528-530).

"In telling the human myth, of how men (sic) wrestle with the problem of being human, of how people envision a society of love but live in a society of hate, of how they conceive of a collective soul but live in individual cells, the anthropologist may find his salvation. In writing of the struggles of others, he may find ways to cope with his own demons that torture him at night. In reciting the heroism of humans, he may learn to live heroically..." (ibid:530) ³.

Despite the intense and dramatic prose (is it really salvation that we seek?) I would agree with Richardson that we are primarily 'storytellers', and this applies as well to the work of the physical anthropologist ("the solid scientist"), the archeologist ("the dirt scientist"), the linguist ("the elegant scientist"), as to the ethnologist/ethnographer ("the uncertain scientist"). Pot shards, 'Lucys', primate social behaviour and statistical significance are as much expressions of an industrial, scientific culture's cosmogony, cosmology, mythology, that is explanations of experience, as Winnebago trickster cycles, or Dogon initiation rituals are for their respective cultures.

I am not simply suggesting a fashionable substitution of ethnographic art for ethnographic science, a naive rehashing of Apollonian (objective?) and Dionysian (subjective?) dichotomies. Rather it is an attempt at drawing the perceived differences together, a rapprochement in such a way as to make more apparent that ethnographies - and explanations in general - are formed and informed from many things.

The old quarrels about art and science, "the warm relevance" and yet "muddleheadedness" of the former, and the "cold heartlessness and dispassionate rationality" (Bruner, 1986:44) of the latter, these dichotomies, at least in their extreme forms, are no longer tenable. As Bruner says, "the old tubthumpings are no longer so convincing". We

are hopefully at a point where we can at least consider, if not agree, that a poem, a building, a scientific theory or an historical explanation, are all first and foremost constructions of the mind, and in that sense are all 'fictions', inventions, 'things made' of the mind (ibid; see also Vaihinger, 1938; Kermode, 1966:40). Thus, "the old discussion has shifted from the products of scientific and humanistic inquiry to the processes of inquiry themselves" (Bruner, 1986:44).

If there is any useful distinction to be made perhaps it is in the sense that science, and philosophy, in the Euro-American tradition, at least, have been preoccupied with the "epistemological question of how to know truth", whereas the poet and storyteller are preoccupied with "the broader question of how we come to endow experience with meaning" (Bruner, 1986:12). Given that part of the post-modern temper is to be suspicious of any claims to 'truth', of totalizing, comprehensive systems, ethnography might turn its attention to examining the possibilities of how our expressions, representations, 'endow experience with meaning', for all concerned (the ethnographer, the 'subject', the reader).

Storytelling has much to do with memory, imagination and empowerment. These are notions that will weave in and out of the narrative which follows, but for the moment we might stir up a few thoughts on the subject.

In their simpler senses we would probably agree that memory is our recollection of experience (past and present), imagination is a field for envisioning possible futures, and empowerment is our strength to act in the present, a strength, not necessarily in the sense of a brute exertion of force or power, but rather a potentiality, a vigour, a liveliness, an affirmation that we can 'author' our own lives (one of the synonyms of empowerment being 'authority'), and that we can communicate this experience to others. Thus we might also say that all three abilities nourish each other, all three are necessary for a story to be told. Memory on its own may simply be nostalgia, a collecting of curios, an inactivity.

Imagination on its own may reduce to a kind of idiosyncratic fantasia. Empowerment on its own may simply be self-interest flexed.

This takes on a particular urgency when one considers that these faculties and the communication of experience are potentially threatened in the modern world.

In a 1936 essay Walter Benjamin observed that the Storyteller was in decline because "the ability to exchange experiences" - and experience itself - had "fallen in value" (Benjamin, 1968:83). This was, he felt, in large part due to a mechanized, modern world that favours "information", communication which is "understandable in itself", one that is quickly disseminated and consumed, "already shot through with explanation" (ibid:88). "Half the art of storytelling", Benjamin says, "(is) to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it":

"(in storytelling) the most extraordinary things, marvellous things are related with the greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks" (ibid).

This is not merely a wistful, nostalgic plea for a romanticised past, which may or may not have existed. There have been numerous examples in this century alone where memory, imagination and empowerment/authorship have been horrifyingly threatened. As Fawcett (1986:6) points out, the situation of Cambodia during the Pol Pot/Khmer Rouge regime of 1975 to 1979 was just one such attempt to enforce a silence on a society, and unfortunately we could easily compile a list of many more:

"Most of the victims of the Khmer Rouge were killed merely because they could remember a different kind of world than the one the Khmer Rouge were attempting to recreate out of the rubble of the Vietnam war. Others were killed because they imagined a different kind of world. Memory and imagination were both capital offences in Khmer Rouge Cambodia" (Fawcett, 1986:5-6).

This drive to "obliterate particularity, direction and local memory" (ibid:63), Fawcett feels (as Benjamin did fifty years before him) is also being perpetrated - albeit in a less violent and more subtle way - in a modernist society that consumes 'information', but has

no understanding or participation in 'experience', one in which vast amounts of 'data' are received, but not in turn transmitted or shared in any meaningful way.

Such a situation condemns one to a kind of white-noise silence (if I can be permitted such an oxymoron) in which no individual voices can be heard, yet everyone (everything?) is 'speaking', in which experience is increasingly more vicarious and homogenized (Fawcett, 1986:161), in which information is received, but stories are not told.

For Benjamin the decline of the storyteller and the story signalled a decline in the use of imagination and the ability to act in the world:

"...the nature of every real story...contains, openly or covertly, something useful.... In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers. But if today "having counsel" is beginning to have an old-fashioned ring, this is because the communicability of experience is decreasing. In consequence we have no counsel for ourselves or others. After all, counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding" (Benjamin, 1968:86).

Thus, the 'something useful', the 'counsel', is in part the imaginative capacity to carry a story on, to communicate and initiate experience, to empower ourselves and others

As anthropologists, who hopefully are more sensitive to thresholds, liminality, crisis (or so we might like to pride ourselves) we might, as Benjamin did, see the "potential of a seemingly archaic genre at the moment of its ruination" (Willis, 1986:xii), to recognize the usefulness of 'story' as a bridge between individuals and communities that increasingly find themselves in a state of displacement and alienation, as a voice against "modernism's will to silence" (ibid:xiii).

This document proposes to tell a story in two parts. The first part aims at examining some of the problems and issues surrounding the "poetics and politics" of ethnography, and develops the idea of ethnography as a kind of storytelling. This includes discussions of the nature of explanation, of storytelling, and of the act of reading, as applied

to ethnography. It also includes a discussion of the life-history strategy as a potential method for dealing with these issues and problems.

The second part presents some life-stories of a man who came to Canada as a refugee from Cambodia. These transcribed conversations are an attempt to deal in a practical way with the problems and issues raised in Part One. In a very real sense the former represents an assessment of the anxiety in contemporary ethnography, and the latter is an attempt to alleviate this anxiety. Most importantly, it is an attempt to create an ethnographic document that is a cooperative endeavour.

What I am proposing is that the artifacts and practices of ethnography can be evocative, poetic, figurative, indeed they can act as objects of contemplation, and at the same time be explanations, or "models for the redescription of the world" (Ricoeur, in Bruner, 1986:7), expressions which allow us to sense "the alternativeness of human possibility" (ibid:53).

It is a kind of evocation in expression which stimulates our thinking in an informal, reflective way - contrasting with the formal, rule-based, approach of logic, verifiability, falsifiability and deductive proofs. It is one that demands a contemplation of the self through the encounter and/or through the text.

It is an approach to ethnography that suggests it may be more intellectually useful to have a 'sense' of something than an encyclopedic, totalising list of traits (which, in any case, can never be complete, especially when speaking of human lives); that ethnography is better practiced by allowing things to reveal themselves than by forcibly uncovering them.

Above all it suggests that ethnography should devote itself more to the construction of meaning through "shared investigation" (Borges, in Burgin, 1966:vii)⁴ than through a solitary, archeological scraping-away of what we mistakenly call debris.

1. Interestingly, there were times when Szpir's writing output in these other endeavours approached or surpassed his formal anthropological writing. It was a way "to come to terms with both his scientific and his romantic yearnings, to reconcile what he portrayed, in one of his poems as the dainty and the hungry man within himself" (Handler, 1983:211). Mead succinctly describes this ongoing struggle among many of these colleagues:

"We lived, in a sense, lives in which the arts and the sciences fought uneven battles for preeminence" (1959:xviii).

2. This term has been a buzz-word for our intellectual era, and despite its wide and fashionable use (the idea of the concept being perhaps more significant than its value as a descriptive phrase for the times) there has, nevertheless, been much debate about what it might and might not be, and when it may or may not have come about (see eg. Foster, 1983; Featherstone, 1988; Calinescu, 1987). This will be touched on below in chapter two.

3. Myerhoff (1979:272) also takes a similar tack in choosing, among all the hybrid, post-Linnaean taxons for the human species - homo technologicus, homo ludens, etc.- a preference for homo narrans, humankind the storyteller.

4. The Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, in the prologue to a series of interviews that were conducted by Richard Burgin, uses this phrase to describe their interaction. He says: "...I should clarify that dialogue for me is not a form of polemics, of monologue or magisterial dogmatism, but of "shared investigation".... Rereading these pages I think I have expressed myself, in fact confessed myself, better than in those I have written in solitude, with excessive care and vigilance. The exchange of thoughts is a condition necessary for all love, all friendship, and all real dialogue. Two men who can speak together can enrich and broaden themselves indefinitely. What comes forth from me does not surprise me as much as what I receive from the other." (in Burgin, 1968:vii-viii). This passage might serve as a suitable epigram to the practice of life history research, with particular emphasis on the notion of "shared investigation".

CHAPTER TWO: IMAGINING EXPLANATIONS AND CONTEMPLATING ETHNOGRAPHIC STORIES.

Before we develop the idea of ethnographic stories we might first look at perhaps the most fundamental purpose of ethnography, that is 'explanation'.

And as with many stories, there may be diversions along the way.

On Explanation.

We say we "explain" something in order to understand it. Nettler (1970:8) uncovers in its Latin roots the meaning "to flatten, to make plain". We should be aware then that in explaining we inevitably 'flatten' that which has a textured surface, a topography, and as such any representation is therefore a simplification of the thing explained. A mindfulness of this topography becomes even more critical when the 'thing explained' is a human life with its corrugations and vicissitudes.

But what constitutes an adequate, useful, acceptable explanation, and what does it mean to understand the phenomena being explained?

In science and philosophy - at least the science and philosophy that has emerged from a positivist heritage - we have come to have very strict notions of what an adequate explanation is and what it does. We speak of explananda (the things to be explained) and explanans (the explanation itself). In its extreme form this point of view would suggest that every explanandum has a single, coherent, unchanging explanans, that explanations should have some sort of predictive power, that they be able to ultimately reduce to a "covering law" or "nomological principle" about a given phenomenon, or at least that they have some 'statistical' or 'probabilistic' value (Lacey, 1986:71-73; see also, Pitt, 1988, and Achinstein, 1983').

But, as Lacey (ibid:72) asks, are prediction and law necessarily and unfailingly the only functions of an explanation?

"Darwinism explains the variety of species, but does not seem fitted for predicting new species. Thales allegedly predicted the eclipse of 585 BC by consulting records, but he could certainly not explain it."

And, importantly, is it possible for the same explanandum to have more than one explanation? In what way is an explanation also a description of something? (ibid:73).

The approach to science and explanation that Lacey is raising questions about is, of course, one which assumed that the enterprise was guided by logic, detachment, objectivity and rationality. It was an enterprise that assumed, with the use of these tools, that an objective truth could be uncovered, revealed. It is a science that, as Nichols (1981:246) says, "gives the impression of an intellectual machine that eats its own past, turning it to waste", progressing in an ever-forward direction, and which proceeds unaffected by the social, cultural, or psychological conditions of its participants. This was the view of science that Kuhn (1970) scrutinized.

What Kuhn initiated, or at least helped to propel, in his discussion of 'scientific revolutions' and 'paradigms' was the notion that scientific explanations are 'creations' in the same sense that myths are, that they are likewise informed by both one's 'beliefs' and 'knowledge' (Kuhn, 1970:2). Thus, as Vaihinger (1935) suggested many years before, the doing of science - indeed any human enterprise - involves a fictive, "as if" element:

"The fictive activity of the mind is an expression of the fundamental psychical forces; fictions are mental structures. The psyche weaves this aid to thought out of itself; for the mind is inventive; under the compulsion of necessity, stimulated by the outer world it discovers the store of contrivances hidden within itself" (Vaihinger, 1935:12).

What becomes pertinent then is to look at the nature and form of these 'fictions', or as Nelson et al (1987:11) say, to move from "the logic of inquiry to the rhetoric of inquiry", that is to examine our explanations as different forms of rhetorical argument. To

do so is to "increase self-reflection in every inquiry" (ibid:ix), to recognize that we all use various devices - metaphor, appeals to authority and audience - in making a point, creating a "persuasive discourse" (ibid:3), an explanation. In doing this we can examine how we write, read and debate with one another without adopting factional positions of scientific 'fact' versus humanistic 'intuition':

"Treating each other's claims as arguments rather than findings, scholars no longer need implausible doctrines of objectivism to define their contributions to knowledge" (ibid:4)².

That ethnographies are rhetorically composed, that is, how the "language and form of a text (is) an integral expression of the author's intentions and claims" (Marcus, 1982:171), is part of the point of such recent examinations as Geertz's Works and Lives, in which he surveys the discursive and rhetorical practices of of several elders of the anthropological tribe (1988; see for example, the tellingly entitled, "Evans-Pritchard's African Transparencies"), and Rosaldo's "Rhetoric in Anthropology" (1987:87-110).

That our scholarship and our inquiries are rhetorically formed has been most pointedly and provocatively identified by a number of feminist critiques of science. Many of these point to the language of science, with its roots in Platonic-Baconian-Enlightenment epistemologies and methodologies, as the field in which "the nature of science is bound up with the idea of masculinity" (Keller, 1985:3). As "the paradigm of all true knowledge" (Flax, 1987:625) with its claims of objectivity and detachment, with its primary tool of 'reason' as the only correct and proper means of establishing 'Truth', it projects itself as a unified, transcendental activity, (that is, one which is unaffected and uninformed by historical or social circumstances). As Keller (1985:10) says, what such a critique uncovers is the great "personal investment scientists make in impersonality".

The rhetoric of such a science finds its most dominant expression in the metaphors of the sense of vision, the eye (the "I"?), the gaze (see eg. Keller and Grontowski, 1983).

The primacy of the visual in Western thought, or as Tyler (1984:23) terms it, "the hegemony of the visual", is argued to be a predominantly "male logic", which as a paragon sense overwhelms the others as a way of knowing the world (Keller and Grontowski, 1983). It assumes a position at the apex of a "hierarchy of the senses". However, as Keller and Grontowski point out, vision as a metaphor in the practice of science and philosophy has paradoxically opposite functions of "connection" and "dissociation" (ibid:209), that is, it provides a 'view' of the object while distancing oneself from it, one can make claims about it without interacting. This "lack of engagement entailed by seeing, the absence of intercourse" (ibid:219) serves a science that values objectivity and neutrality.

But, as Tyler (1984) points out, such a method of knowing the world is in fact not biologically inherent, nor culturally universal. The question to be raised then is, what are the implications for the practice of science that is rhetorically grounded in visual metaphors, and what might the consequences be of a science that bases its 'knowing' in another sensory metaphor? As Keller and Grontowski (1983:221) suggest, a science based in the visual removes itself from the lifeworld and yet professes to accurately describe that world. Furthermore,

"...knowledge likened to the sense of hearing, for example, could not have made the same claims to atemporality Similarly, a theory of knowledge which invokes the experience of touch as its base cannot aspire to either the incorporeality of the Platonic forms, or the 'objectivity' of the modern science venture" (ibid).

They go on to say that Heraclitus (as a foil to Plato's emphasis on vision, perhaps), in describing ways of knowing, used the word ksuniemi, which meant "to know by hearing". The implication is that description might be more oriented to the processual rather than the statistical, that it is arrived at not by a distant voyeuristic observation but by intimate engagement. What we can take from this is that the rhetoric of scientific discourse colours the way our stories get told. More to the point, rhetoric that employs the visual as a dominant metaphor, according to this argument, sets severe limits on how stories are

presented, and indeed, what stories get told. We might consider that in their root origins, stories are 'heard' not 'seen', they are framed - and formed - by the engagement between storyteller and listener, the storytelling is a knowing by hearing.

Nettler (1970) recognizes the rhetorical element in explanation in suggesting that there are many forms of explanation, or as he terms them "explainways", that we employ. We may take a definitional approach, an empathetic one, a scientific one, or an ideological one, but they are all simply different "styles of stories employed with varying success toward many ends":

"It should be clear that many explanations - perhaps all - are fictions; they describe events, put them together, as if the descriptions were complete (and) uniquely accurate.... It should be clear that fictions work ... and that there is no one correct way to explain human action if it is agreed that explanations are encouraged to satisfy diverse purposes. It should surprise no student that explanations that satisfy one man's curiosity or another man's morality, or the third man's urge for action may fail the fourth man's desire to predict" (Nettler, 1970:6).

The question becomes then, what kind of explanation is most useful for relating ethnographic material?

As Rabinow and Sullivan (1979) point out, though the social sciences have long wished to be more like the so-called 'hard' sciences - that is, to be able to reduce human action to a series of predictive laws - there is something intrinsic to the social world which prevents that ³:

"...the web of meaning constitutes human existence to such an extent that it cannot ever be meaningfully reduced to constitutively prior speech acts, dyadic relations or any predefined elements.... Culture, the shared meanings, practices and symbols that constitute the human world, does not present itself neutrally or with one voice. It is always multivocal and over-determined, and both the observer and observed are always enmeshed in it,...there is no privileged position, no absolute perspective, no final recounting" (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979:4-6).

This position of course is not new. It has its roots in Weber's work in the German Geisteswissenschaften tradition and the notion of Verstehen.

The Geisteswissenschaften tradition (the 'human' or 'cultural' sciences) - as espoused by Rickert, Weber, Mannheim, Dilthey, and Simmel, among others - positioned itself as an alternative to, and in a sense as an adversary of, the Naturwissenschaften (the 'natural' sciences). These 'human' studies distinguished themselves by suggesting that in studying human conduct it was not sufficient to provide simply an 'explanation' (Erklärung) - "the correlation of external facts", which was adequate for the natural sciences - but rather that one was concerned with developing an 'understanding' (Verstehen), "a sympathetic intuition" with one's human subjects (Zeitlin, 1968:283-284). This was so because human actions were felt to be eminently "meaningful", they were "purposeful, communicative and goal-oriented", and if as social scientists we are concerned with these purposes, motives, expressions and goals, our task is then to "understand" them, not merely to "correlate and categorize them" (Weber, 1922/1975:14).

Weber felt that in most cases concerning individual and social action, though not necessarily all, "naturalistic causal reasoning is often useless in attaining knowledge of what we regard as essential". In order to first understand, and secondly to explain, we should 'feel ourselves' "empathically into a mode of thought which deviates from [one's] own and which is normatively 'false' according to [one's] own habits of thought" (Weber, 1949:41). In other words, understanding demands an interpretation of another's subjective experience by deviating from our own.⁴

In a word, then our concern with meaning and understanding, expressions and motives etc., suggests that our fundamental concern is really with the minds of the social actor and the social analyst.

This ideal of understanding meaning does not, indeed cannot, demand a kind of exact correspondence between the minds of the social scientist and the subject of study, "an exact synonymy or equivalence of meaning" (Taylor, 1979:26). Again, it is not the inner

workings of the mind that we access but the outward expressions of those inner workings (Strassner, 1985:6).

Thus, what we engage in is an act of interpretation, a 'hermeneutic', a translation of sorts, or, to use the term that is central to this document, it is the creation of a story, a text, or "text-analogue" (Taylor, 1979:25). It is this 'text' that we analyze and interpret, that is, our understanding of the phenomena (in crude terms, our opinion or expression of it), not the phenomena itself. The idea then is that we are always operating with expressions of the mind, concepts about the world, not the world itself.

This "interpretive turn" in social science (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979), where meaning, expression and understanding have primacy, has achieved a more pronounced status in recent years, in the realm of 'qualitative sociology' and "reality reconstruction" - the attempt to grasp the world of an individual or group from the inside (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979) - and in ethnography (see eg. Watson-Franke and Watson, 1975).

One of the more eloquent and vocal exponents of this approach is Geertz (1973;1983) whose adaptation of Ryle's concept of "thick description" is a guiding metaphor for the practice of interpretive anthropology. Following from Weber, Geertz believes that the human animal is "suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" and that the task of ethnography is to sift through the layers of significance, the 'thickness' of human action and expression. Part of this 'thickness' accrues because "what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they...are up to" (1973:9). So again, the work of ethnography is an interpretive one, and as such there can be no definitive description or final explanation of a culture or an individual. What develops is a collection of stories through which we can sift to develop some sense of understanding about the topic, person, culture. Thus, there can be many alternative accounts in explaining human action. As Trusted (1987:152) suggests, our goal is not 'ultimate explanation' but "to find wider and more complex accounts of the world"; or, as Geertz

(1973:29) inimitably phrases it, "our progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate....(what) gets better is the precision with which we vex each other".

This should lead us back to a decision about which of Nettler's 'explainways' is most useful and appropriate for ethnography. Briefly again, he suggests that we can employ definitional (defining the symbols with which we interpret ourselves and others), empathetic (explanations that make us "feel-in-with" someone, allow us a glimpse of what is meaningful to them), scientific (those that permit generalization and predictability), and ideological (those that employ moral judgement) means (Nettler, 1970:v-vi).

It is not, generally speaking, a definition that we seek in assembling an ethnography or a life-history. To do so would merely be to either construct an absurdly detailed one in order to encompass all possible applications (obviously an impossibility), or to construct one so general in scope that it tells us nothing of the richness and variation in the culture or life. And it is not prediction we desire, as should be evident by now, nor should we be seeking to justify an ideological interest. Our criticisms of positivistic science and an understanding of its rhetorical ground should tend to preclude these three 'explainways'.

As Nettler suggests, an empathetic approach seeks to "make human conduct understandable", and "the heart of empathy is imagined possibility: Under those circumstances I too might have behaved similarly" (1970:34). An empathetic explanation "tells a history, depicts circumstances, labels character, postulates needs, instincts and other drives, and describes intentions and feelings" (ibid:36). While it may not provide propositions and predictions, and may appear unmethodical (ibid:47), the empathetic explanation draws - or, at least invites - the reader into the writing, attempts to build a 'feeling-in-with' the subject of the writing.

We might conclude, or at least decide, from our discussion above, that the empathetic approach is the most useful in doing ethnography.

There is a point in this cursory look at the interpretive, hermeneutic turn that might bear some elaboration. According to the original programme of the Geisteswissenschaftlichen tradition explanation and understanding were positioned as antagonistic, or at least as antipodes, the former being of the realm of the natural sciences, the latter of the human sciences (Ricoeur, 1979:87). This only serves to accentuate and rigidify a dichotomy between these two realms, and thus implicitly reinforces the notion that the former is more of a 'science' than the latter, and therefore is a more valid explanatory domain.

Ricoeur, among others, suggests that rather than being in opposition, explanation and understanding are together complementary aspects of a dialectical process (Ricoeur, 1979; 1981). In reading or writing a text (or text-analogue, for example a film, collection of photographs, a play) we engage in an on-going process of explaining (creating a story about) and understanding (achieving some sort of comprehension or satisfactory knowledge of) the thing being examined or 'read'. This is the notion of the 'hermeneutical circle' (Ricoeur, 1979:101), as Strassner (1985:31) says, not a closed "vicious circle" but a "spiral of understanding" wherein we continually create more sophisticated stories and come to more sophisticated understandings. This process then involves an important element of imagination - something we will return to below - that is, the ability to bring something of oneself to a text, and this creates meaning. As Ricoeur (1979:88) contends, "to understand a text is not to rejoin the author", it is to "create an absolutely original situation which engenders the dialectic of Erklären and Verstehen". Again, we re-construct, re-create the explanation, the text, the story for ourselves. This shift from a formal model of explanation to one that emphasizes understanding suggests, as Mink (1970:544) puts it, a shift from a concern with theory to a concern with 'narrative' ("narrative explanation is no longer a contradiction in terms"). In a sense, our concern is with how we put a theory together, what the story behind the theory is. Although understanding may be a vague concept

(though, as we have seen, perhaps no more so than explanation), it is "clarified by reflection on the experiences in which it has been achieved" (ibid).

In a short form sense, every explanation is a text that requires interpretation, and it is in this way we achieve understanding. Neither explanation nor understanding - they both are, implicitly, 'interpretations' - is an exact, total, unalterable account or comprehension of a given thing. They are always partial and they are always to some degree or other 'personal'. We take from them something of what was left behind by a previous writer (or reader/traveller) and we in turn leave something behind, a faint outline of ourselves where we have paused for a moment, a deposit of sand from our shoes, and in the process carry away new sand to someplace else.

On Storytelling.

There has long been an antagonism, as we have already noted in a number of intellectual domains, between story and explanation (again, explanation in its more rigid definition). What has been happening recently however, in the wake of questions about 'objective' accounts of the world, and as we have come to consider the act of writing or 'narrating' - the stringing together of a series of personally or socially significant events - as an act of mind, is that there has been a turn toward looking at the act, or "logic" of narration itself (Mink, 1970:541; see also, Kelly-Byrne and Sutton-Smith, 1983; Mitchell (ed.), 1981).

White (1981:1) suggests that 'narration' is a very fundamentally human act, one that is pan-cultural in its use and its understanding:

"So natural is the impulse to narrate, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report of the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent - absent or, as in some domains of contemporary Western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused... Far from being a problem, then, narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form

assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific."

Narrative may be, as White terms it, a "metacode", something that transcends cultural codes, and in this sense it might be distinguished from 'discourse' which is more historically and culturally situated (see eg. Pease-Chock and Wyman, 1986:7).

One of the things a story does, and which it shares with all other styles of explanation, is to establish a sense of coherence in a world of seemingly random occurrences, it "arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary" (White, 1981:23). What distinguishes a story from merely a report, or a story summary for that matter, is that the story is not a collection of facts, though it can contain these, but recounts "a state of affairs" (Leitch, 1986:26). Or, rather than speaking about the world or for the world, it "feigns to make the world speak itself" (White, 1981:3).

This is not to say that there is no distinction between a 'purely fictional' story and an historical or ethnographic story. One is, more or less, totally a creation out of an author's mind, whereas the other does depend to some degree on happenings in 'real' time and space, and comparison with other accounts. Mink (1970:545) makes this point with respect to history, but it can usefully be applied to ethnography in the same way:

"History does not as such differ from fiction ... insofar as it essentially depends on and develops our skill and subtlety in following stories. History does of course differ from fiction insofar as it is obligated to rest upon evidence of the occurrence in real space and time of what it describes and insofar as it must grow out of a critical assessment of the received materials of history, including the analyses and interpretations of other historians."

While the distinction is perhaps useful, we must again be mindful of the fact that there is a 'fictional' component to all creations, especially literary ones (cf. Vaihinger, 1935), and that historical and ethnographic texts are narratives, "literary artifacts" (White, 1978:81). As White illustrates, history 'as told' is "emplotted" in the same way literary

fiction is. History itself only offers "elements", but the historian chooses, orders and shapes these elements, an idea we will return to below with specific reference to ethnographic stories and storytelling:

"The events are made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others" (ibid).

He cites, for example, the recounting of the French Revolution by Michelot as "a drama of Romantic transcendence", while de Tocqueville, writing at the same time, wrote of it as "an ironic Tragedy":

"Neither can be said to have had more knowledge of the "facts" contained in the record; they simply had different notions of the kind of story that best fitted the facts they knew They sought out different kinds of facts because they had different kinds of stories to tell" (ibid:85).

What is significant then in the reading of history, and by extension ethnography, is, as White suggests, that the narrative

"points in two directions simultaneously: towards the events described in the narrative and toward the story type or mythos which the historian has chosen to serve as the icon of the structure of the events" (1978:88).

We might say that the narrative points to the historian's/ethnographer's 'strategy' - which may or may not be a conscious strategy - in telling the story.

The recognition of these "fictions of factual representation", as White calls them, suggests that it is not the veracity of 'facts' that are at issue, so much as the method of describing them. Furthermore, it emphasizes the blurring between fact and fiction, and as Leitch (1986:3) suggests, though there has been much work in narrative theory "the problem of formulating a rule which shall distinguish things that are stories from things that are not ... has remained unresolved".

The more formal analysis of narration has been recently subsumed under the rubric of 'narratology' (see eg. Brooks, 1984; Chatman, 1978; White, 1981; Leitch, 1986), and has its roots in a structuralist framework. The concern here is with 'units' of narration,

distinctions between histoin: (story) and discours (discourse), or following from the Russian Formalist school, sjuzet and fabula. From this point of view histoire (or, fabula) is the chain of events, the plot or the content of a given narrative. The discours (or, sjuzet) is the underlying structure, the form of the argument within the narrative. Looking at the finer points of this debate is not within the useful scope of this thesis, and indeed it is not our intention to reduce the narrative to a set of structural units. In fact, this kind of reduction, in this instance at least, is to be resisted because, while it may provide insights for those seeking some sort of understanding of what the skeleton of a narrative looks like, it in fact impoverishes, literally defaces, the narrative itself. As Leitch suggests, stories are not simply "means of communicating information" but,

"a transaction designed to arouse and satisfy the audience's narrativity, a sense of themselves as existing in a world of contingent meanings, which encourages guesses about its order, with intimations whose authority is never final" (Leitch, 1986:199).

It may be, as Leitch (1986) and White (1981) seem to suggest that it is not possible, perhaps not even desirable, to definitively distinguish narrative from other forms of discourse because it may precede other forms of discourse (White's "metacode"):

"Instead of positing a narrative sine qua non or differentia, we might define narrative in terms of a characteristic program, or rationale, a way of seeing or shaping the world. All modes of discourse, in this account, would have the status of images or incarnations of a given set of philosophical beliefs about human behaviour and the non-human world" (Leitch, 1986:20).

White (ibid:3) describes it "less as a form of representation than as a manner of speaking".

We can speak formally of stories and storytelling, but in the sense that is pertinent to this discussion, in terms of how stories become intelligible to us, why as a style of explanation they have a certain power that other styles or forms may not have, we need to look briefly at the 'why' of story. As LeGuin playfully puts it in a poem-story,

"The histoire is the what
and the discours is the how

but what I want to know, Brigham
is le pourquoi" (LeGuin, 1980:188).

Or, as Mink (1970:544) says, "to understand what a story is, is to know what it is to follow a story, that is, not merely to have done so (as everyone has) but to know what in general are the features of a story which make it followable."

That stories have such a power is suggested, ironically enough, by a number of empirical studies conducted by Martin (1982) in which she examined the use of 'story' in corporate and organizational settings.⁵

Most of us are probably familiar with and have participated in the oral history or folklore of the various communities and micro-cultures that we are all a part of (eg. job environments, families, leisure activities). Martin has observed that the stories we tell in these contexts, or as she terms them "implicit communications", are often used to express ideas, morals and suggestions that cannot be as effectively communicated in more "explicit communications". She describes the latter as messages that are "characterized by full, clear expression, so that there is no room for ambiguity or reason for difficulty or individual differences in interpretation" (such things as quantitative figures, rules and procedures and abstract policy statements would be examples of this). The former she describes as allowing ambiguity and individual interpretation, where "the point of the message is often left unstated, the conclusion to be drawn by the information receiver" (Martin, 1982:257). The value of such 'implicit communications' lies in the ability to relate information about the 'culture' of an organization, why it has a particular philosophy or set of beliefs.

The value of the 'story', the 'implicit communication', became more pronounced in relating information in a lecture setting. The now-infamous Milgram obedience experiments, which demonstrated that two-thirds of an adult sample would willingly follow an experimenter's instructions to administer electric shocks to another person at a voltage level that was obviously dangerous, served as the 'communication' with which she wished to

make the point that the majority of us are susceptible to the same kind of influence. In one lecture she simply described and summarized the results. When she asked the students how they felt they would behave in a similar situation "only one or two thought the experiment had relevance for their own behaviour" (ibid:267). A year later she tried again, this time supplementing her abstract summary with some statistical data, "a table breaking down the results by the demographic characteristics of the subjects" (ibid). Again, she received the same response from her students. The third year she asked her teaching assistant to give the Milgram lecture. This graduate student summarized the procedures and results by reading a transcript of an interview with one of Milgram's subjects after the experiment. This subject was a German woman who had come to the United States after the rise of Hitler. During the war she could not understand how members of her family and many of her friends could have taken part in the atrocities of the regime. In light of her experience with the Milgram experiment she was then able to understand. The response from the students now was very different:

"This dramatic description of the reactions of a single subject convinced many students of the potential relevance of these experimental results, in a way which the abstract summaries and the statistics had not" (Martin, 1982:268).

It is worth noting that in another experiment Martin found that even among a group of M.B.A.s - a group of professionals who are trained in a "reliance on statistical information" - when asked to assess a 'communication', a mock-up advertisement presented in numerous forms (eg. statistical/data, policy statement, story, or combination of story and statistics), it was the story which had the greatest impact on their beliefs (Martin, 1982:273-275). Ironically, though perhaps predictably, these subjects thought that an advertisement which emphasized statistics would have the most impact on others.

But what is it about stories that provides this impact? To address this question we need to refer again to Vaihinger's (1935) notion of 'fictions' as fundamental features of the mind, that we perhaps conceive of our world in terms of the stories we create about it, that

'narrative', or more specifically 'narrativization' is "the central function or instance of the mind" (White, after Jameson, 1980:251).⁴ As Hardy says, "narrative...is not to be regarded as an aesthetic invention used by artists to control, manipulate and order experience, but as a primary act of mind transferred to art from life" (in Mink, 1970:557). And as Pratt (1977) has argued, such an opposition between 'poetic' and 'ordinary' language only serves to perpetuate misconceptions about what can define and inform literary works, and to misrepresent "non-literary discourse" as "prosaic" and "utilitarian", as somehow less worthy of attention. This she calls the "poetic language fallacy". In a related sense we can apply her criticisms to the notion of seeing scientific discourse as a neutral language, outside of the rules and 'fictivity' of literary production, and not as profane as ordinary, 'natural' language. Thus the story has much to do with how we piece together everyday lived-experience, understand it ourselves and transmit it to others.

Martin (1980:282) suggests that part of the impact of stories on our cognition rests in this central narrative function of the mind. She offers that our knowledge structures are sets of 'schemas', plans that organize information from the environment in particular ways. These schemas are, then, to a certain extent individualized, based on our own experiences, though to be sure some sense of social consensus is achieved through collective socio-cultural experience. What makes a story different from a schema (or 'script') is that it contains an affective element that schemas/scripts don't have. A script may be a "coherent sequence of events" coded by an individual, but a story "encourages emotional identification" (Martin, 1982:300):

"Affect is a detailed system in the memory, so that affect may drive memory, by serving as a cue for remembering the content of material."

This is not a psychobiological analysis of the nature of 'story', so our investigation cannot pursue this particular alley-way. We will have to be content with an allusion to the structures of mind, and the idea to ruminate over that the story somehow establishes an

emotional connection that a table of statistics presumably does not. Martin's mention of a link between 'memory' and 'affect' may be significant in that, perhaps a story, in its evocation of affect and memory, provides us with access to a greater store of cognitive 'scripts and schemas', and therefore, provides a larger domain within which to compare experiences. Perhaps it is this access to a larger domain of experiences that enables us to develop 'understanding'.

But what is important for our discussion of story is not just that they are creations of the mind, but that the stories can be told, they can be shared. For Walter Benjamin (1968:83-109) it was the act of storytelling, not simply the story, that was essential. It was the social nature of the encounter that made it eminently human and integral. It is, to turn a phrase, not merely the transmission of human experience but the human transmission of experience. It is not sufficient that the story is encoded, say, in the mind or in the book, but that the story is offered to someone else.

It is this notion of 'display' or 'performance' that makes a story 'tellable' (see Leitch, 1986; Pratt, 1977), and it is this "tellability" (Leitch, 1986:26) that makes a story a particular and valuable style of explanation. The act of displaying or performing opens the contents of the story to the reader, 'the audience', allowing them to participate in the recounting, to use their own store of experience to 'understand' the story being told. As Leitch says (1986:26), summarizing Pratt:

"The speaker of a tellable utterance is not only reporting but verbally displaying a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it. His point is to produce in his hearers not only belief but also imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs he is representing and an evaluative stance toward it... Ultimately, it would seem, what he is after is an interpretation of the problematic event an assignment of meaning and value supported by the consensus of himself and his hearers."

This 'tellability', the fact that stories can be repeated, is partly bound up in the notion of 'plot', that is how the story is ordered in a particular form. It is not necessarily ordering in the strict sense of the Formalists (see above), but more simply how the author

shapes his or her narrative, how they guide it in a certain direction, which may or may not be conscious to the author. Where, in the past, particularly during the nineteenth century ("the golden age of narrative", Brooks, 1984:xi), there were particular conventions defining plot, and how a story should progress (eg. notions of causality, proper sequence, conflict and resolution), in these post-modern times we are at least suspicious of these conventions, and more often than not embrace irresolution, and indeterminacy (see Brooks, 1984; Leitch, 1986:9). This is not to say that we dismiss plots outright, for it is not unreasonable to say that we all 'plot' the stories we tell, but that there does not have to be any specific plan for a plot within a narrative:

"Plot...is not a matter of typology or of fixed structures, but rather a structuring operation peculiar to those messages that are developed through temporal succession, the instrumental logic of a specific mode of human understanding. Plot, let us say in preliminary definition, is the logic and dynamic of narrative, and narrative itself a form of understanding and explanation" (Brooks, 1984:10).

We might say that the plot in a life-history is the design and intention of the person who relates that life, it is how they relate what is significant to them in their personal narrative. It reflects the desire of the storyteller to make certain things known in the same sense that there is a desire on the part of the reader to know these things. It is this desire that fuels the reading of the story. The plot, then, is a kind of 'force' that operates to create a 'dynamic' between the author and the reader, it is, from Brooks (ibid:104), "a kind of arabesque or squiggle toward the end."

It may be, as Elsbree (1982) argues, that what makes narratives compelling is that they contain archetypal thematic elements that have significance in all human lives to one degree or another. These elements are expressions of "rituals in human life" which "articulate basic phases of human growth and express primary human needs" (ibid:vii). Such 'phases' as "establishing and consecrating a home", "engaging in a contest, or fighting a battle", "taking a journey", "pursuing consummation" (physically or spiritually), he feels are essential patterns of life and of narratives. It is these patterns that resonate in narratives

and establish some sort of connection between author and reader, regardless of temporal or cultural differences.

It may be, as Mink (1970:554) suggests, that stories are told, listened to and repeated because of the "pleasure they give" and/or "the meaning they bear" (White's "coherence" in a chaotic world), or, as Hernadi offers, "to escape boredom and indifference". Boredom is alleviated by the entertainment value of the story, and indifference is countered by the desire to find meaning, or, the "commitment either to change the world or to change ourselves" (Hernadi, 1981:198).

If we agree that all stories - ethnographic, historical, the 'purely' fictional - have their roots in everyday human experience and the events therein chosen to be significant, might we raise the question with Hernadi that what we seek in the story is a "compound desire for self-assertion and self-transcendence" (ibid:199), to assert or affirm oneself in the telling of the story, to move beyond oneself in the sharing of it with others.

Interlude: A Brief (Hi)Story of Ethnography and Crisis.

We see numerous red flags these days (or are they white?) alarming us to the 'crisis' in anthropology, the 'crisis of representation' in Marcus and Fischer's phrasing (1986), or Clifford's 'predicament' of culture (1988; see also Clifford and Marcus, 1986), though the calls of crisis themselves often seem lost and ignored, much as sirens are lost and ignored in the noise and tumult of many crisis-ridden cities. As Bernstein (1983:176) phrases it, "it is a measure of our growing sense of impotence that even to label this situation a crisis has degenerated into a cliché".

The notion of crisis suggests a marked, if not sudden, change from some state of placid harmony to fractured, fragmented dysfunction. Is it significant that one recent critique of anthropology was written by a clinical psychologist? (see Sass, 1986)

But it may be that anthropology has never not been in crisis. With an almost biorhythmic periodicity there have been frequent statements of 'crisis' at other points in its history. Hymes' (1969) edited collection of essays, with contributions from many in the field, voiced concerns about relevance to social realities and the moral responsibilities of anthropologists, which grew out of the turbulence of 1960s North America.

Hoebel *et al* (1982) published a collection of papers that spoke to the issue of a discipline seen to be fragmented by too many sub-fields, careerist concerns (this was the 1970s after all, the aftermath of the 1960s), and a lack of unity of vision. Cora Du Bois' comment that anthropology had degenerated "from a distinguished art museum into a garage sale" seemed to capture the mood of at least some of the contributors (*ibid*:13).

It may be that something about the nature of the discipline invites, or centers itself around, crisis. It may be that anthropology's subject matter, or more correctly, our approach to the subject matter, has put us in a perpetually paradoxical situation, in which, when we take the time to reflect, we find ourselves in a confused or ambiguous state, and call it a 'crossroads', a 'critical point', a 'predicament', etc.

Probably the crux of the paradoxical nature of anthropology is in the fact that it has grown out of the contradictory impulses of a humanistic concern for people, and colonial/imperialistic expansion and growth (Hymes, 1969:50-51). As Hodgen (1964:7-8) noted, anthropology does not really begin with Comte or Tylor in the nineteenth century, but much earlier. In a sense it has existed as long as we have been 'meeting' or stumbling across one another. She cites the works of Herodotus, Pliny the Elder, and Megasthenes among others, as some early examples of ethnographic writing.

But for Western European society we can look to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the era of greatest colonial expansion in which, she says, the "organizing ideas" for the later, more formal practice of anthropology were founded. Although Hodgen does not examine these 'organizing ideas' in the same way we have here - she was, after all,

writing at a time in the early 1960s before the florescence of the social upheavals that would eventually resonate in the intellectual community, introducing a more concerted practice of self-criticism - we can see that they contributed to a practice of anthropology that would in time contradict itself.

From this point on, with the rise of commerce, capitalistic economies, the growth of a merchant-middle-consuming class and other changes in European society, we became Tourists and Collectors. Concomitant with our appropriation of lands and resources was the commodification of culture, both material and spiritual. We assembled "cabinets de curiosités", "fardels of facions", and in so doing were able to possess the Other, not only on their own land, but in ours as well. This ability to possess became an integral part of Western consciousness. Scientific societies emerged among the "learned nobility", to discuss features of culture, things found, (is it worth noting that in English plays of the time it was the Antiquarian Collector - the proto-anthropologist - who replaced the astrologer as the comic fool? (Hodgen, 1964:115)). And collections of facts about these exotic and distant others, like Johann Boemus' "vest-pocket sized" compendium in 1520, or Sebastian Muenster's Cosmographia in 1544, became widely translated, read and coveted, further intensifying the knowledge/commodity/power equation.

While we may have had some revulsion toward the people we encountered, we nevertheless continued to have a fascination for what they produced. As with the natural science approach which we would in time try to emulate, there was in early anthropology this impulse to capture, to fix in time and space. Indeed there has seemingly always been a hint of anthropology as a kind of 'trophy hunting'. As much as we have been 'humanistically' concerned with those we encountered - such 'concern' often expressed in the action of proselytizing a faith or a way of life - for the most part we have sought to contain and control them.

It is interesting to note, as Banta and Hinsley (1986:39) note, that 'modern' anthropology, ie. that coming out of the nineteenth century, developed almost simultaneously with the invention and refinement of photography, a tool for fixing one's subject in time and space. One might go so far as to draw a parallel between Sontag's statement on photography, and the practice of anthropology:

"Still there is something predatory in the act of taking a picture. To photograph people is to violate them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed" (1977:7).

The acquisitive attitude often embodied in the ethnography and the museum is not substantially different from that which assembled a cabinet of curios, or which clutched a translation of Boemus' Fardle of Facions. This is not to say that acquisition, power and control are the only things embodied in these institutions, but an argument can be made that it has been the unspoken and perhaps unconscious guiding principle in their making, and it is in these collections - both textual and material - that we might identify a site for the crises we talk about.⁷

Stallybrass and White (1986:191) suggest that there is a "demarcating imperative" in the human mind which "divides up human and non-human, society and nature, on the basis of the simple logic of excluding filth". This 'imperative', they imply, becomes more pronounced in a class, and in particular a merchant, society. It is the middle class, the bourgeoisie, which becomes most concerned with this 'demarcation' and defines itself by what it defines as 'high' and 'low'. The exotic Other, only one among many features of social life, becomes 'low' by virtue of the fact that they are alien, and by implication disruptive and contaminating to the established order (cf. also Douglas' Purity and Danger (1966)).

But "disgust always bears the imprint of desire" (ibid) and the Other is often the object or the cathexis of this desire. The Other is positioned as an element of the

"carnavalesque" and becomes a symbol and site for bourgeois "displacement and sublimation" of its own fears and desires (ibid:198):

"The bourgeoisie...is perpetually rediscovering the carnivalesque as a radical source of transcendence. Indeed that act of rediscovery itself, in which the middle classes excitedly discover their own pleasures and desires under the sign of the Other, in the realm of the Other, is constitutive of the very formation of middle-class identity" (ibid:201).

What we do is construct an idealized image of the Other - representing either positive or negative ideals - a substitution of an ideal for the real, and a "denial of the ongoingness of experience and the multivocality of points of view" (Stewart, 1984:25). In ethnography we have exercised this practice in particular through the use of the "ethnographic present", a device which, like the camera, fixes its object in space and time (ibid; see also Fabian, 1983).⁸ In so doing we are able to control, "petrify" (Fabian's term) the Other, contain them, and so can 'use' them in whatever way suits one's desire, ie. as object of revulsion, the cathexis of disgust, or object of nostalgia, the cathexis of lost Edens.

And so also with the museum and material culture. Just as we disconnect lived experience in the narrative, in the act of collecting and displaying material culture we extract it from its context and ascribe to it a new context, but one without connection to its own past, the past of its creators, and instead install it in an idealized, ordered past. This is the substance of the line in Fenton's poem on the Pitt-Rivers Museum in which he says, "Yes, you have come upon the fabled lands where myths go when they die" (1982:70), or Adorno's comment that "museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association" (cited in Crimp, 1983:43).

As Stewart (1984:151) says,

"The collection replaces history with classification, with order beyond the realm of temporality. In the collection, time is not something to be restored to an origin; rather, all time is made simultaneous or synchronous within the collector's world."

The collection "stands for the world" (ibid:162) though in reality it creates its own.⁹ Not only does the collection construct an idealized, contained image of the Other, it thus also limits the kind of knowledge we are permitted to see. A "right to free access to knowledge" and to its use is increasingly becoming a concern in the contemporary world (see Ames, 1986).

The anthropologist then, - the ethnographer, the collector - the theorist of culture, has changed little since the days of the 'cabinet' and the 'fardle' in terms of the documentation and 'exhibition' of the Other. In fact under the guise of seeking to display authenticity in text or material we have perhaps perpetrated an even more insidious, covert 'theft' and charade than the supposedly crass tourist and souvenir collector:

"The theorist...is as much of a sightseer as the tourist in his desire to make present to himself a conceptual schema which would give him immediate access to a certain authenticity (the "real nature" of his object of study). The theorist's pretention is even greater though than that of seeing a sight, for he wants to be a seer in another sense of the word as well, someone who knows. He not only wants to see the sights, he wants to possess them and his fellow sightseers through his superior knowledge" (Van Den Abbeele, 1980:13).

We have long known that anthropology is a profession (a vocation?) practiced by 'strangers', at least since Simmel (1950) and Schuetz (1944). More recently Agar (1980:194) has expanded on this notion and has termed us "professional strangers", though we are more like 'students, children and apprentices' than authorities. We are an odd, brash, if not at times arrogant lot who "request the status of an intimate...asking for trust without yet having earned it" (ibid:59).

But up until, say, the last twenty years or so it has been a 'strangeness' defined more or less on our own terms, more or less something we could control. We could always return to a relatively stable, predictable home if life got too strange in the field. As such, some would say, anthropology was "an entertainment":

"...the distant colonized world is often perceived as an exotic place offering temporary escape from the familiarity and monotony of middle-class society in the

white world...in this way field work is a kind of tourism - West Indian nationalists [for example] now decry tourism as whorism" (Willis, 1969:142)¹⁰.

Both ethnographies and museums presented "harmless aboriginal customs while avoiding the frightful contemporary realities" (ibid:141).

But as part of the repercussions of changing geopolitics throughout the twentieth century - former colonies gaining independence, the aftermath of World War Two, the establishment of the United Nations, increasing mobility of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds throughout the world, and the changing social and power relations in previously homogeneous societies - we came to see more clearly that anthropology was 'historically situated', that its practice was defined by power relations based on a notion of Western European cultural superiority, that was now quickly eroding (see eg. Stocking, 1968:1-12; Kehoe, 1985; Helm, 1985; Wolf, 1980; Hymes, 1969; and Tremblay, 1983, for the Canadian context).¹¹

In the light of this, 'reflexivity' (eg. Scholte, 1969), 'studying up' (eg. Nader, 1969), investigations into the anthropology of anthropology, that is, the cultural system of anthropology (eg. Kirsch, 1982), a tone of self-analysis became the new focus:

"We have written ethnographies not for the natives but for ourselves. Why we have done so, why it has been important, where the questions stimulating ethnographic inquiry came from, and why, ... have remained perennial with us. These queries must be investigated in a discipline which incorporates reflexivity....We cannot continue to write ethnographies only for ourselves because the problems no longer arise out of our society alone. We exist in a worldwide interdependence of nations; our fate intertwines with that of others" (Lynch, 1982:85).

Stocking (1982) asks the critical question as to whether,

"anthropology offers forms of knowing that may be applied to all human subject matter, even to the point of painful self-reflexivity, or whether in some profound sense historically delimited, it has simply been a way Europeans have invented of talking about their darker brethren" (1982:419).

What this reflexivity opens up however, is a new kind of 'strangeness', and the anthropologist becomes a different, more anxious, troubled, uncomfortable, and less secure visitor. It is the strangeness - in Camus' sense of 'l'étranger', perhaps? - that results from

a loss of distinct anchors in one's own culture, a sense of (dare one say it?) alienation from one's culture. As Diamond (1974:93) puts it, "anthropology, abstractly conceived as the study of man, is actually the study of men in crisis by men in crisis."

In a very important sense then, it is ourselves that we need to ask questions about, it is a struggling to come to terms with ourselves, our actions embodied in our culture, our history:

"In this anthropological 'experiment' which we initiate, it is not they who are the ultimate objects but ourselves. We study men, that is we reflect on ourselves studying others, because we must, because man in civilization is the problem. Primitive peoples do not study man. It is unnecessary; the subject is given. They say this or that about behaviour ... they engage in ritual, they celebrate, but they are not compelled to objectify. We, on the contrary, are engaged in a complex search for the subject in history, as the precondition for a minimal definition of humanity, and therefore, of self-knowledge as the ground for self-criticism" (Diamond, 1974:100).

As Diamond goes on to say, "unless the anthropologist confronts his own alienation, which is only a special instance of a general condition", we cannot come to any understanding of the Other, or the image of ourselves in the Other (ibid:94;emphasis added).

And so it would seem that 'crisis' is not solely an ailment of anthropology, but more importantly a dysfunction (or disjunction) in Western culture and consciousness in general. Perhaps this is what Clifford is getting at in talking about "the predicament of culture". By accident of the fact that 'culture' has been the centrepiece of our investigations anthropology might appear to bear the brunt of this feeling of 'crisis', but in fact the crisis echoes throughout our culture as a whole, that is, it is "only a special instance of a general condition" in Western culture. It is Western consciousness that is the subject, it is criticism of our own culture that is our focus.

This is evident in the fact that 'culture' is not solely the domain of anthropology anymore, if it ever was. Culture, and from time to time the ethnographic method, has been usurped, (co-opted? borrowed?), by 'cultural studies' and other fields (eg. history, aesthetics, art theory and criticism).¹²

Cultural criticism has come to the fore, but not in the rarefied, modernist aesthetic sense, but rather as a historically informed and politically charged aesthetic. In the same way that anthropology and historical circumstance have widened the notion of culture from an earlier conception of 'manners', 'sophistication' and 'etiquette', so criticism is more than simply "in the service of art...to create a realm of experience that is indifferent to life" (Gunn, 1987:18). It is rather, "a mode of discourse that should be subservient to nothing but its own responsibility to remain culturally self-conscious...a commitment to what might be termed the moral imagination" (ibid:18; see also Punter, 1986).

Self-criticism - cultural or personal - may be seen as the central activity of "the post-modern condition" (cf. Lyotard, 1981), but such an examination is compounded by the problem of it being, as Rorty says, "the discourse of a culture that must not only seek its reasons for being within itself, but has now lost faith in all those disciplines of the mind by which, traditionally, such reasons could be authoritatively established" (in Gunn, 1987:3-4).

To speak of 'post-modernism' has almost become parodic of intellectual activity itself, or at least ironic. As Featherstone says, "one of the problems is that the term is at once fashionable yet irritatingly elusive to define" (1988:195). One author, emphasizing the superficial, bandwagon appeal of the term, suggests that the "word has no meaning; use it as often as possible" (cited in Featherstone, ibid). It is perhaps a statement of these times that intellectualism is often in itself merely a surface spectacle, an ornament, or more to the point, that the appearance of intellectualism supercedes intellect.

Furthermore, there is much debate in the cultural studies school - and this can potentially comprise the broadest spectrum of disciplines, including anthropology, art criticism, literature, history, economics, political science, philosophy, architecture, communications etc.- as to what properly defines 'postmodernism', that is, when it began, what it embraces, etc.

A sampling of some of the key contributors to this debate would include: Jameson, 1984; Calinescu, 1987; Lyotard, 1984; Bell, 1976. Interestingly, Habermas, who disagrees with the idea that we are post-modern, but rather that modernity is an "incomplete project", is nevertheless considered a pivotal member of the debate (see eg. 1983).

We might say, following Habermas, that the 'project of modernity' had its origins in the Enlightenment desire to develop "objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, according to their inner logic" (1983:9). These domains of human activity were to a certain degree wrested from the authorities of Church and State, and were nurtured in an economic climate of developing capitalism and a social climate of democratic impulses, with an emphasis on the power of the individual in society. It opposed 'classical' aesthetics and traditional, centralised authority, and sought social perfection through rational science, political philosophy and industrial revolution. With it came the creation of new 'master narratives' for describing the world, and it was of course, in this setting that anthropology grew in the nineteenth century.

The modernist project, as Foster points out, has not failed so much as it has turned in on itself:

"...modernism, at least as a tradition, has "won" - but its victory is a Pyrrhic one no different than defeat, for modernism is now largely absorbed. Originally oppositional, modernism defied the cultural order of the bourgeoisie and the "false normativity" of its history; today, however, it is the official culture ... its once scandalous productions are in the university, in the museum, in the street" (1983:ix).

Bell (1976) suggests that the very environment that supported the Enlightenment ideals of objective, universal explanations and rules has created "cultural contradictions" which ultimately call into question these explanations and rules. He argues that there are three realms of society - the economic, the polity, the cultural - which now, as a result of the failure of Enlightenment ideals, operate on three contrary "axial principles" (efficiency, equality, self-realization). That these three principles in various ways work against each other cause disjunctions in social life which create the intellectual tensions and social

conflicts we have experienced over the past century and a half (1976:xi). It is this state of "disjunction" or contradiction that creates what Lyotard (1979:73) calls a condition of being "skeptically inquisitive about all grounds of authority, assumption, or convention", in short, of being 'post-modern'.

For anthropology, and for social science in general, this disjunction has, among other things, resulted in a heightened sense of urgency for a more concerted reflexive practice, and an upsetting of accepted canonical approaches to writing about culture. In particular our writing takes on less explicit form, and is informed by a wide variety of sources. This "blurring of genres", as Geertz calls it, creates an atmosphere in which no sharp distinctions can be made - nor are they desired - in the manner, style and tone of our expressions as compared with other expressions. We are less sharply distinguished as anthropologists (in whatever way we might have been said to be distinguished by our writing in the first place), but rather take on the appearance of literary critics, political philosophers, and/or parable tellers (Geertz, 1983:19). This act of 'bricolage', to borrow from Levi-Strauss, or, "collage" (see Clifford, 1981:563), of assembling a spectrum of material in creating an expression, might be said to be emblematic (or, if one is inclined to see it as a pathology, perhaps 'symptomatic') of this postmodern temper.

But 'reflexivity', that legacy from the 1960s, and 'self-criticism and skepticism', or the ironic stance with respect to our representations - the dominant pose of the postmodern mood - are not on their own sufficient for revitalizing the discipline. At best they are merely a kind of relatively benign arm-chair navel-gazing, at worst a timidity that encourages complacency and inaction. As a recognition of the nature of anthropology as a historical phenomenon becomes more apparent, we have become more concerned with the conditions of writing ethnography, ie. the relations between ethnographer and informant.

This concern is 'symbolized' in what Orner (1984:144) calls "a bundle of interrelated terms: practice, praxis, action, interaction, activity, experience, performance (and)

the doer of all that doing: agent, actor person, self, individual, subject", 'key symbols' of anthropology in the 1980s. Attending to the "intentional or unintentional political implications" of doing ethnography becomes of crucial importance.

It is a rephrasing of Diamond's notion that anthropology is a coming to terms with ourselves through the other, "to serve as a form of cultural critique" (Marcus and Fischer, 1986), but carried forward in such a way that both ethnographer and informant, and reader share in the development of that critique. It is Clifford's "collage", "an assemblage containing voices other than the ethnographer's" (1981:563).

Myerhoff and Ruby (1982:6) also advocate a more mature, developed 'reflexivity' that "structures communicative products so that the audience assumes the producer, process and product are a coherent whole":

"To be more formal, we would argue that being reflexive means the producer deliberately, intentionally reveals to an audience the underlying epistemological assumptions that caused the formulation of a set of questions in a particular way, the seeking of answers to those questions in a particular way, and finally the presentation of the findings in a particular way" (Myerhoff and Ruby, 1982:6).

To paraphrase Bernstein, (1983:38; drawing from Gadamer and early Greek philosophy), 'understanding' and 'interpretation' must be followed by 'application'.

This approach to social theory finds its most recent form in the work of the Frankfurt School of 'critical theory' (cf. Habermas, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse). It has its roots in Hegel, and in Marx's notion of 'critique' (see Bernstein, 1976:174), though they extend even further back to classical Greek notions of a bios theoretikos, an ethical style of living that works to close the gap between theoria and praxis:

"Critical theory has a fundamental practical interest that guides it - a practical interest in "radically improving human existence", of fostering the type of self-consciousness and understanding of existing social and political conditions so that "mankind will for the first time be a conscious subject and actively determine its own life" (Bernstein, 1976:180).

The issues and proposed methods for achieving this are too involved for our present discussion (see Bernstein, 1976; 1983, for ample elaboration), but what is important for us to consider is the general mood of this movement, that theory should and can have a practical application to human social life, to use their terms, that a 'practical philosophy' can yield phronesis, an "ethical know-how" of acting in the world (Bernstein, 1983:147).

Carefully avoiding the subtle debates of this particular programme, I want to talk simply about this notion of 'praxis' through discussions of 'reflection and contemplation', the ethnography as a mirror to consciousness (of which more presently), and 'dialogue and conversation', the life-history as possibly a praxis-oriented endeavour (of which more in Chapter Three). In this way, perhaps we might alleviate the sense of personal, that is disciplinary, and cultural crisis that we feel embroiled in.

Contemplation, Imagination and (in) Ethnographic Storytelling.

It is one thing to glean information and cultural knowledge from literary fictions, and admittedly this is an entirely fruitful and valuable source. Collections of literary and ethnographic fiction like Spradley's and McDonough's (1973) open up realms of cultural experience to many who might otherwise avoid - perhaps with good reason - conventional anthropological writing. Davis (1974) suggests that the "sociology-type" stories of Durkheim's anomie, Bateson's 'double-bind' and Weber's 'vocation' can find literary parallel in, respectively, Fitzgerald's Great Gatsby, O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night, and Thomas Mann's Tonio Krüger.¹³

Poyatos (eg. 1988) has proposed 'literary anthropology' as the study of verbal and non-verbal behaviours (eg. paralinguistics, kinesics, proxemics, clothing styles, adornments, the handling of now-lost artifacts) as displayed in the literature of a culture, often of

another time and place, a kind of field-work of the text. Through an examination of such 'artifacts'/signs, he and his colleagues perform what might be termed an archeology of literature compiling an assemblage of 'remains' from which they hope to make observations and generalizations regarding specific cultures in a similar manner to more formal, 'participant' ethnography.

But the story or narrative quality of ethnography proper (then again, what is 'proper' any longer?) becomes more apparent when we consider some of the recent critiques of the genre. The fact that we now consider it a genre of literature in itself suggests this.

As Bruner (1986:139-155) points out, for example, our twentieth century stories about North American Native people have changed as our own view of them changed, as our social and historical conditions changed. We have written about them as if they were children, as refugees from Eden, as intransigent obstacles to 'progress':

"The narrative structures we construct are not secondary narratives about data, but primary narratives that establish what is to count as data" (Bruner, 1986:142).

Helm's (1985) edited collection of essays also implicates this narrative structuring in talking about the shifting social contexts and ideologies that frame and define the way things get written about in American ethnology.

The issue of "re-studies" is yet another case in point. The recent furore over the 'discrepancies' between Mead and Freeman's accounts of life in Samoa (see eg. Fretwell, 1983) would be at least partly ameliorated by recognizing what Heider (1988) calls the "Rashomon Effect".¹⁴

Taken from the 1969 Kurosawa film in which a bandit, a samurai, his wife and a passing woodcutter relate four different 'stories' of their encounter in a forest, and the events that ensued (a sexual meeting that may have been a rape, a death which may have been murder or suicide), he draws a parallel with ethnography, emphasizing that they also are not collections of facts "found", but stories "made" (ibid:73).

There are numerous reasons for such discrepancies, Heider goes on to say. Someone could be simply wrong, though as he points out, even if this is the case, we must go on to consider why they are wrong. They may be examining different cultures or sub-cultures; or, they may be examining the same culture, but at different points in time; or, with a different set of cultural biases and personal values, or differing theoretical agendas. They may have achieved a greater or lesser degree of rapport, or had spent more or less time in the field, or had had different previous fieldwork experiences. All these factors figure in the stories we tell, which ultimately are "self-serving" (ibid:74) insofar as they are 'our truths'.

In the Mead-Freeman debate, the proliferation of commentary on the subject, the restudies of the restudy, or the stories about the story (see eg. Holmes, 1987; Feinberg, 1988) serve to emphasize even more pointedly that ethnographies are constructed, interpretive, and charged with one's personal experiences and inclinations. As Clifford (1986:102-103) points out, Mead's "scientific experiment" was in fact intended to provide "moral and practical lessons for American society" in the form of a comparison with a 'pacific' (a permissible pun?), relatively anxiety-less, island alter-ego. Freeman's hidden agenda, in his "scientific refutation" of Mead, seemed to be that of a 'giant-killer', intent on 'proving' the superiority of biological determinism and scientific method over Boasian cultural anthropology (see Holmes, 1987:143).¹⁵

The sensitivity to ethnographies as 'texts' and as 'narratives' (eg. Bruner, 1984; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1988), has led us to a recognition that there may be different 'readerships' for these stories (Marcus and Cushman, 1982:51ff; Van Maanen, 1988; Agar, 1986:15), and thus not only are there differences in expression based on an ethnographer's personal and cultural experience, but her or his intentions as well.

Van Maanen (1988:26ff) identifies three broad categories of readers - Marcus and Cushman (1982) identify six, but they can be easily subsumed under these three: collegial

readers (those in the profession or in-training, who have a specialized interest and supposedly subtler understanding of what constitutes fieldwork); social science readers (those in related fields who see ethnography as one of a number of useful methods of research and styles of writing); and, general readers (those seeking adventure and/or information). He goes on to say that we construct our "tales of the field" with any of a number, or combination, of voices to appeal to these various readerships.

The 'realist tale' is that which, up to this point at least, has been the most prevalent and recognized form, in which one speaks with an institutional, "dispassionate, third-person voice" (what one critic calls "didactic deadpan" (ibid:51)), where the author 'disappears' from the text, and where the act of interpretation is rarely if ever admitted.

Confessional tales are those which are "highly personalized", told in an active, first-person voice, so as to show the reader how the fieldwork was accomplished, to demystify the process and to thereby perhaps display our nobility in humility - "You see, I am only human". Up until recently, the confessional tale was generally confined to appendices and supporting documents, though with the innovations of Rabinow (1977) and Dumont (1978) as examples, they have become accepted as ethnographies in their own right. "In skilled hands", Van Maanen fairly points out, it can be "a self-reflective meditation...in unskilled hands, a wild and woolly, involuted tract that seems to suck its author (and reader) into a black hole of introspection" (ibid:92).

Impressionist tales "are the backstage talk of fieldwork" (ibid:96). They refrain from interpretation and recount the events 'as experienced', inviting the reader to make of it what they will. Geertz's "Deep Play" (1983), or Briggs Never in Anger (1970) he cites as examples of this style.

Critical tales are those "often, but not necessarily, with a Marxist edge" (ibid:128), written with a concern for, and through the eyes of, a disadvantaged or oppressed group, told with "something of a crusading spirit" (ibid:129).

Formal tales use ethnography to back up formal theoretical propositions, and 'literary' tales borrow from fiction the techniques of intense characterization and plot development to tell a story.

Jointly-told tales are those which "bring the fieldworker to the brink of ending the game and admitting (in theory, anyway) that some natives are as able to represent their culture as is the fieldworker (if not more so)" (ibid:137). They have gained a certain prominence with the recent concern for the political implications of the ethnographer-informant relationship, and the concomitant desire for encouraging 'dialogue' and 'polyphony' in the encounter (see eg. Clifford and Marcus, 1986:15; Marcus and Fischer, 1986). A good example of this type of tale would be the document compiled by Bahr, Gregorio, Lopez and Alvarez (1974) on Piman shamanism and theories of healing. Though Bahr is formally the anthropologist of the group the contributions of all four members are equally recognized.

The point to be taken from all this is that our 'tales' contain, as Van Maanen says, "narrative tricks" which we use to claim truth, tricks that "are no less sophisticated than those used by the novelist to claim fiction" (ibid:25). Again, ethnographic writing is not straightforward or unproblematic description, "based on an assumed Doctrine of Immaculate Perception" (ibid:73)¹⁶

Furthermore, what is important for us here is that our work is deeply infused (suffused? confused?) with what Geertz (1988:8) calls our "signature", our "writerly identity", keeping in mind that even an attempt at non-identity is still a signature of some sort or other. Whether we like it or not, or whether we realize it or not, we have written ourselves into the story.

It should be added, though, that most 'tales' are not exclusively 'realist', 'confessional', 'critical', or 'literary', etc., nor is there any one mode or voice that is preferable to any other. Despite the overwhelming recent criticism of the 'realist' tale, for

example, (see in Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986:77-78), it is not undesirable in and of itself. What one must be wary of is its unconscious use as the privileged mode or only acceptable convention, to the exclusion of all others. Van Maanen points out that such realist tales as that of Malinowski or Evans-Pritchard seem to stand up over time - if at times clumsy or incongruent with other realities - where other works fade (ibid:54).

We may in fact enclose or overlap voices, one with another (or others). What is important is that we develop some reflexivity of this fact. This reflexivity is essential for a critical, praxis-oriented stance, for a position that seeks to concern itself with 'the moral imagination'.

Looking at ethnography in the light of these observations and criticisms our conventions take on a kind of transparency. The danger in this kind of deconstructive activity is that, once we have pulled the rug out from underneath, are we at all certain there is even a floor left? As Geertz (1988:1) says, once the illusion of ethnography as a "sorting of irregular facts into orderly categories is exploded, what it is instead is much less clear".

That it is a story is, of course, the axial point of this document. But what does it mean to be a story? That they are allegorical, as Clifford (1986:98-121) would suggest, is valid, though perhaps already implicit from what we have been saying so far. The allegorical nature of the ethnography, the story, is apparent insofar as it is "a representation that 'interprets' itself", which "continually refers to another pattern of ideas or events" (ibid:99). Van Maanen's classification of types of ethnographic 'tales', and Heider's "Rashomon effect" already spoke of this rhetorical, interpretive, self-serving, sub-textual aspect.

That any act of creating is an act of imagination is axiomatic (cf. Vaihinger, 1935), but the actual involvement of imagination in the process of writing or reading ethnographic texts, or the doing of ethnography is a notion that is less readily accepted.

The capacity to imagine is, of course, a quality of mind. It is the ability to construct images - though, not only visual ones - plans and schemas, where there are none immediately apparent in our external environment. It is the ability to order the world in a certain way, or to change one's order of the world.

As Bronowski (1978:21) went to great pains to point out,

"imagination is not confined to wild bursts of fantasy. Imagination is the manipulation inside the mind of absent things, by using in their place images or words or other symbols."

Furthermore, as he goes on to say, imagination is not confined to artificial dichotomies of 'art' versus 'science', the former often naively held to be the domain of 'imagination', the latter, of 'fact'. Both science and art are "forms of play", both involve experimentation, and importantly both involve "metaphors and associations" that we must recreate for ourselves (ibid:28).

C. Wright Mills (1959) spoke of the "sociological imagination", and by that he meant an ability to examine the world, not just with a collection of facts, not just with the "skills of reason", but with a "quality of mind" that synthesizes this information with these skills (ibid:6). The sociological imagination, he suggested, should enliven the "capacity for astonishment" with the world, in such a way that we relate history and biography to the social. This imagination, he says should be turned to the political and social demands of "urgent public issues and insistent human troubles" (ibid:21).

We might tentatively suggest an 'anthropological imagination' which is also centered around these similar concerns, but which does this through the crucial act of reflection or contemplation.

This is not contemplation in the disengaged, armchair sense that, for example, Dwyer (1982:256ff) and Bloch (1986:xxxiii) criticize. Dwyer, following from Lukacs, opposes "the contemplative stance" of ethnography in the sense of an anthropology that throughout its history has adopted a position of distanced neutrality from the subject of its investigations. He argues that what this has served to do is conceal the 'vulnerability' of the investigator in the encounter, by positioning a self outside of the engagement, and the desire to create an "abstract Other". These practices enhance the anthropologist's claim to objectivity, "places the Self beyond question", and "makes more acute its vision of the Other, but need never examine its own vantage point" (ibid:257). The idea of reflection and contemplation I want to suggest here is more in line with that offered by Tyler (1986) or Laughlin (1986), one that makes it essential that we examine our own vantage point.

Tyler suggests that, rather than 'representation', ethnography - especially in these postmodern times - is more an exercise of 'evocation', a "meditative vehicle", in which experience is evoked in both the reader and the ethnographer:

"A postmodern ethnography is a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality, and thus to provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect. It is, in a word poetry - not in its textual form, but in its return to the original context and function of poetry, which, by means of its performative break with everyday speech evoke memories of the ethos of the community and thereby provoked hearers to act ethically" (1986:125-126).

Laughlin *et al* (see eg. Laughlin, 1986; Webber and Laughlin, 1979; Webber, Stephens and Laughlin, 1983) have proposed a psychobiological model of "symbolic penetration" to explain the efficacy of formal meditative practices, eg. Christian contemplation, Buddhist meditation, Northwest Coast transformation mask rituals. In this scheme an object of meditation, eg. a buddhist kasina, a Zen koan, is contemplated and various levels of absorption into the sign is achieved depending on one's experience and training. These levels of experience may vary from personal to cultural to "core", that is,

fundamental, pan-human, experience. They suggest further that because science has tended to ignore the centrality of human consciousness in the creation of science itself, what is needed is a "cadre of mature contemplatives" who are "sensitized to the importance of such questions" (Laughlin, 1986:49-50). While it is not the point of this document to pursue this particular avenue in great detail, what we might borrow from it and modify, is the notion of seeing the ethnography as roughly equivalent to a more formal object of meditation. We might see the act of reading as contemplation, and possibly encourage ethnographic professionals, and others, to engage in at least an informal practice of 'contemplating' the ethnographic document, Tyler's "vehicle of meditation". In this sense the writing or reading of ethnography is less a cracking of codes, or an acquisitive and unending collecting of odd-facts for the Encyclopedia, or even a magnifying glass on the Other, but rather a tool for looking into the Self, as a kasina, an icon, a shaman's mirror.

The process of reading and writing becomes one of incubating the experience created from the interaction (collision? engagement?) of one's own life-world with those offered in the ethnography itself. Such an interaction evokes a new, or perhaps at least a latent, set of experiences which emerge from the oscillation between the reader's experience and understanding of something, and that of the writer. This same process is invoked in the exchange between the ethnographer and the informant, the oscillation between two points of view to create a third unique one.

Iser (1978; 1980; 1987) has examined this process in detail, what he calls the "act of reading". In summarizing his work we should be ever mindful that the writing of culture is first of all a reading of culture.

Whereas previously the reader of literature - whether it be fiction, ethnography or tract, etc. - has been seen to be merely a receiver of information, in a sense manipulated by an author's point of view and intentions, Iser suggests that the aesthetic response to literature is in large part achieved by the creative capacity of the reader him/herself.¹⁷ We

read, especially scientific writing, as if there is a single umbilical line between the text on the page and its meaning, but in fact there are intricate cognitive, personal and psychological thresholds that are crossed in the making of that meaning.

According to this line of thinking, texts do not have one hidden - or, for that matter, apparent - meaning or interpretation. They are instead the confluence of "the interaction between the text on the one hand, the social and historical norms of its environment, and, on the other, the potential disposition of the reader" (1978:14). Our concern is, then, not the meaning of the text so much as the effect. A text is less a "set of instructions" to the reader, nor is it necessarily "set out to instruct", rather it is a set of "schematized aspects through which the subject matter of the work is produced" (ibid:21-22).

What is created by text and reader is a "virtual work". It is implicit in Iser's scheme that both writer and reader are 'authors' of the work, hence his use of the terms 'text' and reader, not author and reader. This 'virtual work' is a new text that is composed between the poles of the artistic (the writer's intentions) and the aesthetic (the reader's understanding). This process then is 'dynamic' and 'performative', the representation is not a mimesis but a performance, that is, texts "initiate performances of meaning rather than actually formulating meaning themselves" (1978:27; see also, 1987:218), and as such they are always to some degree very individualized and contextualized, ie. your reading of the work is always somehow different from my reading of it.

This 'performance' is achieved by the 'repertoires' and 'strategies' we bring to a given work. To a certain extent these are tools that both the reader and writer bring to the work. They set the conditions on which the two interact, ie. there have to be agreed-upon conventions and procedures by both parties. For example, they must share a common or at least mutually intelligible language and manner of presentation (even if one agrees to disagree), and both parties must be willing to participate in the interaction (ibid,1978:29).

Briefly stated, repertoires are the social, cultural, historical and literary traditions and circumstances out of which a reader and text emerge. Strategies are the ways we organize the material of the text, and how that material is communicated. Again, a given reader's strategies and repertoires will not be identical to the writer's, and need not be, but the conditions of the interaction, as stated above, demand only the minimal agreement that one wishes to 'converse'.

From there on it is this interaction, this "text-as-junction" (1987:219) where other texts, social norms and values of the reader come together in "dynamic oscillation" with the text itself, which creates a new understanding, essentially an evoked experience, what Iser calls "a realization". This 'realization' need not be immediate, and it is in this sense that the parallels with formal contemplation are particularly apt. The act of contemplation is not a kind of psychic vending-machine in which one deposits a sum and immediately receives a return on the investment. It is more like a process of incubation, where something is nurtured, and where one may never be certain what will emerge.

The contemplation of the ethnography, the activation of the anthropological imagination, may elicit a variety of responses from the reader and writer, depending on the circumstances and point in time at which it is read. Responses may resonate immediately, or seemingly not at all (one suspects that there will always be some sort of response whether one is aware of it or not), or they may continue to resonate in different ways for years. What is of importance is how these resonances speak to oneself about the self. Or, perhaps, what is of importance is how these resonances are 'read' (or, 'heard') by the self.

These resonances need not only be of the nature of brightness and light, they may also be turbulent. Iser suggests that the act of reading potentially creates a state of disorder, and that it is in this temporary chaos that meaning is often arrived at:

"Each text makes inroads into extra-textual fields of reference and by disrupting them creates an eventful disorder, in consequence of which both structure and

semantics of these fields are subject to certain deformations and their respective constituents are differently weighted, according to the various deletions and supplementations" (1987:218).

Iser also suggests it is the 'gaps' and 'blanks' in a text that encourage a "wandering viewpoint", that engage the 'dynamic oscillation' between text and reader. The gaps and blanks are those unsaid parts of a narrative that prompts us to fill them with "projections":

"Communication in literature, then, is a process set in motion and regulated, not by a given code, but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment. What is concealed spurs the reader into action, but this action is also controlled by what is revealed; the explicit, in its turn is transformed when the implicit has been brought to light" (1980:111).

In reading an ethnography, gaps may be as simple as the question not asked by the writer but that is raised in the mind of the reader. The 'wandering viewpoint' is engaged when the reader moves between what Iser calls "four main perspectives in narration" (1980:113), the writer's point of view, the narrator's (who is often not the 'writer' *per se*, but the subject of study), other characters in the narrative, and the reader's own frames of reference. It is in this way that meaning - individualized, contextualized meaning - is arrived at.

There is a similarity between Iser's formula and Geertz's interpretive practice of moving between "experience-near" and "experience-distant" concepts (1983:57). These terms, which Geertz acknowledges are borrowed from the psychologist Heinz Kohut, refer respectively to experience as defined by one's informant or subject, and that experience as described by the ethnographer or analyst. Bronowski also speaks of this creative, constructive aspect of the act of reading, which we might say now is essentially an act of imagination at work:

"No work...has been created with such finality that you need contribute nothing to it. You must recreate the work for your self - it cannot be presented to you readymade.... Ask yourself what image rises...like a rocket for you and spills a bright rain of light over your understanding" (1978:14).

The act of reading ethnography, we might summarize then, is an interpretive, contemplative practice, that is perhaps better seen as an evocation of aspects of oneself in relation to others, rather than strictly a compendium of information about those others. We might highlight Bronowski's phrase and frequently return to ask ourselves, what from our reading "rises like a rocket and spills a bright rain of light over our understanding" (ibid).

Part of the strategy and rhetoric of looking at ethnography as a story and as a style of storytelling is to avoid a positivistic approach to experience, what Webster (1983:187) calls "the reification, even fetishization, of the objective world", the reduction of lives to a catalogue of predictions and verifications that precludes, or ignores, both the individuality of the cultural host, and the psychology of the listener (reader or writer).

But, as Webster (ibid:192) also points out, to resort to tired antinomies of 'objectivism' versus 'subjectivism', the "acceptable knowledge" of the former, and the "romanticist alter-ego" of the latter, tends to "paralyze", or "flatten" storytelling by demanding that it must be one rather than the other. Neither positivist social science nor its supposedly existential, subjectivist antipode provide a 'better' or more 'penetrating' insight into reality. They are both fundamentally narratives, one which seeks to deny its own narrativity, the other which seeks to eschew 'realism'. What is important for us to recognize is this narrativity in all our writing.

There is an inherent irony in our 'story' so far and its nature is perhaps best summarized by a comment of Webster's concerning our critique of ethnography, and our desire to reincorporate, rejuvenate, recognize the practice of storytelling:

"Whether consciously or not, it (and this essay as well) is a narrative telling a story about storytelling, that is, mediating at a moment in history (perhaps ineffectually or parochially) between ethnographies that preceded it and those which will react to it. Insofar as it appears to be neutrally informational or explanatory, this mediating role

is obscured, which is to say its storytelling potential becomes ideology, conscious or not" (1983:196).

As he goes on to say, and I would echo, "that is why my ethnographic storytelling must not merely tell stories about storytelling."

1. Hempel's 'deductive-nomological' model of explanation is probably the most well-known and developed of this kind of approach; see in Achinstein (1983:7) and Hempel, in Pitt (1988).

2. See Rosaldo in this volume for an essay on the rhetoric of anthropology.

3. The irony here, of course, is that, after Kuhn, even the 'hard' sciences can no longer be seen as 'hard'.

4. Though Weber's name is most associated with these notions of Verstehen and the beginnings of 'interpretive social science', he was not suggesting naive 'intuitionism' as a tool for this work. He made distinctions between, for example aktuelles Verstehen and erklärendes Verstehen, the former referring to the possibility of understanding an act or expression immediately without referring to a broader context, and the latter being a kind of understanding that demanded a broader context and which could not be immediately apprehended (see Eldridge, 1971:93). As Sica (1988:145) notes, the assumption that Weber "subscribed methodologically to an 'intuitionistic' Verstehen and little else" may be due to "unfortunate choices made by translators over the years".

5. See also Schwartzmann (in Bruner, ed., 1984:80-93) on the use of stories in the organizational context of the patient/staff hierarchy of a mental health centre.

6. There is a parallel here with the well-developed notion of the human mind as a "cognized environment" central to the 'biogenetic structuralist' school in anthropology (see eg. Laughlin and Brady, 1976; d'Aquili, Laughlin and McManus, 1979). The "cognized environment" they suggest, is the sum total of models one has encoded in the brain as a result of one's phylogenetic and ontogenetic history. It is these models that one acts on, not the world per se, thus these models are a kind of fiction. Though it is outside the scope of this paper, it would be interesting to pursue in detail some questions relating to the 'psychobiology' of the narrative function.

7. See also Clifford (1985;1988:215-225) for discussions of the collection in Western cultures, and the notion of "appropriation" of art, artifact, and culture.

8. See Stewart (1984:25); see also Fabian (1983) for a detailed discussion of the use of 'time' in ethnographic narratives, and the "petrification" of ethnographic subjects in a perennial ethnographic present.

9. The collection also contains within it the "metaphor of the social relations of an exchange economy" (Stewart, 1984:164), that is, notions of its use-value usurped by its exchange-value. This becomes very pertinent when one considers that the ethnographic museum piece is now coveted and financially valued in the same way as, say, a Renaissance painting. In a sense they are both artifacts - material remains of a specific society and culture - and expressions or objects of aesthetic desire. See Danto et al (1988) for a discussion of this, with specific reference to the valuation and exhibition of African art and material culture over the past century.

10. In a situation of turning-the-tables on the anthropologists, Agar (1980:79) notes that, in our unrelenting ability to overanalyze the obvious, to starch the everyday and to make the most Keystone Kop-like cultural blunders, we have brought great delight to many people we have lived with. "Sometimes I think," he says, "the only reason ethnographers are tolerated at all is for their entertainment value".

11. Stocking's History of Anthropology series (eg. 1983;1985) is one attempt at clarifying and documenting the historical and cultural contexts in which anthropological research has been done. In a sense it is a collection of the stories behind the doing of anthropology.

12. It should be noted that 'cultural studies' is not necessarily a 'new' field, having its origins in the Kulturwissenschaften of German idealism at the turn of the century. Kulturwissenschaften was the preferred term among some theorists (eg. Rickert and Cassirer) to the more widely used Geisteswissenschaften, though the two can for the most part be treated as synonyms (see Edwards, 1972:276ff.).

13. See also Schmidt (1981) and Langness and Frank (1978) for discussions on ethnographic and literary fictions.

14. The similar Lewis-Redfield controversy some twenty years earlier would be another example of this. Heider lists others (1988:73).

15. There is a related issue in our discussion of the 'fictions' of ethnography that might bear some mention, and it can be centered around the kind of controversy generated by the work of Carlos Castaneda. That all writing is to some degree a form of fiction we have already dealt with above, but there remains the additional concern about what constitutes a 'valid', and an 'authentic', report. As de Mille (1980: 48ff.) reminds us, "validity is not authenticity". We might say that a valid report is one in which we agree that the content is more or less correct according to what the anthropological community decides is in the realm of 'correctness'. An authentic account is one that can be shown to have been based on actual experience. Thus, Bowen's Return to Laughter (1954), while it is a work of ethnographic fiction, is both valid and authentic (valid in content, and authentic in that it was based on the author's own fieldwork experiences), while Turnbull's Mountain People (1972) may be said to be authentic but invalid (de Mille, 1980:49). The critical case, however, is one such as Castaneda's where the report was presented as authentic, but was subsequently questioned as to its authenticity (see eg. Noel, 1976; de Mille, 1976;1980). While the material in the Castaneda books may be in some senses valid, the seeming deception in its presentation opens up basic issues of honesty and integrity in anthropological reporting. Decisions as to whether such work is chicanery, pseudo-anthropology, or, as Geertz (1983:20) suggests, "a parable posing as an ethnography" - or perhaps a combination of these - can presumably only be made by open and concerted dialogue within the community itself.

16. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) also outline different textual strategies in the writing of ethnography, though these can be subsumed under Van Maanen's categories. Though they don't speak as explicitly as Van Maanen, they talk of organizing accounts in terms of chronological, natural history, and a narrowing and expansion of focus styles.

17. This is also the spirit of Barthes' notion of 'the death of the author' and 'the birth of the reader': "...a text is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.... A text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.... The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author." (Barthes, 1977:146-148). As Wolff (1981:120) suggests however, the 'birth of the reader' should not necessarily demand the absolute 'death' of the author, but rather a restriction on his/her claims to authority. Thus, as Iser shows (see below), it is simply that another text is created, not that one must be destroyed.

CHAPTER THREE: A REVIEW OF LIFE-WRITING AND RESEARCH.

We have seen that the central question in the post-modern critique of ethnography centers around the issue of 'authority' (see eg. Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Clifford, 1988). It is a question that focuses on, as Clifford says, "a general trend toward a specification of discourses in ethnography: who speaks? who writes? when and where? with or to whom? under what institutional and historical constraints?" (Clifford, 1986:13). What this "specification of discourses" implies is a recognition and identification of all the relations, circumstances and 'voices' that go into the making of an ethnography, what Clifford (1988:39) calls the "discursive occasions of production". It is argued that for too long ethnographies have excluded, ignored or made anonymous the participation of the 'others', ie. the putative 'subjects', involved in the encounter, and that this has resulted in very one-sided and highly subjective, interpretive and idiosyncratic representations of culture, (with the subjectivities and interpretations hidden from view).

"Henceforth neither the experience nor the interpretive activity of the scientific researcher can be considered innocent. It becomes necessary to conceive of ethnography not as the experience and interpretation of a circumscribed "other" reality, but rather as a constructive negotiation involving at least two, and usually more, conscious, politically significant subjects" (Clifford, 1988:41).

Thus, the issue of how we 'write culture' becomes concerned with notions of 'dialogue' (as opposed to 'monologue'), and 'polyphony', the drawing out to the surface of the text of the 'multiple voices' involved in its production.

What this climate of self-criticism has encouraged, or more to the point demanded, is 'experimentation' with the form and content of ethnographic writing (Marcus and Fischer, 1986:40), an attempt to innovate different strategies in representing cultural experience, and which actively cultivate the 'dialogic', the 'polyphonic', the authority of informant(s) as well as ethnographer in a "constructive negotiation" (Clifford's phrase), or "cooperatively evolved text" (Tyler, 1986:125).

Experimentation in ethnography, as Marcus and Fischer see it, is guided by a "spirit" that is "antigenre", that is, such attempts eschew the strict adherence to a model or "restricted canon" that sets formulaic constraints on how ethnography should be presented (performed?). This is not to suggest that this "experimental moment" is a kind of stylistic free-for-all, a sort of exhibitionistic display of 'novel' approaches, each trying to outdo the other after a superficial 'avant-garde' or 'surreal' fashion. As these two authors advise, "experimentation for its own sake" is not the point, "but the theoretical insight that the play with writing techniques brings to consciousness" (Marcus and Fischer, 1986:42).

Furthermore, we are not running away from the past, as if experimentation were an expression of some kind of Oedipal jealousy and a strategy through which we are able to 'kill the fathers (and mothers) of anthropology'. The works of older anthropologists contain numerous 'contemporary' experimental devices.¹ In fact, much of the present experimentation, Marcus and Fischer tell us, is fuelled by earlier work:

"Most experimental ethnographies look backward for inspiration to recognized classics by Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, and others, felicitously misread them, and draw out their underplayed, forgotten, or latent possibilities. An experimental ethnography works if it locates itself recognizably in the tradition of ethnographic writing and if it achieves an effect of innovation. Legitimizing an experiment by recovering a forgotten possibility is most often how an ethnographer balances these two opposing tendencies" (1986:40).

The life-history approach to ethnography is one such "forgotten possibility".

Life Writing.

The life-history strategy in anthropology is not in and of itself an inherently experimental approach, though it does lend itself very naturally to the production of dialogic or cooperative texts. This is not to say, of course, that all life-histories have been dialogic,

or that it is the best or only strategy for accomplishing these ideals. Nevertheless, it is an approach which, despite the fact that it has been the subject of ongoing debate as a viable method in anthropology, is experiencing something of a revival in the contemporary scene as one of a number of strategies which play with textual form and content.² Where in the past the life-history has been a "documentary device" for representing culture through the characters of individuals it is now an "effort to explore the multiple points of view that go into (its) construction" (ibid:58).

The life-history can be situated within a constellation of related terms from a number of fields: biography, autobiography, oral history, psychobiography, psychohistory, medical or psychiatric (clinical) history, to name a few. What the life-history shares with these is a focus on the evocation of an individual life, or aspects of it. A few words on the genre of 'life writing' in general might help shed light on issues that are pertinent to the anthropological life-history in particular.

Put simply, a biography is considered to be the story one person tells of another. It is an exchange between an 'author' and a 'subject', and ultimately the reader, usually with the author's voice predominating. An autobiography is, of course, one's 'own' story, author and subject are one and the same. A life-history sits somewhere between the two, having both the feature of having been elicited and often guided by someone, which it shares with biography, and, having the autobiographical trait of being comprised of the subject's 'own words'. Of course, as we shall see, a life-history can bend toward either of these two poles to a greater or lesser extent.

But what they all contain is a circumscribed view of a 'self', and it is this notion of a 'self' that has ramifications for how a biographic document is constructed.

We have to keep in mind that there can be no single, consistent definition of a 'self', nor any single, consistent way of describing that 'self'. It would seem to be a curiously Western conceit that an individual personality is simply that, an undividable entity,

and that there is only one 'true', 'authentic' picture of each personality. As several authors point out, this bias has been largely due to the fact that for most of its history biography in the Western world has been the stories of 'great men and great deeds', the so-called res gestae, and were seen and presented as models of an 'ideal' moral life to be emulated (see eg. Weintraub, 1978; Spengemann, 1980). Such biographies were confined to the form of the memoir or the confession, for example the notable Confessions of both St. Augustine, and Rousseau.

However, it was the rise of the individual self in Western consciousness and culture, which gained momentum around the end of the eighteenth century - in 1810 Coleridge termed this new era "the age of personality" (Clifford, 1978:42) - that signalled a change in the form and subject matter of biographic expression. With a recognition of "the value of the individual" (Weintraub, 1978), of unique personalities, came a lessened concern with the normatively defined moral life and a greater concern with the idiosyncracies of an individual life. As Weintraub (1978:xi) puts it, there emerged in Western man (and indeed, it does seem to have been determined by that specific gender) the 'modern' belief "that whatever else he is, he is a unique individuality, whose life task is to be true to his very own personality", and that, "to fail one's individuality becomes in a sense a crime against the human cosmos" (ibid:xvi).³

But this shift to the idiosyncratic, individual reflection still held within it the notion of a consistent, unwavering self, however idiosyncratically defined. This was in good part fuelled by the assumptions that a biography or autobiography is merely an 'historical' document, a collection of facts, or conversely, that they (and autobiography in particular) are simply fictional creations around a set of facts (Olney, 1980:49).

Perhaps as a result of the greater wealth and availability of materials about personalities - it was only in the nineteenth century that letters and diaries came to be widely used as additional sources of information on individual lives⁴ (Langness and Frank,

1981:91) - the rise in the production of different author's views of the same subject⁴, and perhaps as a result of a developing awareness (as suggested by the discoveries of ethnography) that not everyone in the world conceives of the 'self' in the same way (see also, Hallowell, 1955; Schweder and Bourne, 1984) thoughts and assumptions about how biography and autobiography are composed changed. Clifford (1978:44) highlights this Western bias of the notion of a consistent self - "the myth of personal coherence", he calls it - by pointing out that Melanesian notions of the self are not based on the idea of an individuated entity but the self as a kind of composite of pluralities:

"For example, an unmarried woman would be addressed in a plural form, thus including in her personality the child to which she might one day give birth. Two people seen approaching would be identified with a single term containing no element of twoness, but a specification of relationship, like "twin" in Western parlance" (ibid:47).

For a Westerner, as he goes on to say, such a notion of plurality implies madness, and yet for the Melanesian "who cannot be circumscribed with a locution of plurality", s/he is "bwiri, adrift, without consistency, not a 'person'."

Dorothy Lee relates a similar point of view from her work with the Wintu:

"When I asked Sadie Marsh for her autobiography, she told me a story about her first husband, based on hearsay. When I insisted on her own life-history, she told me a story which she called 'my story.' The first three quarters of this, approximately, were occupied with the lives of her grandfather, her uncle and her mother before her birth; finally she reaches the point where she was 'that which was in my mother's womb,' and from then on she speaks of herself also" (cited in Clifford, 1978:41).

And so it is in more recent theorizing about life writing in the Western tradition, that we come to speak less in terms of Clifford's 'myths of personal coherence' and more in terms of "metaphors of self" (Oiney, 1972). We seek less the 'true', 'total', 'real' and single picture of a personality, but rather the 'truth in the design' of how the story is told (Pascal, 1960; see also, Kaplan, 1986), the metaphors and designs which we choose to use in giving order and sense to the story of our own or other's lives. These metaphors and

designs can really only point toward aspects of the subject, the outline and configurations, and not unearth the subject. They don't relate 'facts' so much as 'experiences', "the interaction of a man and facts or events" (Pascal, 1960:16). "In all autobiographies," says Pascal (and, we could add, all biographies, or life histories) "there is a core of darkness at the centre" (1960:184), that which no form of personal document can ever perfectly illuminate. What we indicate, what we "communicate to others," as Renza says (citing Bachelard), "is an orientation towards what is secret without ever being able to tell the secret objectively" (Renza, 1980:295).

The Life-history in Anthropology.

While biographic methods are common to many of the social sciences, for example to psychology (Allport, 1942), sociology (Becker, 1970), and history (Gottschalk, 1945), and although the first recognized use of it in social science is generally attributed to the sociological study The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918-1927), it has had the longest and most continuous use in anthropology. This does not mean, of course, that the discipline has settled itself on a definition of what constitutes a 'proper' life-history, or how to go about doing one. As must always be the case there have been continuing debates as to both purpose and method.

Paul Radin's Crashing Thunder (1926) is generally considered to be the field marker for the use of the life-history in anthropology (Langness and Frank, 1981:18; Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985:5), though such documents had been used before in the discipline. In fact, Radin himself had published earlier in 1913 a brief autobiography of a Winnebago Indian. Elsie Clews Parsons in 1922 solicited from her colleagues fictional, composite life histories of 'individuals' in different societies based on anthropologists' field research, and it is in this that we get a clear idea of the motivation behind much of the early use of the life-history: while the anthropologists spoke of 'individuals' what they were really concerned

with was the creation of ideal types, representatives of a culture, as Preston says, "the particular individual...was overlooked in favour of an abstract generic man in a generalized culture" (1986:2)⁶. Culture, not individuals, was the domain of anthropology.

Radin, while admittedly the key proponent of the life-history in anthropology, has also been accused of using it as a way of describing a representative sample of a given culture (Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985:5; Langness and Frank, 1981:18-19), though there is some disagreement on this. While Radin did say that his aim in using the life-history was, "...not to obtain autobiographical details about some definite personage, but to have some representative middle-aged individual of moderate ability describe his life in relation to the social group in which he had grown up" (1922:384), it would seem that his intention was not to ignore the significance of the individual but to examine the relation of the individual to culture in society (see Little, 1980 for a more complete defence of Radin). Furthermore, as Radin himself proposed for the practice of ethnography,

"...the recognition of specific men and women should bring with it the realization that there are all types of individuals and that it is not, for instance, a Crow Indian who has made such and such a statement, uttered such and such a prayer, but a particular Crow Indian. It is this particularity that is the essence of all history and it is precisely this that ethnology has hitherto balked at doing" (Radin, 1933:185)⁷.

This issue of the individual in culture is central to our discussion of the value of the life-history as a viable method in anthropology, because every ethnography, whether implicitly or explicitly, employs that strategy in one way or another. For what are ethnographies but the condensation of a series of encounters with individuals? It is the recognition of these individuals and the role they play in the story we tell that is usually lacking in our reports.

Part of the emphasis on the 'culture concept' in anthropology - as if culture was some kind of organic feature in the environment - has been based on the assumption that individuals are passive receivers and carriers of cultural ways, as if we are "automatons, responding blindly to the vague factors and forces that are said to compel this or that type

of action" (Brandes, 1980:190). This was to change somewhat, beginning around the 1930s, with a developing interest in psychology within North American anthropology (in particular psychoanalysis with its emphasis on the individual), and in the relationship between culture and personality. This interest found expression in the cross-cultural examination of such things as child-rearing practices and religious practices and the link between these "cultural variables" with "psychological attributes" or "personality variables" (Langness and Frank, 1981:23). The nature of these subjects made "use of life histories virtually a necessity" (ibid), and suggested a certain degree of variability in individual behaviour within cultures.

Edward Sapir was keenly interested in an exchange between anthropology and psychiatry⁴ (see eg. Sapir, 1932; 1934; 1937; 1938), and recognized that our monolithic, generalized descriptions of culture were both devoid of any 'personality' and 'life', and, in so doing, told us really very little about culture itself:

"It seems unexpectedly difficult to conjure up the image of live people in intelligibly live relationships located within areas defined as primitive. The personalities that inhabit our ethnological monographs seem almost schizoid in their unemotional acceptance of the heavy colors, tapestries, and furniture of their ethnological stage. Is it any wonder that actors so vaguely conceived, so absent-mindedly typical of something or other, can be bludgeoned by a more persistent intelligence than theirs into sawing wood for still remoter stages, say that dread drama of the slain father and the birth of totemism?" (Sapir, 1937:865).

What Sapir was also pointing to, especially in the wonderful imagery of his last line here, was (and this was to become an increasing tendency in the discipline in the 1940s and beyond) the forcing of individuals into cultural, and other, theoretical and analytical categories. So while there was a glance towards the individual in culture and a concomitant rise in the interest in life-history studies, there was a movement, partly fuelled by the questions raised by psychoanalysis, toward more rigid notions of method, theory and analysis. As Langness and Frank put it:

"Notice here that the interest in culture is not given up in favor of an interest in personality. Rather, an interest in personality is added to the earlier anthropological interest" (1981:23).

The interest in looking at lives gave way to an interest in theorizing about lives, ie. psychology or psychoanalysis is a practice of theorizing about lives, and theory, of course necessitates the development of methodology, a way of making such examinations more consistent. This was also part of the general trend toward more sociological (ie. group-centered) study, the dependence on survey methods, the desire for statistical generalization and the idea that one could describe a generic personality "type" within a cultural "pattern".⁹ As Shaw (1980:227) describes this early history of method in anthropological life-writing,

"Most of the early critical discussions of the life-history centred upon questions of 'reliability' of one kind or another. They reflected the controversy of the 1930s over the relative merits of quantitative 'scientific' investigations of social phenomena which used statistical survey data, vis-a-vis qualitative approaches, employing for example descriptive narrative, which were more subjective in nature and therefore, it was argued, less scientifically respectable."

And so the life-history, if it was used at all, was relegated to the status of being a secondary, 'descriptive', supporting document behind the more 'scientific' methods of experimentation and hypothesis testing. It became, as Crapanzano describes it, "a conceptual - and emotional - embarrassment to academic anthropology" (1984:954), an "unwanted stepchild" (Watson, 1976:95). Even those who actively espoused the life-history suggested that a greater concern with analysis, reliability and representativeness was needed (eg. Allport, 1942:xi; Dollard, 1935; Kluckhohn, 1945).

Method and Analysis in the Life-history.

The first concerted effort to develop "criteria for the life history" was by Dollard (1935). While his motivation, to his credit, was to take the life-history out of the realm of being merely a supporting document - "as a way-station to knowledge", or worse, "as a kind of fairy story built out of the imagination of the observer" - his attempt at developing

a "systematic viewpoint" tends to concentrate on the use of the life-history as a tool for making claims about cultural groups rather than illuminating an individual life (1935:7). Watson and Watson-Franke (1985:7-8) find his criteria highly arbitrary and "deeply colored by his Freudian theoretical perspective", though others find him more driven by a "cultural bias" than a psychological one (Langness and Frank, 1981:21). In addition, his methods would seem to be somewhat rigid and exclusive as suggested by his comments on Radin's Crashing Thunder, about which he says:

"The editor's comments, while revealing and sympathetic, are few and are characterized by a literary and impressionistic admiration rather than by a laborious theoretical construction of Crashing Thunder's life experience" (1935:260).

While there may be spare commentary on Radin's part (there are in fact only thirty-two footnotes in the two hundred and three pages of text, and no other explanatory sections save for an introduction) this is in keeping with Radin's belief that "the only acceptable ethnology is the life-history, self told, by members of indigenous society" (Diamond, 1974:111).¹⁰ Radin further defends his preference for a "qualitative" approach, though many have branded it with the "soft imputation" of being merely a "branch of belles lettres", by suggesting that

"history has frequently been accused of the same frailty, and yet its association with the dreaded belles lettres has not seriously interfered with the correctness of the pictures Thucydides drew of Greece, Gibbon of Rome, and Burckhardt of the Italian Renaissance" (Radin, 1933:169).

The next major statement on method came with the publication of Kluckhohn's contribution to a project commissioned by an agency of the United States government, The Use of Personal Documents in History, Anthropology and Sociology (Gottschalk, Kluckhohn and Angell, 1945). Coming as it did at the end of the Second World War, a time of increasing immigration to the U.S., and being sponsored by the Social Science Research Council with the aim of responding to the social consequences of such immigration, it is perhaps not surprising that 'generalizability' and the necessity of representative samples were

key themes of his approach. In addition to this, his own bias leaned toward the "culture and personality" school (as is evident, for example by his involvement with Leighton and Leighton's 'psychobiological' life-history of a Navaho man) which makes for a decidedly, if not exclusively, psychological approach to a life-history. Using this approach he sought to answer the question, "what type of individual does a given culture foster?" (1945:138).

In fact, Kluckhohn seems to suggest a fairly rigid form of presentation for the life-history based on the Leighton's work as a model, with sections devoted to "the life history" itself, a "personality sketch", "cultural conclusions" and "culture and personality conclusions" (Kluckhohn, 1945:150-154).¹¹

What Kluckhohn was responding to was what he felt to be the somewhat aimless nature of the life-history method as practiced in anthropology up to that point in time. Perhaps it was an unconscious (or conscious) desire for a social science capable of generating laws and acting 'in the world'. It should not be ignored that he made many insightful observations and suggestions which we would still do well to bear in mind. In his summary of life-history research up to 1945 he saw deficiencies in the "sketchy" and "limited" descriptions that provided not even "the shadow of a life - merely the partially outlined skeleton" (1945:102). He was critical of the fact that most life-history documents were centred around the lives of men, usually fifty years of age or older and to rectify this encouraged the development of women's life histories, and of individuals from different age groups. Most of all he was concerned with what he saw as an inadequate amount of annotation, analysis and interpretation (ibid:103). He proposed a very detailed 'nuts-and-bolts' method, for carrying out life-history research, including instructions on interviewing and note-taking, the use of interpreters, rapport, selecting, motivating, and "controlling the 'honesty'" of the informant (ibid).

What all of this points to are the critical questions of (a) what can we consider to be adequate methodology, and (b) what can be considered sufficient analysis in the creation

of a life-history. At what point does method provide an appropriate framework and at what point does it become too constraining? At what point is analysis a useful tool for highlighting or elaborating features of the life-history, and at what point does it overwhelm and suffocate the story itself? The quick answer to this, though not an entirely adequate one, is that it depends on what you want to do with it. As Runyan (1982:6) points out, the life-history is both a method and a subject matter. We might say that how one proceeds with the first and presents the second says much about how one 'sees' that life, and oneself in relation to that life.

In general there have been three basic approaches to the life-history: one is to use the life-history to make a theoretical point, most often using psychoanalytic or abstract concepts. Another is to, as Preston (1986:4) phrases it, "assume the self-evidence of the life-history, providing a record of an individual's life story with neither analysis nor explanation". A third is to give an account of a life but provide detailed annotation to fill out the cultural, historical and social contexts surrounding the individual (Preston, 1986:3-5). It is not so cut-and-dried that one approach is necessarily better than the others. Each approach can produce a very good or a very poor life-history depending on the way it is used. And in some cases it is not so easy to identify one single approach as the sole method of a particular life-history. What is important is to see in each case how we conceive of lives and how we treat them.

The first approach is that which was used for the most part by the 'culture and personality' school.

In 1942 Simmons published Sun Chief, the autobiography of a Hopi man by the name of Don Talayesva. Simmons' goal was to develop a psychological portrait of this man, and his strategy in using the life-history was to assemble "a full and reliable account of an individual's experience and development from birth on...as an experimental technique in the investigation of personality problems", as well as a body of data that would shed

light on the relationship between the individual and culture, personality development and culture change (Simmons, 1942:1-3). He used the concept of "adjustments" in his analytical scheme to describe the adaptations one makes in response to biological, environmental, social and cultural pressures. Though the text is for the most part in Talayesva's own words it is, as Simmons readily admits, a highly "selected and condensed narration...greatly abbreviated and often reorganized" (1942:7). Simmons does not make clear how he went about sifting and organizing the three hundred and fifty hours of interviews and the eight thousand pages of the diary he asked Don to keep. Furthermore, as Brandes (1980:194) points out, Simmons' stress on 'maladjustment' and conflict situations and a lack of detail concerning the "undramatic activities or uneventful periods" makes for a very one-sided life story (see also, Allport's, 1942:179, and Kluckhohn's 1945:92 criticisms of this general tendency in life-history work). Brandes also makes the point that Simmons' tenacity in pursuing these lines of investigation led to a situation in which he pushed his informant to reveal sacred information to the point where it was "almost threatening the very continuance of the...project by insisting on (his) cooperation despite his obvious discomfort and unwillingness" (ibid).¹²

The Leighton's (1949) "psychobiological personality study" of a Navaho "hand-trembler" centers his life story around an "equilibrium model" of personality, seeing the events of his life as either those which provide security or those which create insecurity, and assesses how he adapts to these events. While the Leighton's detailing of his story is very comprehensive, and while they include in the text the questions by which they prompted him, on the whole the analysis supercedes the story. The narrative is broken up and framed by the conceptual topics chosen by the Leightons and is filled out with tables and "life charts" pointing toward what they feel to be significant incidents in his life.¹³

More recently Mandelbaum (1973) suggested an approach which, while not overtly psychological, shares a passive resemblance to Simmons'. He employed three interrelated

concepts in order to analyse the significant events in the life and resulting character of Mahatma Gandhi. His framework involved looking at the "dimensions", "turnings" and "adaptations" in a life (these being the biological, social, cultural and psychosocial experiences that shape our actions) the transition periods in our lives at which we take on new roles and attitudes in response to changes, and the adaptations or adjustments we create to respond to these changes or to maintain continuity. While it is a useful scheme perhaps for framing a life story - and while Mandelbaum himself did not necessarily mean to suggest his was an ideal model to be followed, but rather a way of "opening up discussion" on frameworks for examining lives (Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985:11) - it is a somewhat removed form of analysis. For one thing, it is a reconstruction of a life based on bibliographic material, not one composed from first-person narration. M. Brewster Smith (in the discussion following Mandelbaum, 1973:204) questioned whether such an 'etic' analysis "is feasible for something as inherently 'emic' as human lives". In other words, it tells us much about Mandelbaum's perception of Gandhi's life, but little about Gandhi's perception of his own life.

Other proponents of this kind of approach employ the terms 'psychohistorical' analysis or 'psychobiography', that is, reconstructing the lives of historical figures with an eye toward analyzing their development in the context of the wider social or historical circumstances of one's era. Often this approach uses a specific personality theory (see eg. Runyan, 1982) or employs a more generalized psychoanalytic framework (see eg. Erikson, 1958; 1969; 1975).

Erikson (1969) for example, also examines the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Like Mandelbaum, Erikson seeks to understand the importance of Gandhi both as a human being and as an icon in Indian society, and casts himself in the role of a "reviewer of history" as he assesses numerous significant events in the Mahatma's life (1969:29). Unlike Mandelbaum, Erikson does not really identify specific "dimensions", "turnings" or

"adaptations", but rather opts for a more global yet detailed recounting of Gandhi's actions and words. While Erikson looks for clues in the early life that might suggest how the man "grew into his historical role", he resists what he calls the "traumatological" approach to a life which explicitly tries to causally connect rupturing events with later development (1969:99).

Among those who espouse the 'self-evidence' of a life story, are Dyk (1938), and Lewis (1961;1970). Their unencumbering approach suggests that the life story can be read and understood without any additional conceptual schemes or even annotations.

Dyk's transcription of the life of Left Handed (the son of Old Man Hat), is a straightforward first-person narrative of a young Navaho man's life through his twentieth year. There is no editorial commentary except for brief phrases at the beginning of chapters to indicate the particular topics discussed (eg. "he is born before his time...he has lots of fun playing with Paiute children...jealousies and quarrels...trials and tribulations") and an introduction which explains how he has moulded the narrative by leaving out "a few minor experiences and repetitious episodes", and rearranged certain "episodes of early childhood into what would appear to be a more exact chronological order from that in which they were given" (Dyk, 1938:xii).

In his introduction to the work, Sapir (who was Dyk's teacher) points out that the document is not a "cultural museum" nor a psychological "study of a personality" but a narrative which,

"not by hinting at human likeness or difference but through the sheer clarity of his daily experiences, resolves all cultural and personal conflicts and reminds us that human life is priceless, not because of the glories of the past nor the hopes of the future, but because of the irrevocable trivialities of a present that is always slipping away from us" (Sapir, in Dyk, 1938:ix).

For Sapir and Dyk it was sufficient that the story was presented in the author's own words, and presumably (and not without some justification) they saw editorial comment as an intrusion. Sapir grants that if one wants to know about Navaho culture in general there are

"priceless ethnological records of Washington Matthews and the Franciscan Fathers" that one could refer to, "but in all their pages it is not told what a boy who happens to be about is expected to do when an old man dies" (Sapir, in Dyk, 1938:x). Sapir's and Dyk's point of view stresses the value of the narrative itself, unencumbered, of the humanness of the story, the recounting of the "irrevocable trivialities".

Lewis (1961;1970) is generally considered to be the greatest proponent of the life-history method (Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985:10; Langness and Frank, 1981:24-25) and he uses it in a very literary style in order to make more apparent the dynamics of family interaction, in particular among the poor in Latin America. His Children of Sanchez (1961) for example, is a collection of factual though novelistic accounts by different members of a family of events in their life together. His texts often literally read like a novel with flourishes of dialogue the subject supposedly has related to Lewis (see for example, "A Thursday with Manuel", in Lewis, 1970: chapter 21), and narration that is impeccably constructed and plotted by Lewis. While his approach has great value in the assemblage of multiple points of view around a common set of circumstances, and his 'style' has made the life-history more accessible to a wider audience, they are in effect fictionalized recreations of the subjects' lives, not their own words in particular settings and contexts. As Lewis admits, he has eliminated his own questions from the interaction and has "selected, arranged, and organized their materials into coherent life stories", but he does not explain how he went about doing this (Lewis, 1961:xxi).¹⁴

The third approach is exemplified by such work as Radin (1926), Lurie (1961), Nuligak and Metayer (1966), Kelly (1978) and Degh (1975). They provide edited first-person narratives with very little interference from the investigator save for unobtrusive footnotes or endnotes to elaborate on specific contextual or ethnographic points.

The example of Radin's Crashing Thunder makes an interesting case in point of the illusion of an unencumbered narrative, and the problems that can arise from such an

assumption. As Krupat (1985) argues, one must look closely at the 'mode of production' of the life-history, at how the document was elicited, and at how it was constructed to see that the narrative is seldom simply a verbatim report.

In the first place, as Krupat notes, most life histories, and in particular Native North American ones, are not initiated by the subject of the document but by some outside individual, usually an anthropologist.¹⁵ Secondly, it is therefore impossible for this outside individual not to exert some sort of influence, whether intentional (ie. coercion to elicit a desired response) or unintentional (ie. an 'observer effect') on the subject and thus the production of the document.

Crashing Thunder is a reworking of an earlier life-history, "The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian" (1920), and what Krupat demonstrates is that while Radin claims to have created a 'scientific' document that needs no interpretation - and therefore contains no distortions - the very fact of his having reworked and modified in several ways an existing text proves that he has manipulated and shaped the text, that is, the words of the subject.

"Radin's selection from and arrangement of the available materials, his decisions in matters of translation-indeed, every aspect of its mode of presentation-make Crashing Thunder an interpretation of a life, one that is, in its turn, in need of interpretation" (Krupat, 1985:87).

Furthermore, Krupat suggests that in matters of eliciting sensitive material, for example details of the Winnebago Medicine Rite, and even in the writing of the autobiography itself, there was "an element of coercion involved" (ibid:86).¹⁶

Krupat's point, and it is a critical one for understanding what we might now consider appropriate criteria for the method and analysis of a life-history, is that the life-history is a text, "the material and historical mode of production" of which "weights the particular selection from and arrangement of all the available facts" (ibid:89). Thus, whether we consider it a literary or a scientific text, it is "an expression not only of its subject's life and culture but of its editor's life and culture as well" (ibid:90). Interestingly,

the other life histories mentioned as examples of this approach, while they may lack a theoretical or analytical thrust, go to some lengths to describe the circumstances of their production. Lurie (1961) talks about how she manipulated her kinship relationship with Mountain Wolf Woman in order to elicit her life story. Metayer (Nuligak, 1966:7) did not even suggest a list of questions but simply asked Nuligak to write his memoirs.¹⁷ Kelly's (1978) portraits of contemporary Yaqui women, while written from her voice clearly identifies her role as investigator and the conditions of collecting the life histories. Degh's (1975) stories of the lives of Hungarian-Canadian tobacco farmers includes extensive notes and transcripts of interviews, often with her questions included.

All this would seem to point to the crux of the issues concerning methodology and analysis. While there have been numerous cries for methods and analysis (eg. Kluckhohn, 1945; Langness, 1965; Langness and Frank, 1981; Runyan, 1982), there has been little or no consensus as to what these should be. This is because the concern has been with how to make the life-history 'useful' in some objective, utilitarian sense instead of looking at the interaction and the document itself. As Runyan (1982:6) puts it, "if you can't generalize from these studies...what's the point of doing them?" (see also Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985:10; Barnouw, 1963:198). But as Kluckhohn and Murray suggested a number of years ago, generalization is at best only an approximate possibility because "every man (sic) is in certain respects (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, (c) like no other men" (1953:53).

The simple, and admittedly flippant response to the question of 'what to do with them' is to 'read' them! This means, to read not in simply a passive sense, but as Krupat suggests with an eye (and ear) toward the circumstances and influences of its production. Thus, it behoves the anthropologist, editor, translator, etc., to make explicit the circumstances of production. Our method is centered in our ability, and willingness, to candidly and honestly represent the interaction - something which we have in the past been

reluctant to do (Brandes, 1980:189). Our analysis is framed by our ability to 'read', to interpret, the text and ourselves, in the sense that we spoke of in Chapter Two in applying Iser's (eg. 1978) notion of reading, that is, a participation with the text.¹⁸

Thus, it matters less whether we have cause to use particular analytical frameworks or have theoretical axes to grind, rather more that we recognize that the document produced is explicitly or implicitly an exchange, an interaction between two (or more) people. Brandes (1980:196) among others suggests that it is "ethically imperative" that we indicate the nature and the conditions of this exchange, "the circumstances of data gathering" (Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985:16ff). This is the first step toward what we mean by attempting to practice a 'dialogical anthropology'.

Dialogue and the Life-history.

The notion of dialogue has been driven primarily by this concern for an "ethical anthropology" (Langness and Frank, 1981:134; Brandes, 1980:196; Marcus and Fischer, 1986:30,69; Clifford and Marcus, 1986:15,23), one that considers the place of the informant in the encounter and the effect that encounter has on all participants. It is an anthropology that encourages, as Langness and Frank put it, "the voices of small heroes", or as Vandiver says, with respect to biography proper, it acts as "an agent of humanism", which shifts its attention from the lives of great figures to those of "previously silent people" (1986:3ff.; see also Veninga (ed.), 1983)¹⁹. As such it is not merely reporting or chronicling, as Vandiver says, "both biographers and historians honor facts; biographers honor, too, personality and character and must do no violence to either" (ibid:11).

The idea of dialogue is one that is very natural to anthropology (fieldwork, after all, is built on dialogues with people) though the full extent of it may not have been apparent at all times, nor may it ever really be possible for it to be 'totally' apparent. Dialogue is not to be seen as some final, perfect approach to the practice of ethnography. It would be

suitably ironic (not to mention a double standard) if we were to suggest that in our attempt to avoid "totalizing" metaphors and systems, we have in fact now discovered the ultimate technique, the corrective panacea for all the 'wrong' practices we have engaged in up to this point. As Tyler (1986:138) says, we have to forego "the tale of the past as error" and deny "the myth of the future as utopia". Rather dialogue simply opens up a range of possible approaches to the practice of ethnography none of which should be situated as the premier approach above all others. It is not so much a method or technique as a stance, literally a point of view. Dialogue suggests that ethnography-as-fieldwork is an 'encounter', 'exchange' (eg. Dwyer, 1977, 1979, 1982; Webster, 1982), a "complex negotiation" (Crapanzano, 1984:955). It is not simply an 'observation'. Ethnography-as-writing is a 'collaboration' (eg. Crapanzano, 1984:959; Langness and Frank, 1981:86; Mintz, 1979), a "document of interaction" (Frank, 1979:83; Angrosino, 1989). Anthropology, Crapanzano suggests,

"rests upon dialogue - with our informants, with the texts we, and others, produce, with ourselves. It is a continuous movement of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction in the field and in the academy. Indeed the movement of field work, so central to anthropology, is perhaps so central precisely because it is a symbolic enactment of the larger enterprise" (1977:3; emphasis added).

What Crapanzano says drives home the point that dialogue is and always has been inherent to the ethnographic enterprise. What has often been missing is the extent to which we have been aware of its dialogical character, and the degree to which we have actively encouraged and represented dialogue in our actions and texts. As a number of authors note (see Clifford, 1988:55ff; Marcus and Fischer, 1986:40-41) dialogic representations or concerns were given voice in Bateson's Naven (1936), Griaule's Ogotommeli (1948/1965), and in Walker's Lakota Belief (1917/1982), among others. Furthermore, the idea of dialogue is implicit in Pocock's notion that "the work of the social anthropologist may be regarded as a highly complex act of translation in which author and translator collaborate", in which the anthropologist "enters the private world of his subject in order to learn the

grammar of his private language" (1961:88). Again, the point is not that dialogue has not been practiced before. The point is that it should be engaged in as a matter of course.

We see the importance of the principle of dialogue all the more clearly when we come across examples of it having been ignored, and, as we saw in Chapter Two, the photographic encounter is an apt metaphor, if not an uncanny reflection, of the ethnographic situation. This becomes even more striking when photography and ethnography are combined. For example, Michaels (1982) recounts how he was impressed with how different were the videotapes of a Yanomami group by Juan Downey, a Chilean artist, from the now-infamous films of Chagnon and Asch. As he says, "the fierce people whom Asch recorded in a manner that made my students recoil became transformed into attractive human figures in the Downey tapes" (ibid:135). When Downey suggested a collaboration Michaels saw it as an opportunity to see how the artist went about his work.

"Mr. Downey spent his first four months in the rain forest much as an anthropologist would, developing word lists from informants, learning interpersonal skills. He was not sure it would be appropriate to tape in this context. When he did bring out his equipment, it was first used in nonrecording capacities: games based on feedback and monitoring distances. His sensitivity may, in part, be traced to a concern with process, as opposed to product,.... He was interested in involving himself and the Yanomami in a communications process, not in retrieving a product. When he began to tape, the Yanomami acted as directors, suggesting taping events, and forbidding others. Through this interaction, Downey came to appreciate certain features of Yanomami sense of time, event, color, and appropriate subjects for representation. His discoveries in these areas provided a basis for decisions to be made in the editing room, as he directed these tapes toward a further interactive process with a viewing audience" (ibid)²⁰.

The lack of a dialogical perspective in a life-history is perhaps most strikingly apparent in Leslie White's Autobiography of an Acoma Indian (1943). As Preston notes, White's text is very brief and his commentary is confined to footnotes. More pertinently, in his introduction he makes the sweeping generalization that the Pueblo lack a sense of individuality thereby rendering the creation of a life-history in effect impossible:

"He assumed that individuality was lost in the formal, ritual patterns of Pueblo life. The possibility that sharing the truly intimate aspects of one's life with a stranger

might not be agreeable, seems not to have been considered by White" (Preston, 1986:3).

We have borrowed, or purloined, the more particular features of a discussion on dialogue from Bakhtin (see eg. Bakhtin, 1981; Clark and Holquist, 1984; Todorov, 1984; Giles, 1987:chapter 6, for more involved discussions), who has been cannibalized, coopted and made current in a number of other related fields in 'culture studies' as well.

While Bakhtin was ostensibly a literary critic his ideas on literature and thought were not simply aesthetic but had moral, political and social implications as well (Clark and Holquist, 1984:348; Giles, 1987:134). In his terms dialogism was "an account of relations between people and between persons and things that cuts across religious, political and aesthetic boundaries" (Clark and Holquist, *ibid*). Dialogue, then, can be "external", the exchange between two people, or "internal", "between an earlier and a later self" (Bakhtin, 1981:427). This is significant for anthropology because we can see the nature and necessity of dialogue in the ethnographic encounter itself (ie. two people talking about something), in the dialogue we can have with the text of that encounter, and with ourselves after either encounter. And so there are these two aspects to dialogue, the encounter itself and the 'report' of that meeting whether in text or memory. Think of 'report' as both an account of something, and in the sense of the effect of an explosion.

This first aspect is activated by our concern for an ethical anthropology and the recognition of the politics of ethnography. We might call this dialogue a practice of compassion, or a collaboration that is a necessary feature of social praxis, or an attempt at a material "reconstruction of ethnography" in which we realize "anthropologists can never be engineers". As Stoller suggests, "we must remain bricoleurs", in which we "describe others as people and give them a voice in our discourse" (1986:68-69).

All this is not to say that dialogue is merely the engagement between people, a "rhetoric of participation" (Tyler, 1987:339), or the reproduction in textual form of that

engagement accompanied by narcissistic self-reflection. This simple reading of the practice of dialogue is one of the main criticisms its antagonists offer (see eg. Watson, 1987; Spencer, 1989; Sangren, 1988). As Tedlock (one of the early and more consistent proponents of dialogue in anthropology) reminds us, dia-logos is not really a speaking between 'two', but a "speaking alternately...literally, a 'speaking across'" which "creates a world, or an understanding of the differences between two worlds" (1979:388). This is in contradistinction to ana-logos, a "talking above" or "talking beyond" (ibid:389).

So while it is true that, as Clifford says, reproducing the dialogue of an ethnographic exchange might "dramatize the intersubjective give-and-take of fieldwork" but remain a representation of dialogue (1988:43), the real essence of using the notion of dialogue lies in the fact that it is not a "redoubling of the other's experience within me" (Bakhtin, in Todorov, 1984:21). Dialogue creates a space, or a site for a new event, similar yet different from the original, in which we dialogue with the participants of the encounter, the words on the page, ourselves. This is what Kristeva (1980:15) called "intertextuality", the "transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position".

The creation of this space, whether in the presence of another or within oneself, provides a stage for "freeplay" (Stoller, 1986:68; Bernstein, 1983:161). It should be regarded "less as a monument than as a battlefield" (Wolff, 1981:120) and as such will at times involve a certain degree of 'vulnerability' and 'conflict' on the part of the ethnographer, the subject and the reader. This vulnerability and conflict, though they place demands on the participants (demands which may not have been apparent before) are necessary contributions to dialogue because, as Clark and Holquist phrase it, "dialogism is founded on the ineluctability of our ignorance, the necessary presence of gaps in all our fondest schemes and most elaborate systems" (1984:347). One becomes vulnerable because in a dialogue it is necessary for the self to be exposed, to take a risk (Dwyer, 1979:205).

In the past we have for the most part demanded that the informant be exposed, that we remain 'clothed', and accordingly we have written monologic, analogic ethnographies, literally those which talk from 'above'. In a dialogue, what matters is not 'unanimity' between parties so much as the 'democratic politics' of the encounter (Bernstein, 1983:223), to engage not to overcome the other but to challenge oneself, to "wager" oneself (Dwyer, 1979; 1982) in the process.

The second aspect of dialogue, beyond the physical meeting and exchange, concerns our ability as readers of the dialogue to be reflexive, to be interpretive, to be imaginative. In this sense the dialogue is a hermeneutic exercise - it really is this at all points - but in particular in the way that we use the text to interpret what went on in the encounter and to interpret our own thoughts in response to that encounter. This is what we meant in Chapter Two by the activation of an "anthropological imagination". This kind of reflexivity is as much a social praxis as the good faith and democratic politic of the encounter itself (see Myerhoff and Ruby, 1982:1ff, on this use of reflexivity).

The life-history becomes a very useful vehicle for contemplation because, once we have seen the error of treating the life story as "something that presents itself as the content to the logical form of a scientific model" (Little, 1980:217), or "as a basis for inferences tied heavily to external constructs, theories or measures" (Watson, 1976:97), we can see it simply as "a commentary of the individual's very personal view of his own experience as he understands it" (ibid). There is no "real life", in Kaplan's words, to be uncovered, but rather the recognition that a life story contains some "common denominator" with which we interpret ourselves:

"In the back of the reader's mind, the reader's own life provides the most immediate and natural framework for sifting through the reported experiences of the life history subject. The material may always be read in such a way as to provide an answer to the question: "In what way is this person like, or unlike, myself?" At some level of awareness, biographies are probably read, absorbed, and even judged in contrast with the reader's own life" (Frank, 1979:73).

This becomes even more significant when we consider that we really only have a notion of self in relation to others. As George Herbert Mead suggested, we experience ourselves not directly, but indirectly "from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the social group as a whole to which (we) belong", in effect, through the mirror of other selves, along with other views and responses to 'our' selves (Mead, 1964:17; see also Frank's (1979:75) discussion of the psychology of consciousness of the self).

Thus, there are hermeneutic and phenomenological features to the dialogical life-history. That is, it is interpretive, in the sense of personal reflection, and it recognizes the story "as given in consciousness", not through, say, a psychoanalytic lens (Watson, 1976:101; Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985). We use the life-history then, for "description and comprehension", and we come to understanding by "insight and acquaintance" or "insight and empathy" (Little, 1980:217, 224). What we develop in the creation of life-history is a 'shadow biography' of ourselves as researchers, a "double biography" (Frank, 1979:89). In addition the act of reading creates in essence a "triple biography" - of the subject (author), the anthropologist (translator/author), and the reader (armchair author). As Frank notes, the importance of doing this "parallels the classical requirement that a psychoanalyst be analyzed, not to cure the analyst so much as to open up the workings of his or her own mind as one sharing general properties with all minds" (ibid).

Angrosino (1989:12) summarizes this approach to the life-history with five points:

- "1. The 'life' account document may take many forms, including, but certainly not limited to, the straightforward historical records.
2. This document need not be subject to traditional standards of historical verification.
3. The truth of a document recording someone's 'life' is gauged by its capacity to connect with the experiences of its intended audience, not by its conformity with established 'fact'.
4. The 'self' behind the 'life story' is less important than the self that is created in the process of communication between writer and audience.
5. The literary devices that communicate this 'metaphor of self' are derived from, sanctioned by, and given meaning through the culture that the writer and the audience share."

As we have already stated the use of a dialogical mode is not new, but the recent florescence of issues and concerns in ethnography that dialogue responds to has made it more openly discussed, or at least apparent, as is evident in a number of contemporary ethnographies and life histories in particular.

The book Piman Shamanism and Staying Sick (1974) is an interesting example of the dialogical attitude, though significantly (it was written before the 'postmodern crisis' became an issue to the vast majority of us) it is without much fanfare about this intention. It is a collaborative work between Don Bahr, an anthropologist, Juan Gregorio, a shaman, D.I. Lopez, the interpreter, and A. Alvarez, the editor. It is an intensive study of one particular shaman's theories of Piman healing. As it says in the introduction, presumably also a collaborative effort,

"(the) decision to limit the study to the theories of a single man was made, first, in order to transfer to the shaman as many as possible of the functions associated with authorship. These include the selection of an expository style, the duty to make interpretations and explanations, and the right to judge which things are important and which are not. Bahr felt that in many anthropological studies the role of the native informant is confined to stating facts while the functions subsumed under authorship devolve on the anthropologist. This state of affairs he wished to reverse" (1974:7).

Gregorio gave tape-recorded lectures in Piman on any questions asked by the anthropologist, on the condition that they be asked in Piman, hence the double importance of the translator. "The answers," we are told, "would stay within the bounds of what Gregorio considered legitimate public knowledge" (1974:8). Thus, it was Gregorio who determined what was to be known and on his terms. The presence of an informed editor, knowledgeable in Piman practices, along with the anthropologist served to create a "shared negotiation", to use Crapanzano's term, of Piman healing.

Kikumura (1981) compiled what appears at first glance to be a fairly straightforward life-history in the unencumbered, 'self-evident' style. The first part of her book is the account of her mother's experiences in Japan and then in the United States after emigrating.

It is a first-person narrative with neither notes nor analysis. The second and third parts of the book however, are a series of reflections on Kikumura's relationship with her mother, and her relationship with the text itself. This is not simply a confessional ode. Kikumura talks about the problems of first and second generation immigrants, the process of acculturation, and of family expectations on her concerning the shape and content of the document, "pressure...to form congruent family images that are held by the majority" (1981:146). Significantly, all participants were given a copy of the manuscript after it was completed and were consulted before publication.

Both Miller (1981) and Preston (1986) are primarily interested in the issue of the relationship of the individual to culture, in the first case in the attempt to view culture and the individual simultaneously, and in the second case to examine how one "identifies and explicates personal meaning" within the frame of one's culture (1986:7). While they both have this particular analytical concern they do so by presenting the actual dialogues between anthropologist and subject, so that the reader is aware of the anthropologist's presence and the nature of the conversations from which the analyses are produced. While the transcripts are edited, it is not made clear just how it was decided to include, exclude, trim or modify what material. The conscious inclusion of the anthropologists in the text of the dialogue points to their recognition of the importance of the process, and the implications of doing ethnography.

Hoskins (1985) presents the life-history of a key informant in Indonesia who had also worked for Needham in the 1950s. What is interesting here is that after Hoskins had done some work with this man, Maru Daku, and had temporarily left the field, he fell gravely ill and seemed near death. He took it upon himself to compose a story of his life in the traditional Kodi style of a lament. These were not usually used for 'personal' narratives or self-presentation but rather for the veneration of ancestors or guests. But since he already considered himself marginalized, partly as a result of his work with Needham

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and Hoskins, and that his social position and self-perception had already changed, he decided to use this form for his own individual expression. This song, which is presented in both English and a romanized transcription of Daku's first language, Hoskins says,

"goes beyond my own account in that it creates a new genre of autobiographical narratives within his own poetic traditions. He styles his lament as a defense of choices that he has made in his own life and as a final accounting of his contributions" (Hoskins, 1985:148).

Myerhoff (1975; 1979; 1982) initially used the life-history almost incidentally as a way of offering some form of reciprocation to the elderly members of a Jewish community center in Venice California for the time they spent talking with her, helping her to distill an ethnography of this sub-culture. She conducted "living history" sessions (her subject's phrase) with them once a week in which they had an opportunity to tell their stories, to recount their personal histories, to review and be heard. An earlier study of hers (1975) had shown the value of the life review "as integration", as a forum for 'self-scrutiny', for recognizing that what they had done with their lives had significance. Most importantly from a storytelling and dialogic point of view, these sessions proved that what these people had to say could be communicated to others who in turn could find relevance for themselves in the stories.

What is also interesting is that Myerhoff's 'ethnography' Number Our Days (1979) is in a sense threaded by a series of life histories. There are very distinct, named personalities in it whose stories, words and thoughts she relates, both from their mouths and from hers. More to the point, her work is very personal, though not self-absorbed, and throughout it she engages in a dialogue with herself and her subjects on what it means to be Jewish in America, a question which is obviously very important to her, but becomes moreso as she sensitively and engagingly draws out what it means to her subjects.

Crapanzano (1980), Shostak (1981) and Dwyer (1982) have each composed life-story documents around which much of the recent critical commentary on life histories and dialogue seem to center.

Shostak's Nisa is the "life and words of a !Kung woman", which Clifford describes as a "Western feminist allegory, part of the reinvention of the general category "woman" in the 1970s and 80s" (1986:104). It is not merely Nisa's story however, but in a very pointed sense the story of Nisa's relationship with Shostak, Shostak with Nisa, and Shostak with herself. She asks questions that are pertinent to her own life, for example what it means to be a woman in one's own society and culture. The narrative is from Nisa's perspective, with commentaries informed by interviews with other !Kung women to assess the representativeness of Nisa's view. Shostak asks questions of herself, as a female member of her society, and of her readers, all of whom will live in some form of gender-biased society of one form or another as well. What Shostak does not make clear, however, is how her tapes were edited, or how the form of each interview might be affected by the circumstances and "dynamics" of each sitting, or whether her organization of fifteen chapters reflects the actual fifteen interview sessions or are composites of topics that she later rearranged thematically (Marcus and Fischer, 1986:58-59; see also, Howell, 1983).

Tuhami (1980) is Crapanzano's attempt at rectifying the "bad faith" anthropologists have acted in in "proclaiming neutrality and even invisibility in (our) fieldwork" (1980:ix). Thus it is not only a portrait of a Moroccan tile-maker but, as Loeb says, it "is also a venture into self-discovery, [whose] real intent is to question the assumptions about the nature of the relationship of an anthropologist to the object of study" (1981:465). As with most of the other life histories and documents in this mode it is the relationship that is highlighted, though in this particular case there is a twist. Tuhami lived in, to outward appearances at least, a confused and inconsistent mental world. In eliciting his life story Crapanzano heard numerous tellings and retellings of events that would change or disappear.

Tuhami's 'story', which Crapanzano advises should not, indeed cannot be seen as an untruth, or fantasy, or imaginary and dismissed, became a kind of "jigsaw puzzle" (Loeb, 1981:466). "It was Tuhami," Crapanzano tells us,

"who first taught me to distinguish between the reality of personal history and the truth of autobiography. The former rests on the presumption of a correspondence between a text, or structure of words, and a body of human actions; the latter resides within the text itself without regard to any external criteria save perhaps the I of the narrator.... Their equivalence is, I believe, a Western presumption" (1980:5).

Crapanzano invites the reader to unravel this puzzle, as Marcus and Fischer put it, he "holds back on what would normally be the authority of the ethnographer over his own account, thus making room for an active reader drawn into a process of inquiry" (1986:72). As Clifford (1988:44) points out, this is an example of why a dialogical document does not necessarily have to be literally a dialogue in its textual form. Crapanzano presents bits of dialogue between himself and Tuhami, but there is not a steadily running dialogical stream of text that recounts the interaction. Furthermore the dialogue that appears is not organized chronologically except in the sense of the step-by-step unravelling of the 'puzzle', which is of course a post hoc construction.

Some of Crapanzano's detractors take issue with this point in particular. Spencer (1989:156) criticizes the "abrupt shifts between anthropological detachment and snatches of raw dialogue" with what he feels is too little context, as making the reader in fact depend more on the author and his commentary rather than encouraging them to engage the text. Others (eg. Watson and Watson-Franke, 1985:54) while generally applauding Crapanzano's efforts, find it flawed in its incompleteness as a life-history text itself. As a result they feel his reconstruction of Tuhami's life is "overinterpreted", that is it may say more about Crapanzano's inner life than Tuhami's. Still others find it lacking because it tells little of Tuhami's life and milieu or even of Moroccan life in general (Loeb, 1981:466; Spencer, 1989:156). But this is missing the point of Crapanzano's work, though it may be flawed in certain respects. As Crapanzano himself notes, his interest initially was in "the informative

aspect of language" while Tuhami was concerned with "the evocative" (1980:14). Only when Crapanzano tuned his ear for the evocations did Tuhami's story, and the real dialogue, emerge:

"I did not then understand that the real was a metaphor for the true-and not identical with it. Tuhami had been speaking the truth from the very start...but I had been listening only for the real, which I mistook for the true. The truth was for me the real masked by the metaphor. Such was my cultural bias" (1980:130).

Dwyer's Moroccan Dialogues (1982) is an assemblage of transcripts of interviews between himself and a Moroccan informant, Faqir Muhammed. The transcripts are only modestly edited and they are accompanied by commentary by way of footnotes and two concluding essays on the 'dialogic of anthropology', which is the guiding principle of his practice (see his earlier formulations of this in Dwyer, 1977, 1979).

Along with the usual table of contents and an introduction, Dwyer includes at the beginning a detailed list of questions which he asked the Faqir. These run the gamut from ethnographic questions concerning his participation in a religious brotherhood, cultural and social events, everyday events (a bicycle theft, a fight, an all-night party), as well as explicit questions specifically centering around their relationship. Dwyer asks, for example, "When I came here for the first time, what did you think then?...Could you explain to me what you think I'm doing here?...What effect has [my staying here] had on your house?...Do I do things that annoy you, that anger you, that you don't find good?" (1982:xiii). Interestingly, and perhaps distressingly telling, when Dwyer asks what part of their dialogue was most interesting or important to him the Faqir replies, "As for me, I know that I'm not concerned with a single one of your questions. I know that these questions serve your purposes, not mine" (1982:225). This raises the issue of whether we should determine beforehand if such dialogues are of any use to our subjects in the first place.

Some find Dwyer's attempt "simply a set of meandering interviews in which Dwyer himself never exchanges ideas with his informant" (Rosen, 1984:597) which, by being

overly-cautious in terms of interpretations and analytical comments, "precludes the exploration of the issues" that he suggests at the outset:

"What we are left with is the paradox of presenting an intellectual venture from an anti-intellectual stance" (ibid).

Others (eg. Spencer, 1989:157) feel that in his concern to avoid "the bad faith involved in the presentation of seamless, polished accounts of other cultures" he espouses a "non-intervention" that ultimately becomes merely a form of 'thin description'.

But this is a superficial reading of Dwyer. He does not advocate non-intervention. Rather he seeks to make the intervention and the "structured inequality" of the encounter "visible" (1982:xvii,xxii). He is fully aware that the anthropologist chooses the topics, asks the questions, directs the interaction to some extent, and that the informant "answers, embellishes, digresses and evades". And he does not operate under the illusion that the presentation of the text of the interaction is in any way a "faithful record" or a "fully communicable" experience. Rather he feels that while a 'full communication' may be an impossibility, it is "no excuse to reduce the effort to preserve in the text, and to convey to others, what one believes to be crucial in that experience" (ibid:xix). Above all Dwyer is concerned with the dialogue, and the possibility of presenting the power of the Other and the 'vulnerability' of the Self.

Furthermore, as Tedlock has noted, Dwyer involved himself in dialogue in a number of ways. There is the literal lay-out of the life-history in the book. There is the dialogue Dwyer has with the Faqir. There is the dialogue Dwyer has with the text in the form of footnotes and the essays. The decision to form a book in the first place was the result of a mutual discussion between the two men, which Dwyer includes in the text. And of particular interest to our discussion, since its publication there have been oral readings of the book in Morocco, retranslations into Arabic and new translations into Berber (Tedlock, 1987:328).

What is important here is not that there are deficiencies or flaws in the 'dialogic mode' for there always will be in any rendering, in any representation. What is important is the attempt at providing something that the reader can evaluate in an interpretive, reflexive manner. Runyan (1985:463) describes this as a "quasi-judicial" approach "where evidence, inferences and interpretations in a life-history are critically assessed by those with competing points of view who are free to present their own evidence, interpretations and conclusions." There is a useful parallel here to the idea in some feminist epistemology of "dynamic objectivity" which "recognizes difference between self and other as an opportunity for a deeper and more articulated kinship" (Keller, 1985:117).

The Life-history as Performance and Storytelling.

A brief comment should be added here about the life-history as a kind of performance, a storytelling.

The obvious parallels are probably self-evident: the act of engaging in dialogue with someone involves an 'actor' and an 'audience', though it needs to be emphasized these are not static roles. Both participants occupy these roles alternately and in response to each other. Dialogue involves the establishment of a defined time and space in which the exchange takes place. In this respect we are creating what Victor Turner would call a "liminal space", one which removes us from the mundane world for a moment and permits "a play of ideas, a play of words, a play of symbols, a play of metaphors", in short, a place to 'play' (see eg. Turner, 1977:33; 1985: chapters 8 and 9).

But there is another aspect to the performance, the "situated communication" (Robinson, 1981:58), that centers around the telling of the story itself. The telling always has an evaluative component to it. This is what distinguishes a 'story' from a 'report'

(ibid:64). What the storyteller evaluates is his or her experience, his or her personal history, and the present moment, the interaction with another. In a complex way these evaluations become a 'self-fashioning', a self-conception, and it is this that we attend to. As Peacock (1984:96) says, it is what is "placed before us", it is a narration "with its own integrity and force."

This self-fashioning, or self-presentation, was a key part of Myerhoff's work (1975; 1979; 1982) for example, in which participants to her workshops were able to "become visible" to themselves and each other in the telling of their life stories. It is in the action of performing the story that we become visible, that we develop or elaborate an awareness of who we are, and 'what it means to be human'. To paraphrase Benison (in Grele, 1985:81), "it's not the song, it's the singing."

It is very difficult (as we've alluded to in our discussion of dialogue) though not impossible, to adequately represent "the singing", the performative dimension in the text. There are numerous attempts to approximate it by playing with the typography on the page, by the use of spacing etc. (see eg. Tedlock, 1972, 1983; Antin, 1976; Sherzer and Woodbury, 1987), and while these strategies are not without merit (they tend to be of greater value in more structured performance, as in ethnopoetics: see Tedlock, 1983, for example) for the most part they tend to create too concrete a template for the reading of a life-history narrative.

The only decisive way to incorporate the performative dimension in the actual text is to keep in mind that the act of reading is itself a performative act. The act of reading is an opportunity for the reader to examine or fashion the self through reflection, to realize one's own stories through the words of another. And thus, the significant performance may not be so much the dialogue between the anthropologist and the subject, but between the reader and the text.

1. See Marcus and Fischer (1986:181-182) for notes on, for example, Clifford's reading of Evans-Pritchard, Meeker's of Reo Fortune, and Marcus' of Bateson's Naven.

2. See Marcus and Fisher (1986:45-76) for a discussion of these strategies, and pp. 57-59 specifically for some thoughts on the life history.

3. Freccero (1986:18) makes an interesting observation that there are, generally speaking, marked differences in the way men and women report their lives. He finds that "male versions seem to be linear, conflictual and, in a word, oedipal, marked by a struggle for separation. Female versions seem less obsessed with separation and struggle, less linear and more global in their recounting of a life story". He finds these differences, for example in the autobiographies of Saint Augustine and Saint Theresa of Avila.

4. In fact the use of such documents came to be seen as a threat to any potential subject of biography. As Kaplan (1986:72) notes, "the nineteenth century was a time of burning archives, for the rise of intimate biographical inquiry and an avid reading public had added a new terror to death.... Biographers had become murderers, and their subjects, fugitives."

5. As an example of this, one might compare three 'versions' of the life of Dylan Thomas: a 'formal' biography, such as that written by Paul Ferris (1977), one written by a friend, Daniel Jones (1977), and of course, the poet's own Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog (1940). Or, consider the biography, the life story, of the early jazz musician Buddy Bolden as written by Marquis (1978), a 'formal' biography, and that written by the writer Michael Ondaatje (1973). What do different approaches, versions, tell us about both subject and author?

6. An early, glaring example of this kind of use of the life history can be found in the writings of the missionary Reverend George Brown in the South Pacific in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In his Melanesians and Polynesians: Their Life Histories Described and Compared (1910), there is no mention whatsoever of any individual Melanesian or Polynesian. His 'life history' is confined to a narrative, from his point of view only, of generalized activities in the "they climb trees remarkably well, with a loop...made of a creeping vine" style. He did in fact write a monograph that was more identifiable as a life history - The Life History of a Savage, (1898) - but this was also a generalized account intended to portray obvious features of social and cultural life rather than the individual within that society and culture. See also, Langness and Frank (1981:21,24), Watson and Watson-Franke (1985:5), and Little (1980) for similar criticisms.

7. Stanley Diamond also identifies Radin as perhaps the premier advocate of an anthropology based on the individual, especially at a time when a bias towards a 'scientized', 'quantitative', 'objective' ethnology was gaining momentum: "One can understand," he says, "why Paul Radin alone, among the anthropologists of his generation, insisted that the only acceptable ethnology is the life history, self told, by members of indigenous society. Radin defined this as both the method and theory of ethnology which had, eventually, to be assimilated to history.... (V)hat is more pertinent is that his view was exactly the reverse of the objectifying trend. He spotted it and tried to combat it early on" (1974:111; see also, 1981:67ff).

8. There are interesting connections, beyond those of the 'culture and personality' school, between psychiatry/psychology and anthropology, and the life history in particular. The encounter itself between anthropologist and the individual relating the life resonates with shadowy allusions to transference, countertransference, etc., paralleling at times the psychiatric dialogue. The difference is, there is often no clear and consistent distinction as to who is therapist and who is patient. We will discuss this further below.

9. There is a parallel here with psychology. The individual-centered practice of psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on the interaction between patient and therapist, was quickly being pushed aside in the 1930s and '40s by the trend toward behaviorism with its concern for group behaviour and experimentation based on natural science models.

10. It is interesting that in one of Radin's earlier attempts at life history he has a much more detailed series of footnotes. In The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian (1920), published before Crashing Thunder (1926) and the text on which this later work would be based, contains three hundred and fifty-one footnotes in its ninety-one pages. It might also be of incidental interest to the reader that the 'real' Crashing Thunder was the subject of a 1913 life history by Radin, a Winnebago man by the name of Jasper Blowsnake. The name was 'borrowed' by Radin and Jasper's younger brother Sam Blowsnake for use in the 1926 publication (see Krupat, 1985, who investigates the circumstances surrounding the making of a number of Native American autobiographies). It is also interesting that the subject of Nancy Lurie's Mountain Wolf Woman (1961), unbeknownst to Lurie for the first year of her involvement with this woman, was coincidentally the sister of these two men.

11. To be fair though, he does remark that "biographies gathered for various purposes and under various conditions may well be organized and published in a variety of ways and that indeed such experimentation is itself of value" (Kluckhohn, 1945:152).

12. In 1951 Aberle conducted a "psychosocial analysis" of this life history. His approach was even more psychological and used the life story merely as secondary data to make a theoretical claim.

13. The autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutl Indian, is another document that seeks to portray the, in this case successful, adaptation to culture change (Spradley, 1972). While the text is in Sewid's own words it is not clear just how it was assembled and edited by Spradley from the initial five hundred page interview transcripts. Furthermore, though it is at times a very interesting portrait one suspects that the editor's emphasis on Sewid as "a model of bicultural adaptation" - as determined by a battery of psychological tests given to him (eg. a sentence-completion test, a self-image test, an achievement-motivation test, a Rorschach test, and a value orientation questionnaire (1972:4)) - serves to highlight only the heroic aspects of his life, and thereby commits what Allport (1942:179) and Kluckhohn (1945:92) warn is a tendency to overemphasize conflict situations, and in this case the overcoming of them, and an underemphasis on the less dramatic features of a life.

14. Lewis says that he believes this reconstruction "in no way reduces the authenticity of the data or their usefulness for science" and offers that he can make the taped interviews available to those who are interested (ibid:xxi).

15. Two interesting exceptions to this general tendency are Savala (1980) and in Hoskins (1985). Refugio Savala was a Yaqui Indian poet who, while in a nursing home in 1964, began work on his

autobiography which he later showed to Muriel Thayer Painter, a student of Malinowski's. The completed manuscript eventually found its way into the archives of the Arizona State Museum where they were 'discovered' by Kathleen Sands in 1974. She later met him and collaborated with him in his goal of "giving his story to a non-Yaqui world" (ix).

Hoskins relates the story of the life history of a key informant in Indonesia who, when he was near death in 1981, composed for her, and his descendants, a lament in a traditional style with himself as its subject.

16. Krupat suggests that Radin was attempting to "increase the scientificity" of these documents, in order to appease Boas who was sceptical of the "scientific usefulness of the autobiographical method" for anthropology (1985:80,89).

17. It is worth noting that this seems to be one of the few life histories, and a very early example of it, that identifies the primary authorship of the document under the name of the subject, not the editor or translator. This is becoming more common as anthropologists become more sensitive to the nature of the roles they and their informants occupy in the encounter (see eg. Savala, 1980; Jacob and Preston, 1986).

18. It is important to note that as far back as 1945 Kluckhohn suggested it was essential to recognize the personalities of both the subject and the interviewer: "Particularly neglected in the past has been the responsibility of the anthropologist to report upon himself. He must picture his motivations for his sort of work, his difficulties and what played a part in them. He should give his interpretation of how he solved the dilemma of his dual role as sympathetic friend and as blank screen upon which the revelant could project his fears and fancies" (1945:139). (NB: He might also have added, 'how the investigator uses the revelant as a blank screen upon which we project our fears and fancies'.)

He also spoke of a need to have as much as possible the actual words of the interaction: "Perhaps one final plea for the full presentation of raw data as obtained may be made. The temptation to reduce the vernacular of interpreters and of English-speaking informants is very great. But it would seem that a crucial difficulty in the social sciences has been that published data have been so remote from the actual facts...." (ibid:155).

Unfortunately, as is obvious from the inconsistent and indiscriminate application of these suggestions in life histories after 1945 these ideas were generally not heeded.

19. There are interesting parallels here with similar movements in history and sociology. The practice of "people's history", in part a strategy of grass-roots democratic liberal or small 's' socialist groups, orients itself "towards the recovery of subjective experience...to personalise the workings of large historical forces...to identify the faces in the crowd" (Samuel(ed), 1981:xviii; see also the "Mass Observation" movement in Britain from the 1920s on, eg. Calder and Sheridan, 1984).

Bertaux (1981:6) tells us that in Poland the collection of hundreds of thousands of pamiętniki, "written, topical memoirs" of people from... all segments of society has been going on for sixty years.

20. Banta and Hinsley (1986:121ff) recount similar stories. When the Maybury-Lewises returned to the Shavane in Brazil in 1982, they found the people were more uncomfortable around the camera than they were twenty years before when the anthropologists recorded much on film. Members of

the tribe would now only be photographed on their own terms, dressing and posing the way they wanted. King (1985:41; cited in Banta and Hinsley) reported that among the Maori, once it became apparent they didn't have to be "passive subjects for European photographers, that they could order and arrange pictures for their own purposes, they began to look upon the process more favorably". As Banta and Hinsley note, "a century ago resistance to photography was usually attributed to superstition and ignorance. It has since become obvious that the deeper issue was always vulnerability: being exposed on someone else's terms" (1986:125).

CHAPTER FOUR: CONVERSATIONS WITH HORNG-YORN.

One of the interesting conventions of most narratives is that we create a space for the unfolding of the tale, we demarcate a special status to its telling by intoning some sort of introduction or 'call' to those who might want to hear it.¹ It is as if we clear the ground of twigs and stones and debris, inscribe a circle in the dirt and say, 'Here..., here something special will happen'.

Pellowski (1977:101ff) tells us that when a story is performed in public in rural Ireland a fresh pipeful of tobacco was lit by the head of the house, passed to the most honoured guest, back to the host and on to the rest of the participants back and forth, as the scene-setting for a storytelling.² In other places candles are lit, incense is burned, sticks of wood for the fire are brought, or formalized calls and-responses are exchanged between storyteller and listeners.

Because this story is not being performed face to face, mouth to ear, we unfortunately cannot prepare ourselves with these kinds of communal preludes. Since it is being told in the context of a formal, academic anthropological framework we might introduce it by describing the circumstances in which these conversations came about, and an explanation of how it proceeds.

But since this story also centers around the life stories of a man who is Buddhist, it might be appropriate to introduce them the way many Buddhist stories are begun, "thus, I have heard...". The significance of this phrase, both for us as readers of ethnography and the listeners to a Buddhist parable, lies in the idea that what one hears, and subsequently relates, is not necessarily what was said, that is, what we recount is a recreation of what was said. At best we are recounting a version of what was originally spoken, and in the case of the Buddhist canonical parables in particular, we are retelling retellings, and so have no claim to an 'original experience' of the 'original words'. We do, however, have a claim

to our rendering of it. We might say, to turn a phrase, that there is a certain dialogical wisdom in saying "thus, I have heard".

Hong-Yorn (pronounced, 'Hong-Yuen') and I met in late 1988.³ I had become aware of him through some work I had been doing for an agency that provides aid to immigrants and refugees settling in Canada. My original intention was to ask him if he knew of anyone in the Cambodian community who might be interested in talking about their life, before and after coming to Canada. While I had no particular theoretical axe to grind at that time (except insofar as a somewhat-vague-and-foggy critique of ethnography was concerned) and no specific question about Cambodian resettlement and culture in Canada, the general purpose was simply to converse with someone about their experiences, about what it means to be human. The questions I had, if indeed they were even clearly formed at that point, were very basic ones. What did it mean to an individual to leave a country in turmoil, a country like Cambodia that had been drawn into the conflicts in Southeast Asia of the past twenty-some years. In what ways did one maintain one's cultural beliefs, if at all, in a new country? What experiences or thoughts would a prospective subject like to relate? What are some of the problems or general experiences of being an immigrant or refugee? My general interest in how religious beliefs are transplanted, and a particular interest in Buddhism itself, also served as rough markers for topics to be discussed.

But in a sense the real question, what was really prompting or provoking me, centered on the ethnographic encounter itself. In light of the issues associated with the "poetics and politics" of doing ethnography, was it possible to listen to someone's story, participate in the story and (re)present the story in such a way that was sensitive to these issues?

For our first meeting I had prepared myself to ask him numerous questions about who he thought might be interested in participating in this kind of research, and what it would involve in terms of time demands, etc. We had in fact talked on the telephone a number of times before this, and though I hadn't yet brought it up I had thought of asking him if he could help me as a translator in the event that the prospective 'subject' and I did not have a mutual language to converse in.

But at that meeting one of the first things Horng did was give me his own personal dossier of letters, achievements, resumes, "so you will know who I am". The earnestness and the leap of faith in giving someone who you do not know such personal material was a bit startling but also curiously touching. As would seem to often be the case we do not so much choose situations as fall into them. I took it as a sign (even the most 'scientific' of us seem to read meaning into seemingly chance occurrences; we all read tea leaves or entrails in one form or another) and asked him if he would like to talk about his life.

We agreed to try to meet once a week for an afternoon, which given the numerous other demands on his time was very generous. In addition we met outside this formal arrangement when the opportunities presented themselves. At times it was impossible to meet but we were at least in touch by telephone, and while these conversations aren't part of the dialogues that follow they inevitably inform and 'fill in' the story in many ways.

Because Horng speaks English very well (along with Cambodian, Laotian, Thai and French), and because of the logistical problems that made learning Cambodian myself impractical, we were able to converse quite easily.

Our conversations, fairly open-ended, unstructured questions and responses, were recorded on a small tape recorder and a few words should be said on its use.

Before the invention of the tape recorder we wrote down what subjects told us, as Brandes (1980:195) notes, "a long and arduous fair for both informant and ethnographer" which required "incredible patience...of all participants". Upon reflection it seems even

more remarkable that such comprehensive, verbatim reports as do exist were collected at all. The tape recorder made that whole process easier, and as Brandes suggests, "the element of spontaneity in the informant's verbal expression, as well as in his or her mental associations, could be more accurately preserved" (ibid). It does however create its own particular problems, not the least of which are editing what is often a greater amount of material, and adequately transforming those spoken words into a written text.

There are those who have reservations about the use of tape recording for this type of work. Tyler (1986:128), in a somewhat strident tone, suggests that it reduces the subject to a kind of "straight man",

"as in the script of some obscure comic routine, for even as they think to have returned to "oral performance" or "dialogue," in order that the native have a place in the text, they exercise total control over her discourse and steal the only thing she has left---her voice."

Walker (1981:155) relates the story of the photographer Yusuf Karsh being interviewed and objecting to the use of the tape recorder saying, "No. I don't want to be recorded...You must take down what I say". Walker reflects on this:

"I know what he means, there is a difference between what we say and what we mean to each other. The tape recorder is too literal, it captures words but not meanings. It is primarily a way of 'looking at' not a way of 'looking for'.... (T)ranscripts are ideally suited to an archive...but in itself it does not constitute a picture, story or study. It provides evidence but the locus of meaning is elsewhere" (ibid).

This points toward the crux of the whole project, that is how to effectively communicate human experience, not just what we 'say' to each other but what we 'mean' to each other. Where is this 'elsewhere' in which Walker's locus of meaning resides?

While the tape recorder does present specific editorial dilemmas, which we will discuss below, what it does, as Tedlock (1983:3) notes, is "set free" the voice of the storyteller and the ear of the listener. As he says, "even as the story is being told, the ear already takes in a broader spectrum of sounds than the anxious ear that tried to hear how each word might be spelled".

So rather than worrying about the particular details of what is said, a furious chasing about to capture all the birds that rise off a tree, we can attend to the exchange itself, participate, spend time appreciating the few birds that fly our way. Later we can go back to the tape which, even though it is removed in time from the "original performance", contains the "internal timing" of that performance with its stops and starts, coughs and pauses, or simply the "ambient sound of the room or the dooryard" (Tedlock, 1983:5).⁴ In a sense it can act as a mnemonic for the listener, ethnographer or "mythographer" (as Tedlock calls us) who will go on and try to communicate that performance in oral or textual form.

Transforming the oral performance on the tape to text is, of course, the critical junction. Word for word transcriptions are not the performance, and we should not deceive ourselves into thinking they are. In this sense we might heed Tyler's objection to a naive representation of "dialogue" which attempts to imitate speech (1986:45). There is no way of 'capturing' and re-presenting the original performance, and this may be the fallacy that confuses us endlessly, that we can ever perfectly re-create, re-present an experience.

But what it is perhaps, is an invitation to perform oneself, (to perform oneself and perform for oneself). The text that is offered is a creation, a distillation of a particular performance in time. It is in itself a different though connected performance inspired by that first performance, now at another point in time. Your reading of it, fuelled by your own imagination, your own reading "repertoires and strategies" (to borrow from Iser), is yet another performance. Here perhaps, is Walker's "locus of meaning". It is the creation in one's own mind of what is significant from the material that we are presented with.

The text which follows is an attempt to represent an interaction between two people, some reflections on that interaction and some information to highlight what is presented in the conversations. It hopefully represents the 'locus' of what Horng found meaningful and important to tell and what I found meaningful in listening to what he had to tell. To the

extent that it helps in creating such a locus for the reader, a degree of absorption, it will have met its purpose. To the degree that it inspires a performance for any potential reader it will have been successful. Ultimately this is an issue that is aesthetic, philosophical, even spiritual (or, 'anthropological' with a capital 'A').

The editing of transcripts is always a difficult task. What do you include? What do you excise? And how do you come to a decision about either?

The tapes were transcribed as verbatim as possible, that is aside from technical malfunctions with the tape or machine that affected audibility. I then lightly edited the transcripts, mainly correcting for grammar or to clarify a turn of phrase, but also to excise passages in which our conversations meandered or where material seemed sensitive or not especially relevant to the general discussion. Because of the time constraints on Homg it was impractical to ask him to be a full participant in the editing process, but transcripts were given to him with the understanding that he should have the final decision as to what was to be included, ie. the decision was his to decide what material was too sensitive or personal for publication, and to include things that he wanted known. The dialogues that appear here are then a compromise of what he and I felt would be interesting, and as such they are abbreviations of the original conversations. For those who are interested, and only with the permission of the subject himself, the tapes could be made available for listening.

The transcripts are drawn from twelve taped conversations that we had over the first six months of 1989. While the conversations that follow are, again, not complete transcripts of each meeting, they do follow the chronology of our meetings, and sections have not been moved about within each dialogue, nor between dialogues, so as to present as much as possible how our conversations flowed. For example, I find it interesting to see (hear!) how a piece of information, or an opinion, that was once new between us might later re-emerge in another conversation. It is interesting and instructive to hear how our stories are retold, reshaped. It is then something we both share, a mutual awareness of

something that allows a conversation to unfold along many different lines. In our retellings we may emphasize things we did not find as significant before, and downplay some things that were previously more prominent. Our retellings allow us the opportunity to change or to think about things in a different way.

There is one exception to the chronological ordering of the conversations. The two dialogues comprising 'conversation eleven' actually took place in the reverse order to the way they appear here. I have rearranged them and placed them together because this way they seem to better tell the story of Horng's father.

In addition to the tapes, I kept a diary of our encounters, as a record of any immediate reactions or thoughts I might have had, more as a vent for my academic frustrations than anything else. In retrospect it might have been interesting to ask Horng if he would like to keep one as well, that we might be able to compare and discuss it later on (Simmons asked Sun chief to do this, with mixed results). Again, for practical reasons having to do with Horng's time it would have been more of an intrusion and nuisance, though in other circumstances it might have been fruitful to have more of his reflections on the whole process.

I would agree with Crapanzano (1977:5) when he says that "ideally the ethnographic exchange, however unreadable, should be allowed to speak for itself" (emphasis added). But we are predisposed to analyze in some way, otherwise we would not define our interests as anthropological (or historical, literary, philosophical, etc.). Analysis, however, is a double-edged word, especially when speaking of human lives, and in particular with respect to the ethnographic encounter. It has the vague odour of acid in its etymological roots of "to dissolve", which one may find useful if one wishes to clear away the calcium carbonates that obstruct understanding, but which may do much more harm than good if it comes in contact with finer, more delicate tissues. It also has in its roots the meaning "to set free" (OED, 1982:31), and it is perhaps this facet that we should emphasize.

The most common form of analysis for life history documents is probably psychoanalysis, not strictly the Freudian approach but one that seeks to find, as Edel (1986:24) phrases it, "the reverse of a tapestry...the figure under the carpet...the hidden personal myth".

While there may be a certain value in this approach, for example in literary biography (as Edel applies it to Hemingway, Thoreau, Rex Stout and Arthur Conan Doyle), or in therapeutic psychology, and while we have seen its use in anthropology in numerous instances (eg. Leighton and Leighton, 1949; Aberle, 1951; Simmons, 1942), it becomes complicated and treacherous in the ethnographic encounter precisely because, as we now recognize, it is not simply 'the subject' that we analyze but the encounter itself and its two participants. Perhaps the only ethnographic life history to date which makes it apparent that if one wishes to employ psychological analyses, then both participants have to be 'on the couch', is Crapanzano's Tuhami.

Analysis, in the form of commentary or a sub-text, should be an amplification of the encounter, not a covert aside to the reader about what the subject 'is really about'. It should amplify the presence of at least two 'figures under the carpet', and it should give voice to the other presences that inform such an encounter. In this sense it can become literally "polyphonic", that is 'multi-voiced'. There are the two obvious voices to the exchange, and in addition there are the inner voices that compose those two voices (the voices that entertain, instruct, manipulate, inform, confess). And there is the reader who is the canyon, the bell in which the text resonates, through whose voice only, the story is able to be carried further.

The commentaries here are intended to point toward something, not necessarily to determine anything for the reader. In a sense they are more like aphorisms which frame a thought without strictly defining it. The primary aims of the commentaries are to help

Homg tell his story by providing additional background, and to reflect on some aspects of ethnography.

The conversations that follow present a portrait of a man who came to Canada as a refugee from Cambodia. To borrow from Tuchman (1986:93ff), it is "biography as a prism of history", and culture. It is life-historical, that is it deals with aspects of a man's life, though not the 'whole' life, and in that light we might call these 'life stories' rather than strictly speaking, a 'life-history'. In any case, we must ask ourselves what is a 'whole life', in what sense can any description be complete and total? Tuchman would remind us that it is not simply a congestive, "overloaded", "laundry-list" of facts and minutiae that makes a portrait - "a portraitist does not achieve a likeness by giving sleeve buttons and shoelaces equal value to mouth and eyes"(1986:102). Perhaps any sense of a complete portrait has more to do with what the ethnographer, the mythographer, or the reader brings to the text in the form of imagination and absorption.

The ruminations that follow each conversation are in a sense secondary dialogues, with the text, with the encounter, with myself, with ethnography in general. The primary dialogue is between Homg and myself. Dialogue in the sense suggested here is not simply an interrogation, a sifting for cultural nuggets. It is hopefully a conversation not a confrontation. Nor is it simply a convenient confessional for past ethnographic sins, a way of washing away (or exorcising the demons of) post-colonial guilt.

It is rather, a forum for an exchange, one in which the floor is ever 'open' for the reader's involvement.

A Note on Reading the Conversations.

Resonances of a spoken story often lie in the memory of the intonations of voice. While we can't, of course, reproduce the actual voices of these dialogues, some sense of them might be evoked by reading the text aloud.

An elaborate legend detailing how the text might be read would be defeating some of the 'dialogic' aims of this document. But to provide a small assistance we might clarify some of the typographic marks.

Emphasis or stress on words or phrases is indicated by **bold print**. Short pauses, or phrases where we interrupt each other or complete each other's sentences, are indicated by three dots, eg. Longer, perhaps more thoughtful pauses are indicated by four dots, eg. Square brackets, [], indicate substitutions or clarifications of unclear or awkward phrases or words. Square brackets with [ie.] inside them are explanatory notes. Square brackets with a series of dots inside them, [.....], indicate a break in the tape or transcription.

1. Pellowski (1977:107) notes that among the Akamba in East Africa storytelling begins simply with "The story of...", and among the Amapa in Mexico "there is no particular preparation or opening or closing phrases", raising the question of to what extent formalized beginnings and endings are universal. Then again, the exceptions may prove the rule.

2. There is an obvious correspondence here with many Native North American groups, of course. As Pellowski (ibid) notes, among the Mandan-Hidatsa the preparation for a storytelling session was begun with the opening of a tobacco pouch, the filling, lighting and sharing of a pipe. In fact, as she goes on to relate, the same word, Kiruskidits, was used to end a story and to describe the pulling of the drawstrings on a tobacco pouch in order to close it.

3. This name, Horng-Yorn, is necessarily a pseudonym in order to preserve some privacy for this man. It was a name he himself chose. Interestingly, and significantly, in Cambodian legend Horng-Yorn is the name of a mythical bird who in ancient times took a builder to a special place where he could find a special type of stone with which to construct temples. One of the peculiar qualities of this stone was that while it was soft and malleable when quarried it would quickly turn to, literally, a 'rock-hard' consistency when exposed to air. I will let the metaphoric and ironic possibilities of this image rest with the reader.

4. There is a point to Walker's (1981:155) comments concerning the relative merits of writing something down that one has heard over a simple reliance on verbatim transcripts. Walker himself has found that his practice of sending a reconstruction of an interview written from recall to interviewees for review meets with greater acceptance than transcripts.

For myself I have found that on the occasions that I simply listened, rather than taped, and later wrote down what I recalled of a conversation there is an immediacy, sense and coherence that when re-reading transcripts sometimes takes more effort to achieve. There is, of course, a conciseness in writing from recall that probably has much to do with the workings of the mind and one's own internal logic, imagination and personal psychology which select what is essential and significant. The advantage of using tape transcripts, however, is that it provides some fuller context for the reader to hear what the exchange was like, so readers can use their own logic, imagination and psychology to select what is essential and significant.

Thus, I have heard...

Looking at Maps of Southeast Asia.

HY- ...It's not bad, it's not bad this one...

ML- There's another one I have... here's one of the whole peninsula...

HY- Oh yeah...that's the one I told you...that's the one I have at home, too. That's where I lived, here, that's where I was born here. Stung Treng, you know Stung Treng province. It's bordering with Laos... you see the river here?

ML- The Mekong?

HY- We cross this and go up here to get to Laos... Vientiane is the national capital city...

ML- Of Laos?

HY- Yeah, of Laos... It's a funny thing, Laos has two national capital cities. One is the administrative capital city ... that's why it's funny ... it's right on the border ... that's rare in the world, to be right on the border. I don't know if it's because it is a landlocked country, there's no sea-port. You see, here is Cambodia, here, South Vietnam, here North Vietnam. You see, it's exactly twenty-five kilometres from the border. And the other one is ... Luang Prabang. You see that? It's the national capital city of the King. So, most of the time I was stationed here, during the war. And here... Sepone... most of the time. Because here, you see the border here? They call it Ho Chi Minh Trail. It comes up the whole way along the border here...

ML- Oh, so the whole border from Laos up to North Vietnam...

HY- Yeah, from here in North Vietnam, the Trail follows the border down through Laos ... Most of the time I was right here at the border between the three, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia ... You see, what they call Duck Lake, here? That's where the supplies were divided, some to go into here [ie. South Vietnam], and some get into Cambodia in order to supply the Vietcong. The Vietcong always stayed just inside here...

ML- ...oh, just inside the Cambodian border...

HY- Yeah, they couldn't stay here [in South Vietnamese territory], because the Allied Force, the Americans, South Vietnam, the Australians, this and that, they carried out what they call 'Operation Seek and Destroy'. So the Vietcong always dig in the ground, the trenches, and hide their caches, their ammunition caches around here. And so most of the time I was stationed here in Sepone. You see here, in Khe Sanh [a few miles from Sepone, but in Vietnam], there was a big, big American Base.

You know when they lost Khe Sanh they lost almost everything. That was when I was in Sepone here. I got shot here. And also, in Vientiane, always they were having coups. Almost every year, because the military right wing and left wing, you know...So, when I was stationed here, I worked as a liason officer, most of the time in Sepone. When Cambodia fell into the war from 1970, because there was a coup in Cambodia, after Prince Sihanouk, and then Laos and Cambodia fell into the American political and military sphere. So, as liason officer, I worked here and here, and in the north of Laos, Khouang ... Xieng Khouang. Because Stung Treng province, here, [in northwest corner of Cambodia, very near the Laos border], when the coup in 1970 broke up, the communists got in. Only two days they were fighting, Stung Treng and Kratie they fell down to the Vietcong, the North Vietnamese, the Khmer Rouge. So all the officials had to move to here ... Kompong Island ... right in middle of the river [ie. the Mekong]. The provincial capital city they moved from Stung Treng to here... Actually there is a small village near there, where they trained American CIA, American training...

ML- But this is where you were born, in this area, Stung Treng...

HY- Stung Treng, yeah. My dad, came from here in Battambang province. My dad is here, my mom is here [ie. in Stung Treng]. I did my primary studies here, and then secondary school in Kompong Cham here, and then high school in Phnom Penh. So every year, once a year when we had a holiday, one time I would go to Battambang to see my father's family, and the next year I would go to Stung Treng. Every year we had the chance to cross the border to get into Laos, to see my relatives ... That's the reason I can speak the language. Because, like you, every summer we worked to get some money. One year I work there, the next one I work here ... so I got some familiarization with the language. When I finished high school I went to the college in Phnom Penh. The University of Arts. So I went down there. I transferred to Laos, to Vientiane, to learn how to read and to translate. That's why I'm very comfortable with Thai, and Laotian, Cambodian and French. My English was not very good at that time. So when I came here, as I told you, ten years ago now, I couldn't understand the word 'mass media', I'd never seen it. We were taught by the French; French professors to teach English. I don't mean to say that the French teacher could not teach English to us, but the textbook that they chose to teach us was not modern English, it was almost like the English that was written in the Bible. And secondly, the pronunciation. They never told us to pronounce 'c-a-t' cat, or 't-a-l-k' talk. That's why when I first arrived here, it was terrible. I was lucky, a little bit, to speak French, but then again, if I was speaking in Ottawa, fine, in Montreal, fine, but get across the border to Hull, that's it!

ML- ...it's a different French altogether?

HY- Yes!

- ML- There are people from France who say the same thing. They come to visit and they can't understand the French spoken here.
- HY- And you don't try to say something in Parisian French, they say "Non, je comprend pas." So when I came here I said, OK, I will have to spend time learning French again. It was a funny thing at that time, I had classes, three nights of English, three nights of French, but all in five days, so this week I would have to skip one French class for an English class, and the next week I would have to skip one English class for a French class. So I spent about six semesters doing that. One day my professor asked me, "I have observed, that one week you miss, the second week you show up, another week you miss...". So I told him. He said that "you're burning yourself out", you know, like a big candle, burning it at both sides. I said, "well, you're right, sir, but I have no choice, I have to do that. I know nobody here, nothing about Ottawa, no friends, nothing. He said, "OK, fine, but be careful." And after that I got the notion about anglicisms, and slang where they try to, in Quebecois French, they try to use a word directly from the English to the French. You know, like the word 'check'. In French the word is 'verifier', to verify. There's no word 'checker'. Over here they use the word 'checker', that means, 'to check', you just add 'er' at the end. That's what they call an anglicism, or 'Fransition'.
- ML- You know what I've heard it called sometimes? 'Franglais'. You hear, 'le hot dog' or 'checker', half-French, half-English.
- HY- Yeah. I don't mean to criticize, because that's the way language is, coming to us like grains of snow or sand, too much that you can't count, in the wind. Language is for whatever you want to say, to accomodate what you want to do, what you want to say. In the end, I just had to learn it again, that's it. That was my experience, my first impression. And because of that some of the people I know in Montreal tease me or look down on me, either directly or indirectly, because they say I should go there, stay in Quebec as a Francophone. They say you wouldn't have to do anything, but improve your skill in working, to earn money. They say, you're crazy for staying there [ie. in Ontario]. So, they look down on me. But I say, that's a good idea, that's your opinion, but mine is different. I want to learn English. One day when I become a Canadian citizen, I want to be an English-speaking Canadian, too, instead of a French-speaking Canadian alone. Some people say, "you're too ambitious." Well, I say, sometimes our ambition is a good thing. Sometimes it's like a remedy. Well, for me that's the way, I try my best to improve myself. So, it's a long way, hard, painstaking, but up to now at least I can speak a bit and communicate with other people. Even though my English is not great, to the level that I want it to be, but at least I can make it, speak it, and communicate with people, make people understand what I would like to say. But to me when I came to be here in Ontario, with mostly English-speaking Canadians, so, I have lots of things to learn, again lots of things to adjust to. So I spend lots of time to come to school, to learn something especially how to educate myself, to socialize myself with you, as brother and sister, because there is no way you can do that only in the workplace. Workplace, you spend eight hours a day, to earn money, to keep to the best of your ability the production that your boss will like you to do. And again, indirectly you learn something, how to deal with people, how to behave yourself, this and that. But, in order to do much better than that, I decided to come to school, learn something.

I've taken sociology, anthropology, looking at social change, vertical mobility, contrast, mobility, this and that. And at the same time I work as a volunteer, firstly involved with Project 4000 [a project to bring refugees over from Southeast Asia], because I think I mentioned to you before, I ran away alone, to Canada, I left my wife and two little kids. My daughter, my first daughter, a year and a half; my son only six months old. I had half an hour to tell my wife, to convince my wife that I had to run away. I couldn't stay there because of the political situation at home [in Cambodia].

ML- ...that was when? In '75?

HY- Yeah, '75, in April. You see, April 17th, 1975, that was the day the Khmer Rouge took over the power in our country. And because we worked with the embassy, when the new political regime changed. We had no choice... well, we had two choices: either you support the new government, if you like it, if you think that that's the way of your thinking, or, if you don't like it, you have to defect. And because I was the Press Officer, my duty is to follow all kinds of information, in terms of the fighting, in terms of the political situation, this and that, between Americans or the Chinese, or so and so, and that the prospect of negotiation, peacefully, to me was none. So April the 17th, the Khmer Rouge took over power, we had a meeting in the embassy to discuss what we were going to do, and the first thing that we agreed on was that we decided to say we would support the new government. So I sent a telex saying that all the members of the Cambodian embassy would like to submit ourselves, to support the new government, so and so. Normally, the new government will answer, yes, we agree with your terms, or, yes, you are welcome home, if they still want us. If they don't want us, they just say, no, you are undesirable, just go wherever you want. So we sent a message every two hours on the first day, no answer. And the second day we tried again, no answer. And then, to me because I was the Press Officer - I'm not the first Secretary but, second Secretary... Press Officer is the ear and eye of the ambassador, the chief of the mission, you know in the diplomatic section of the embassy you have the ambassador, and you have a first Secretary, in a small embassy you might have only one, but in a big embassy like the States maybe two or three, a first Secretary in charge of trade, another in charge of political affairs, another one is the consulate, the people who sign the passports, and who take care of Canadians who have gone down there to visit the country, and then you have the attache. So, after two days, I said, the new government hasn't answered, no 'yes', no 'no' to our request. And it made me worried, personally I was very worried. And all the members of the embassy, we organized all kinds of meetings every two hours. And me, I was sticking to the telex, all the time, waiting for the answer, but nothing even on the second day. So, they had a meeting, they talked, they discussed, they presented their opinions, except me because I had to sit in the office, waiting. And then on the third day, as soon as the meeting opened, I made a request to my ambassador, I said, well, if you don't mind I'd like to express my opinion, just a little concern about what we are going to do, because now it's the third day. So my ambassador agreed. The first thing I said was, we have sent a message every day for two days now, every two hours, we haven't received a reply. It struck me as strange, if you look at the history of the world, when a political system changes, in any country, most of the people like us who work in the embassy have to do the same thing as we did. But one thing is strange, the new government hasn't answered us, no 'yes', no 'no', and that made me feel uneasy, because if we have no answer, you don't know what they're going to do. If they don't say anything

and we go home, and something is wrong, it would be terrible, no one could help us. No one could guarantee anything. I tried to explain the situation, and it made the people of the embassy frightened or worried, whatever, they didn't say anything, but the way they expressed in their behaviour showed to me that the idea was good, that the feeling was mutual among us. And the more we did that, the more my ambassador, my boss, he had some sort of sympathetic feelings toward me, because for two days nobody was saying that, and the third day, I'm the one, the youngest member of the embassy I'm the one who said that, and it made the people split. So, he was worried too. So he asked my opinion. So I said for us I compared it to the fighting in a military system, because now we lost the war we are surrounded, we have no capability to fight anymore. The only thing to do is to show a white flag, to surrender. And then when we do that, according to the law, our conquerer can do anything to us, but they can't kill us. But in order to guarantee that, in our situation, we tried our best to entice the government to do something in our favour, but now we've failed. They haven't said anything. And when they don't say anything, I'm frightened, not for my life alone, for all of us. So I said, to me my own opinion is that I have to appeal to the International Red Cross, right here in Vientiane, to tell them that we are the members of the embassy, and we'd like to support the new government. The reason why we do this is because nobody can guarantee our life, our safety, if we go there. But if we appeal to international opinion, if something went wrong, maybe they could say to the new government, hey, don't do that. So we discussed for a little while, and they said nobody can do that except you, according to protocol. And you have to ask permission from the External Affairs of the Laotian government. So I was sent there, and when I talked to the Director General he said, no, you have no right to do anything, you have to stay here in the embassy and wait for instructions from the new government. I thought, this is like being a little bear just put in a cage, they just let you go in and out, you have nothing, you can't say anything, where's the freedom of expression? Because, now it was as if you were accused of a crime. At least you would like to say, we are not exactly criminals. At least let us have a chance to talk.

ML- Were your wife and children in Vientiane?

HY- Yes...

ML- So when you left, in April, you had to escape through here, down the Mekong, this way...?

HY- You see, from Vientiane to the border...here is Nong Khai, on the Thai side...it's about 75 kilometres...There is a checkpoint, before you cross to Nong Khai, the immigration police are standing there. You cross the Thai border here and there are Thai police also, to stamp your passport. But me I came to about three kilometres close to here, and then I got off the road and crossed the river...

ML- Did you swim, or did you go by boat?

HY- No...by boat. I made friends with the little kids. When I left home, I put on black pajamas, nothing else, no ID, sandals, I only had 25 dollars, which I put in a plastic bag and put it in my sandal. I took a fishing net and a sack, pretending to be fishing. I took a taxi from home here in Vientiane, came close to Tha Dhi here, got out and walked about three kilometres through the jungle to the Mekong River...The Mekong River here is an international border, half belongs to Thailand here, half

belongs to Laos. So I got here, I made friends with the kids, and after that I said, Oh my goodness, I've lost my wallet. So I ask the kids, can you bring me across the border, across the Mekong River, and I'll pay you. They said that's fine, so we crossed in a small boat. When we arrived on the Thai side, I said, you wait here, I will go check, and I may come back in fifteen minutes, if I don't show up it means I was able to cross, and you can go back home. So I took a rickshaw, you know the tricycle, and went to the police station and I told them I came as a refugee. He asked if I had an ID card, a passport. I said no, I couldn't carry it, because if I did and the police find it they would arrest me. Well, he said, how can I believe you, because you might have done something wrong, you might have killed somebody, and you come here and say you're a refugee. So I said, well sir, if I've killed somebody, and I come here to submit myself to you, you won't need to spend lots of time and effort to find me. But he says, how can I believe you. So I called the International Red Cross, and talked to them, but it was very hard. Again they asked for ID cards, this and that. They said the best thing to do was to check with External Affairs of Laos, they have a small directory, what they call the Diplomatic directory. You'll have to name the embassy and all the staff, the personnel with their functions. They wanted to phone my embassy, I said no. Because if you do, we are only 25 kilometres from Vientiane, my boss could have me arrested, I could be extradited. You do that you kill me, you kill my wife and kids. So the best thing I said he should do was to call the headquarters in Bangkok, find the directory, so and so. After three hours they were able to confirm my identity, and he gave me a slip, a little note. But again because I have no ID, by law the police could arrest me and put me in jail. And never in my life had I been in jail. Except I was arrested by the communists, but that was nothing serious, it wasn't because I was stupid and had committed a crime. The communists looked at the reporters, journalists as spies all the time. Sometime we were arrested during the war, during the coups. Because as a press officer you have to go everywhere, you are the eye and the ear of the boss. You don't go, the next morning the boss asks you what's wrong. We would be arrested then they would release you, ask you this and that. It wasn't easy because it wasn't like the border between the States and Canada, there's no pole to say here's the Canadian side, here's the American side. Over there, today this could be controlled by government troops, but how about tonight? The communists fight and push back, and by the next morning it's become the communist's zone. So sometimes you don't know where the border is, they arrest you. So I had to cheat the police a little bit, got on a bus and went to Bangkok. Here I applied to come to Canada, the States, to France and Australia. Australia I had already applied to secretly. The first secretary was a good friend of mine. He said, keep quiet, if my boss knows about it, that's it, finished. That's why when I applied here in Bangkok my intention was to go to Australia, because firstly the weather. It didn't matter to me, I used to be in Paris, but for my wife and my kids since they had never been in such cold weather, I said we should go to Australia. Definitely I didn't want to go to France or the States, because the nature of my values, I would say, well, we often had discussions, hot discussions sometimes, [about these two places]. That's why I didn't want to go to the States or France, unless it was very necessary. My first choice was Australia, second one was Canada. Although my friends always would say, how well do you know Canada. I'd say, not very much, in Quebec a little because there were some French-Canadians who worked there [in Vientiane]... They would say, why do you choose to go there, you're stupid. It's very cold. You get into a plane, and you go to the North Pole, and you put on a parachute and jump! That was the impression of some people. Well, I said, that's your own

picture, that's your own opinion. What I mind very much is not the weather. I could get used to it in a year or two. What I mind is the society, the people themselves with whom I'm going to work with, the society where I'm going to educate my children, and to grow up in. That's what I mind. As a Canadian you look like an American, but you're not. American is American and Canadian is Canadian. And I'm not wrong. The more I stay here the more I know. You see now most Americans travel outside Canada or America to Europe; they always carry a Canadian flag. People appreciate Canadian values very much. During the Vietnam war actually, as you know, there were Canadians who fought with the Americans. They looked like Americans, they spoke English, but they were Canadians. So when they were arrested by the communists, the Vietcong, the Pathet Lao or the Khmer Rouge, if you could prove you were Canadian, if you have a passport or an ID card then you would be spared and you would be better treated...

ML- Even if they were fighting for the Americans?

HY- Oh yes...even then. It means that in the four chambers of heart, you still keep one for Canadians. That's because Canadian political guidelines, in terms of international justice, have done a lot of good things. For example in Indochina, the International Commission of Control and Surveillance, the ICC, after the first Vietnam war in 1953, when the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, this commission was composed of three members: Canada, representing the Western world, the free world; Poland, representing the Communist world, the East bloc; and India, representing the non-aligned world. So most of the time the Indian delegation was supposed to do the good job, like a judge... but much of the time it was the Canadian delegation that did the job. Canada shows honour, dignity and respect. That's to me. But I was not wrong. But even in the Middle East, Cyprus, this and that...to me that is my observation.

In 1978 I was in college, and at that time the Quebecois movement, there was lots of tension, and my professor asked me, how do you feel, will Quebec ever separate from Canada, this and that. I said, sir, to me in the Canadian family I see myself as the youngest boy, the youngest one in the family, because I just came here, I know very little about Canadian problems. Anyway, you asked me the question, if I come, and have the right to live in Australia, Canada and France... and I decided to come here. Since I came here I feel good, I feel good that, even though I'm very new here, there's no big gap between the rich and the poor like in the States. In Canada there's a small gap, you know, not too rich, not too poor, most of the time. And in terms of racial relations, I think there is lots of harmony between Canadian black, Canadian yellow, Canadian white, they can look face to face. There's not very much press information, or on TV, that the blacks and the whites are at each other, like in the States. And the second question you asked me was, how do you feel about that. I said, well, I learned a little history about who came to Canada first, and apart from the Natives, I think the people who came here, the French and the British, only the French came here a little earlier than the British, but from the beginning up to now until we became a confederation to me both the French and the English are the same as my 'mom' and my 'dad'. And the rest, Italian, Spanish, Polish, anything, the Chinese, the Japanese...they look like my 'brother' and 'sister', that's it to me. For example, if Quebec wants to separate from Canada, it hurts me, because it's like my mom is going to divorce from my dad, or vice versa, to me I don't like that, but I don't know, what can I do? I

would hate to see my mom and dad separated, especially me because I am the youngest of the 'family', it hurts. And to me, again, I'm still young in terms of being here. But if Quebec separates from Canada, they might not lose in terms of honour and dignity, but in terms of economic prosperity, the States will grab everything, there will be nothing. Again, the professor says to me "hey, you're a smart-guy, eh?" I said, I don't know sir, (laughs). So again, they were asking me how I feel in Canada, I said, I feel great. After Cambodia I've chosen Canada as my own country. Fortunately at that time I was reading in the paper about American prisoners in Mexican jails, including some Canadians who were stuck there with drugs or something, and I cut out the article from the newspaper and showed it to my professor, I said, you see, even in a Mexican jail, still Canadians are treated better than American prisoners. I don't know why, but as I told you, internationally speaking Canadians are well known in terms of international justice, in terms of friends, this and that. That's why you [could convince] me to come here no matter how cold it is. Even now, that's another reason why I have chosen to come here. Some friends of mine, even my cousins who tease me all the time. I say, I don't mind. You see I give an example, my children I put in a bilingual school, my daughter, fourteen years old in grade ten, my son twelve years old in grade nine, and my little one nine years old, they're all perfectly bilingual. They can speak in French and English almost the same. And they're on the Honour Roll at school, bilingual Honour Roll. When their cousins came from the States, to visit the relatives in Montreal, and three from Lyons in France, they could not communicate with each other. So my two kids wherever they went they had to drag the two altogether, because the two can translate, can be the interpreters. They would run here and there but they had fun altogether and became loved by their cousins. Without them they couldn't say anything, they couldn't have fun. So, I say, they are fourteen and twelve years old. If they keep doing that, the way I try my best to educate them, it's a good future, because, if you speak the language it's not bad, especially in Canadian society.

And then, through the adjustment to Canadian society, now I'm talking about the Cambodians who came here the same as me, who came later than me, most of them are younger, and because of the war, in terms of education there's almost nothing for them. They don't even know the concept. The reason why, for me in 1953 I was in grade four, in elementary school, that was the time of the French moving out of Cambodia, at that time the school system was still Cambodian and French, mostly French at that time, because they couldn't change it right away, educational systems aren't easy to change right away. So through high school I still studied French, and Cambodian, until I finished high school in 1959, I was nineteen years old. I can say that I am the last generation that still learned French from elementary school up to high school. In 1968, you see the Vietnam War, the second Vietnam war, began in 1960 with American involvement, because of the nature of my province being in the north, bordering with Vietnam and Laos, I moved to Kompong Cham to study. In 1966, 1968... yes, '67, '68, the area bordering with Vietnam here was already in war, it had spilled over, the Vietcong would hide their caches, their armaments, food stuffs, this and that...

ML- You mean the Vietnamese came this far into Cambodia?

HY- Yes... here about 10, 12 kilometres inside here. You see they couldn't get into Vietnam and hide there, because the American strategists had 'seek and destroy', so they had to get in along here... So, the people in the border areas here, beginning

in '65 to '70 and up to '75 - the degree of the war from '66 to '70 was not very much, but in 1970 with the coup, you know when Sihanouk was kicked out, the Khmer Rouge and the Viet Mien attacked here, in only two days they occupied all this here. So from '70 to '75 the war went on all around here. And then from '75 to '79, the whole Cambodian system of schools, because the Communists said there will be no schools, they wouldn't let you go to school, they just trained you to do their things...

ML- ...and Pol Pot had kicked everyone out of the cities, so the whole school system crumbled...

HY- ...Yes. So the Cambodian generation that came here, those that are 25 to 35 years old, that's the generation who were most effected by the war from 1960 to 1970, and the people who were 25 and down, who were completely effected by the war from 1975 to 1979, so speaking approximately, from 1966 to 1979 the Cambodians who are younger than me have almost no schooling, they just ran away from one place to another to get away from war. And then these people in this age group who survived, and fled to the Western world, when they come here and they become parents, well, a parent who has no education, who knows nothing about education, they know that in order to improve yourself you have to read and write in order to get some sort of upward social mobility, but they don't know how hard the school is, or how much effort you have to put in to that. So when they come here, the big barrier is the language, it's not easy to learn the language especially as you get older, and when you have no education, and their children go to Canadian schools, they speak English or French they come home from school, they want to do their homework, they get stuck with their homework, they can't ask anybody. With my kids at least I can show them, because I'm at school, I know the school system. How about the majority of the Cambodians who have never had any schooling? They're blind, they have no idea about how to educate their kids, even if they have the idea, they're blind because they can't read English, they don't know how to even find a book in the library, they don't even know how to tell the kid what to do. Many times the teachers talk to me, compare me with the Vietnamese, ask why the Cambodian kid, the Vietnamese kid, the Laotian kid can't do a good job. They ask me to help. When they have seminars the teachers ask me to be a speaker. I bring my daughter to dance [ie. traditional dances of Cambodia] over there, show them where we come from, why I teach this dancing to my daughter, and after that they throw questions at me, on every aspect of a "new Canadian", how they have adjusted to Canadian society, how fast or how slow, if slow, what is the problem, and the teachers ask me how to deal with the kid who is a refugee. And I've learned from them that it's not just the Cambodian kid who has a problem like that. In any refugee kid their parents have the similar situation to the Cambodian. Every day they have to struggle, to get a job by themselves, to feed them all, everything. Because of that, I had the guts, the courage to sit as a member of the board of directors of an immigrant services organization for two years. Every Thursday we would sit there and talk, to try to solve the problems, make recommendations, this and that.

And when people get stuck with the law, again, I go to the police department, the children's aid society, the courts. You see, that's my life. I don't know why. You know, some people say, you do too much, one day you're going to FALL DOWN, you won't be able to get up again.

ML- What do you think...about that?

HY- Yeah... I think they remind me. I realize that. But, I don't know... If something happens to somebody and I don't go there, for example with the police. I don't take the side of a criminal, but if somebody who commits a crime, a little crime, without knowing it, that would make me feel uneasy if I turned him away.

ML- ...because you could explain why, why he did this. Or to translate, because they may not have known they had even committed a crime...

HY- Yes... You see, for example, with sign language, sometimes there's a big problem, especially for these new people. You see, to make a sign like this [hand up with index finger pointing up] for Canadian people, for American people it's not bad, but for the Vietnamese and the Cambodians this sign is not very nice. If a Canadian makes it sometimes it is misunderstood. For Cambodians or Vietnamese it means "come here!", but if you say it that way it's an insult...

ML- you mean it's like a command?

HY- Yes. It's like a curse with body language. These kinds of things are the way you would call a dog, a little dog, like saying, tik tik tik tik tik, come here!

ML- So, someone might misunderstand something and get nervous with the police, say,...

HY- Yes. That's one story I could tell you about a worker and a supervisor... Another one is behaviour, the way you show something to somebody. One day the police arrested one guy, ... well, let's say I own a car, and I have a problem with police, I didn't pay a fine, and one day you borrow my car. You drive it, the police see you and stop you and ask this and that. But you assume when the police stop you you are guilty of something automatically. You are trembling, frightened, and when the police sees that, he doesn't do anything to alleviate that, he just takes you into custody. And when everything has been found out, the police feel upset. They say, why did you act this way. The reason why he did that was because of the way he [the police] showed him a gesture, this and that, implying he is guilty of something somewhere, somehow. Again, it's a cultural thing.

You see, to us, you, police officer, are the image of authority. And for these people - Cambodian, the Laotian, the Vietnamese - we have a long history from the past. We were controlled, we were governed by the absolute monarchy. We were not allowed to look at the face of the king or the queen as they crossed on the street, you had to lay down, look at the ground. But curiosity would sometimes make you want to look at them, and if his police, his soldiers or the members of his entourage saw that, you were killed, they would cut your throat, because by law you weren't allowed to look at the face of the king or the queen. So generation after generation you were told not to look. And it wasn't the king or queen who would kill you but the police. So these people are scared of the police. The police are the image of, the representative of authority. It's a matter of life and death. Back home, during the time of French domination, the same thing. The French police, the same as the British police did in Africa, they scared the people, the same thing. And when the communists took over they said, oh, we are good guys, we don't come to terrify anybody, we are nice guys. But look at Cambodia. They came to power and in less than three years they killed three million people, or

worse. Again, the representative, the image of power and authority. They saw the first monarchy, they saw the French police, they saw the Khmer Rouge police. And when they fled to Thailand and stayed in the refugee camps the Thai police did worse than that. They kicked them, killed them, they raped the women. So, they saw four images of authority. Now they see the fifth one, the police officer here...

ML - ...and how are they supposed to respond to that?

HY- Yeah. They don't know otherwise. Because firstly they have the language barrier, they can't communicate with a police officer. The police can't explain anything to them and vice versa. But also the physical appearance, the big guy with all kinds of equipment, it's intimidating. You see? They were told generation after generation. And these people they saw the Thai police brutality over there [in refugee camps]. When they came here again, well, [when we were children in Cambodia] we used to be told about the French police and their cruelty. So if they see a police officer it's the same thing, they've had four or five images before. That's why I said [to the police officer], when he saw you he was frightened, terribly, he looked pale, couldn't even talk. They said, why didn't he even look at me? I said, sir, because he is scared of you. Anyone from these places would be scared. I told you, it's the image of authority, and because they were told not to look at the face of authority, the police, the army, the king, the queen. Now when they see you they don't understand yet that you are a nice guy, that you are a good friend of these people. When they come here there is a big wall between you and them, in the sense of a cultural barrier. That's why to me I have a duty to clear the wall, the big wall of misunderstanding between you and them.

ML- ...that's a big job...

HY- That's why every time they have a problem, they call me, I have to go there. I say, please, give me twenty-four hours to sort the thing out.

ML- ...so you can go back to the people and say, what's your side of the story...

HY- Yeah. There was one guy who came here. He got a job with a farm plow, he worked about twenty miles from here. His boss told him, you've got to get a licence, a driver's licence otherwise you can't keep your job. He comes back home, he talks to his wife, his wife gives him money and tells him to go get the thing, try your best. And he passed the written test and has a yellow paper, the temporary licence not the real one. That means that person can drive, can practice driving, but everytime you drive you have to have someone who has a driver's licence sit with you all the time. That person has to have the driver's licence put in his pocket at that moment, not just at home, right? And the driver's licence has to be in good shape, not expired, so and so. But nobody told him in detail, or maybe he was told but his English is not really good. I don't know. God knows. But nobody knows what he was told. It wasn't clear. It was like, that's the driver's licence, you can drive, that's what he understood. So when he got that he was happy, and his wife said, fine, I give you one thousand five hundred dollars, you go out and by a second hand car. So he did. And he went to work a night shift, I think 4 o'clock to midnight. And maybe by the time he left, the traffic was a little heavy, he drove slowly, nobody noticed, but when he comes back home at night the street was clear, I guess, during the summer and he goes a little faster and the police officer stopped him. And I think, well, as you know when the police officer asks you to stop,

normally the first question they ask is, can I see your licence, can I see your insurance this and that. So the first thing he produced was the yellow temporary licence. And the police says, no, and he said, yes, this is my licence, the police says, no, he said, yes! He gets out from the car and showed a little gesture, because back home, with the Thai police for example, you have a problem, you shake hands, twenty dollars, you put in the hand, that's it...

ML- ...but here if you do that...!

HY- ...here if you do that you're on your way to jail. And then, that guy, the way he got out of the car, the way he showed a little threatening behaviour, a little frustrated with the police. And you're not supposed to do that, whatever you want to do you have to cooperate with the police, whatever you want to say, you have the right to a lawyer, but you have no right to object, to give contempt for the police's work. But for him, he knew nothing. That's why the police headquarters called me, I think it was 1 o'clock already. The person who called from headquarters was a lady. So my wife at that time - she hadn't passed away yet - she had a small phone in the room, and she heard as I spoke that it was a lady. And then I get up, I didn't want to disturb her, I know she was asleep. As soon as I open the door she said, honey, where are you going? I said, I'm sorry I thought you were asleep. They have a problem over there, I have to get out there in a hurry, go fast otherwise the police will charge him, I have the problem. So my wife gets a little jealous and says, honey, do you know what time it is? A girl calls you at this time, you get up and just walk out? I said, honey, there's the phone number, ask our daughter - my eldest - ask her to phone the lady and ask what's wrong. I have to go otherwise the guy will get jailed. She looks at me toe to head, head to toe. That's the lady. She gets jealous because the girl called me (laughs). So you see, sometimes there's a problem like that, but I have to go there, I have to go.

So I get there, I told the guy my name, so and so, I told him I speak Cambodian and I ask him what's wrong. And he told me the story. And I said, no, you have misunderstood. I said, now, don't do that. Here the police officers are very strict, but they are not corrupt. So there is only one way to get out of it, that is to confess that you had no intention to commit a crime, to violate the law. It was only because you didn't understand. So the police officer explained the law, that if you drive without a licence it is criminal, if you kill somebody [by accident] ... so and so. He seemed to understand now, you don't fight with the police officers here. What he told you is true, and he has every right to arrest you and charge you. So he calmed down, and I translated again. So the police said, OK, you can go home. That means he was not going to be charged, but he got a ticket, a fine. But that's much better than getting charged, he'd have to go to court, and if the judge is very strict it would be no good for him. A criminal! He couldn't even get his citizenship, it would be very hard to get a job. So most of the time it's situations like that. Another one is when a mom beats a kid, a girl. Again, it's a cultural value. Because for us, the Vietnamese, the Laotian, the Cambodian, we raise the girls to be... well, they are frightened, that if something goes wrong with the daughter [ie. if she gets pregnant at a young age, or gets into drugs], especially the mother, if something went wrong with the daughter the mother would be blamed the most, if something goes wrong with the boy the father will be blamed the most. You see, that's the cultural value. It's not like food, if you don't like it you throw it away, put it in the garbage. This is not so easy. In terms of criminal activity

the legal system has to step in, but in terms of cultural values you have to be...like that [ie. flexible]. I'm always making deals with the police. Like if a mother beats a girl, I say, don't charge her yet, find out what's wrong, teach her. Because these people they can't read the books about law and regulation. They don't know all the rules. The Cambodians would like to be taught, reminded, given advice, drawing the line, this is bad or wrong here, you might do that there, but here it is wrong, you don't do that. And if they are told once, and you draw the line, it's black and white, they won't do it. But at least i want you, police officer, to tell him or her, not me. I'm only in the middle, trying to help you out. If you charge the person right away, they'll repeat the same thing...

ML- ...because they wouldn't understand what they did was seen as wrong?

HY- To me it's not really a reasonable thing to do. I know to you, police officer, it is the law. You might say I'm on the side of the criminal. It's not that. As a Cambodian-Canadian I've walked past this path before you - of course, I didn't do something wrong, it's just I know what happens. So, I say, one thing I can do is to help you both, save the money, save the time, save the trouble, just give me twenty-four hours to talk to the person. Firstly I'll teach the lady about law and order, I'll ask them why they chose to come to Canada in the first place, and I say, as soon as you put your feet on this land, when you become a landed immigrant you are one of the people of this land, and as one of the people of this land you are under the law of this land. You come here, your kid is no longer one hundred percent your kid, he's a kid of Canadian society. The Canadian society has the law to protect the kid. So you don't beat the kid. So, OK, they can see the right and the wrong.

So that's why when I step in, you see, I have 23 young couples who call me 'mom-and-dad'.

Since 1975, in the aftermath of the Vietnam war and as a result of on-going turmoil in the region, some 120,000 refugees have come to Canada from Southeast Asia (Chan and Indra, 1987:6). Cambodia, a country that has experienced four violent changes of government since gaining its independence from France in the 1950s, has been particularly victimized by the geopolitical turbulence of the area.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, though it was a neutral country, it was bombarded by American forces seeking to destroy North Vietnamese sanctuaries within its borders. In 1970 an American-sponsored coup overthrew the government and installed one which plunged the country into economic, political and social chaos. Then in 1975 this

government itself was overthrown by the Khmer Rouge who sought to transform the country into a classless, agrarian utopia but instead turned it into the infamous "killing fields", a situation that was worsened by a famine that occurred a few years later (see eg. Shawcross, 1985; Etcheson, 1984; Jackson, 1989; Becker, 1986; Schanberg and Pran, 1984). In 1979 the Vietnamese invaded the country and set up a government sympathetic to its own regime.

This period has created many refugees, with many different experiences and needs. With tens of thousands of people caught in refugee camps throughout Southeast Asia, most notably in Thailand along the border with Cambodia, it is an unfortunate fact that it is still creating them.

There are numerous problems that those who are able to be resettled must face, not the least of which are language hurdles, the problems of finding work, dealing with authorities in a new society and learning other cultural rules and behaviours (see eg. Chan and Indra, 1987; Adelman, 1982).

In addition, however there are the problems of maintaining or redeveloping community and kinship ties, finding or creating a social support network, and asserting personal autonomy and dignity.

In a very real sense these all resolve to issues of empowerment. As Tollefson (1989:158) suggests, when we speak of refugee needs we often, ironically, act in such a way that denies individual power and self-sufficiency. In many instances training and 'adjustment' programs are aimed primarily at assimilating refugees and immigrants as quickly as possible into so-called 'mainstream society'. In the process much of an individual's sense of self is modified or lost. The past is something to be left behind or more to the point, submerged as demands to adapt and 'get along' in the new society become more pressing.

It may be somewhat simplistic to suggest that merely by listening to someone's stories we can provide a means for realizing one's place, for encouraging a sense of personal power. But at the same time, in this simple act of listening, by being present, we credence the storyteller's experiences and their version of shared experiences, and in doing so take part in, to borrow from Hocart (1952), "the life-giving myth".

Looking at photographs.

HY- ...And these are of the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh, the Water Festival with canoe races, that's in front of the Royal Palace. This is the central market.... You see the Mekong River has what we call four arms here. You see here, this one is going up to my province here, this one is going up to the Great Lake [the Tonle Sap], and this one goes to Vietnam here, and this one also goes to Vietnam, here. Here there is a special phenomenon. During the rainy season the water will flow into here [ie. instead of flowing straight downstream to the South China Sea the river reverses and flows 'up' into the Great Lake]. Here it's about 30 kilometres, and this one here about 56, 57 kilometres. During the rainy season the water flows backwards up here. It doesn't just flow one way, it can flow backwards. And when the water is running down at the beginning of the dry season, it runs down and down and down, about 60 kilometres. During the rainy season it gets wider here [ie. the Great Lake itself floods its banks and covers triple its usual area] and that's when we get alot of fresh-water fish. You don't even need to come down here to fish. So you see why the Thais and the Vietnamese have invaded the area [throughout our history] because here there is alot. You see the Mekong river here? And around here? [ie. around the Tonle Sap and into the Cardamom and Elephant Mountain ranges] Here Cambodia is almost the same as Canada in terms of lumber and natural resources. And that's why the Vietnamese after the war, they had closed the border with China, they had problems. They had no food supply. They couldn't depend on the Russians, because the Russians, as you know, they bought how many million tons of wheat from us, from Canada. They could only feed themselves. They couldn't feed the Vietnamese. They said, if you need guns we can give you guns, to fight, but the Vietnamese didn't need that because they had had enough. That's why their resolution was to control Cambodia and get the food and the lumber from around here. And also Laos, around here there is alot of natural resources, iron ore and timber. Right around here, they built a railway, moved everything from here, to pay back the Russians.

ML- So that was one of the reasons for the Vietnamese taking over Laos and Cambodia, for the natural resources...?

HY- Yes. They couldn't feed their people and if you can't feed the people, that's it, they'll turn against you, because you promised them that the communist regime, the communist ideology is the best in the world. But, you know, for human beings what is very important is their stomach. If you feed them they'll be with you, if there's nothing, then no. ...This here is Central Market, it's like the Byward Market. Most of the time it's for selling agricultural products.

ML- Is this quite old? It's a really beautiful building.

HY- I think it was built in 1941, the same year I was born, I guess. It's French architecture.

ML- ...and this...is Angkor?

- HY- Yeah, that's the first one I think. We knew how to build from the sixth century. And this one, I think, is about the eighth century, and this one too. You see this one was built by the Lady, by the queen - the reason why I want to show you this is because if you know something about me, about my background, you'll know everything - you see this is of the Angkor Temple from the twelfth century, all stone.
- ML- ...and it housed, what, thirty-thousand monks I think I heard?
- HY- Something like that... Because before the Khmer Rouge took over we had about twenty-thousand monks. And they have been forced to be defrocked, to become laymen. You see all this carved in stone...?
- ML- What's happened now with Angkor Wat?
- HY- The Angkor Wat has been destroyed by nature, because of rain, by erosion, but also by human beings...
- ML- Did the Khmer Rouge destroy...
- HY- Yeah. The fighting...the fighting. And the stealing, you know the Thai people - oh, I forgot to bring the National Geographic, 1982, that has a lot of things [on the Angkor Wat temple] - you see before they would steal the entire thing [ie. a whole piece of sculpture or bas-relief], now they just knock off the head and send it to Thailand and sell them. It costs between about four and six thousand dollars on the Thai market. You see the small one [the small temple] here in the picture? They began to build a small one first here. And then this one...that's the last model. You see they had water, a lake, human beings did this, it's not natural. They made it go into the rice fields, for growing the rice, this and that. But...well, from the eighth century to the twelfth century [it lasted]. We lost the war to the Thais in the twelfth century, or in 1235, something like that. It's very hard to get all the documents that I want to get...it's very expensive.
- ML- Do you try to put together things that you find about Cambodia?
- HY- Yes. I read...
- ML- Is this a scrapbook that you keep?
- HY- Yeah. And I'll write a note where I can get other information. ... You see that part, destroyed, that was during the war. The Cambodians didn't do that, they wouldn't do that because this they consider as Buddha. Maybe just a kid [did it]... but I don't think a kid could carry a gun like that...
- ML- Yeah. That looks like a big gun did that damage. Was it originally... a royal palace?
- HY- Well, around here is the royal palace. The temple itself is dedicated to the religion. You see, at that time we had two religions, Brahmanism - or Hinduism - and Buddhism. You see, some people say that two religions can't live together. For us it's different. I mean, at that time the Cambodians, the young generation, like right now, it's the same thing, because they have been trained, they have been

brainwashed by communism. They see communism as another religion. Gods. Mao-tse Tung, Ho Chi Minh as gods, as their gods. For us at that time India was very powerful. We considered Hinduism, we could compare it with the sun, and Buddhism compared to the moon. Again in the family we could compare 'dad' to the sun, 'mom' to the moon. The two have to be complementary to one another. Too hot is not good. Too cold is not good. Without the sun we couldn't survive. If it's too hot we couldn't survive, too. The same with religion. You see, in our beliefs, we are human beings. We try to be nice, kind, gentle, helpful, everything. But we know that human nature doesn't allow us to be always like that. We are all from different circumstances, all from different genetic transpositions. It's not all the same. Some people are born into a family that is cruel, they become cruel. Like twins. Because of circumstances they become separated. One is raised by an archbishop, the leader of a religion. And the other one is raised by gangsters. You can see when they grow up, when they are adults, the physical body may be the same, but in terms of behaviour it's not the same. So, we say, Hinduism teaches you to be strong-minded, in a sense a little aggressive. And that's good for our current life here, the people who want to be generals, police officer, the architect, the engineer. If you become a general you can't be gentle like a priest, an archbishop. When you enter into that training you have a duty and a function to do the job. But by the same token, there are people who say, no I don't want that, I want to be a scholar, the French word is 'savant', to be educated, nice, gentle, helpful, this and that. And for this we say, well, you want that way, Buddhism will teach you that way. So, at that time we had two religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. And they said, how many gods do you have. Well, Buddhism didn't talk about 'god'. The Buddha said we have god, but there are many gods. For you, your own god is your mom and your dad, for you your own god is you yourself. Because if you do bad, you get bad results, you do good, you get good results. First thing is you have god within yourself, and second, because you have the connection with your parent, you have to worship your own god here. That's the way.

ML- What do you think is the difference between Hinduism and Buddhism...and why...why is it important for you to practice Buddhism?

HY- Well, Buddhism is the...well, you have to look at the history. Before Buddhism [there] was Brahmanism...and Brahmanism had a lot to do with caste, social class, you know, this and that. And if you talk about the genetic roots of Buddhism, you see the [historical] Buddha he was born in India, in a tribe and he became like a king. At that time in India there were many small religions. The big one was Hinduism. Because he was born in Hinduism he was trained, he was taught the Hinduist way. But when he grew up he said, no, it's not that way. If you look in the world you see all sorts of worldly problems. To him he saw the world as a source of suffering, disease. He saw [what we call] 'the four sights'. The cycle of the world is you are born, you grow up, you become old, you get a disease, you suffer and you die. And you are reborn again. You grow up, you decay with disease and you die. The cycle is going on and on, and he didn't like that. He said, to me I would like to find out what is the root, what is the cause of being, the cause of getting old, getting a disease and suffering and dying. I want to end that, I don't want to go on like that. He had gone through five-hundred births, five-hundred deaths, incarnations, and this was going to be the last one.

And according to the predictions of the royal family in which he was born, Gautama Buddha when he becomes twenty-nine years of age he won't stay in the

royal palace, he will go away. So, his father always had a lot of servants and any time he would go out for a tour, this and that, they would chase away the old people, the sick, anything that they called the 'four bad things', crippled people, all kinds of bad pictures that would cause him to not be pleased with the world-life. But again, no matter how hard they tried, one day he got out, he saw the people getting old, getting sick, suffering, the people dead, and the last thing he saw was the saffron-robe of the priest. So he went back home and said, I can't stay. And he ran away. He couldn't even kiss his son goodbye because he left at night.

So he went far away, cut his hair off, he would sit and do the prayers, this and that. And he took six years, but it didn't work. Because he didn't eat as normal, he became skinny, skinny.

And one day a goddess, actually, an angel, the angel came down and played the guitar - well, I say 'guitar'. Over there they would say 'vina', you know, the Indian kind. He played but the string was not straightened to the level to make a good sound. So he still sat there. After that he tried to tighten it up and the noise was too tricky and the string broke. Then the next angel came. He tried but said the sound is not good. He put it tighter, but it was too tight so he took it down. He kept trying again and again, until the sound of the guitar was very lonely, but very good. And then he said, oh, now I get the idea! The first one was not tight and the sound was not good to listen to. And the second one was too tight and the string broke. It's the same with me. I tried for six years and it didn't work. And then the last six months I try too hard, I didn't eat, take care of myself, became skinny, and I couldn't control my mind because the body needs something. So he said, I have to go on the 'middle path', that's why they call it the Middle Path. He took the example of the last angel. And he took the middle path. He said, ok, I will eat, I will enjoy myself, it's normal, but not to indulge myself, there's a limit. And then he set up the 'four positions'. In a 24-hour day, he divided equally, you know, 6 hours he would sleep, 6 hours he would go in search of food, 6 hours he would teach the people, and 6 hours he would do the meditations. And he did. And after that he became enlightened.

So, now we come back to why we became Buddhists and why, at the same time we became Hinduistic. Again, we go back to the comparison between the moon and the sun, by comparing to our life. Life is beautiful but to go through it from the beginning to the end is not easy, you know, sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad. Sometimes you can succeed in what you want to do smoothly, but sometimes you get obstacles. When you have obstacles you can't be soft and gentle according to the Buddhist principles. If we're sitting here and someone knocks down the door and points a gun at us, well, do you allow him to do anything? If we can't protect ourselves, to protect our family, we couldn't even practice the religion. So we have to fight. But if you were trained one-hundred percent Buddhist, Buddhist, Buddhist, you know you have at least five precepts to observe, then another eight, another thirty, and then two hundred and fifty-seven. It would be too much soft, too soft. It doesn't work. In Hinduism, well, you are my friend, ok, equal. You stay in your home, I stay in mine. You need help, I help you. Sometime if you can, you help me. But if you give me a hard time, if I'm Buddhist and Hinduist, I will warn you, that's not nice, friend. I'll warn you once, maybe twice. There's a limit. And at that limit you have to use Hinduism. You could destroy me. I have to save myself. You can't be soft and gentle all the time. Whoever wants to be a general, whoever wants to be a police officer you have to be trained by the Hinduist principles. The one who wants to be a counsellor to the king, in a peaceful way, to become scholar,

professor, this and that, you have to be trained by the Buddhist principles. But both of them, they are like bicycle wheels one in front, one in the back, and you can go. But without one, it doesn't work, there have to be both.

ML- But then Buddhism became the dominant one...

HY- ...Yes. And later on, because most of the people who were trained by the Buddhist principles they became soft and gentle. It may be the trait of the people. Well, we can go back to why we lost the Angkor Temple to the Thais. Maybe because of that it may be psychologically true. At that time we were a big kingdom throughout all of Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese empire was only a small one to the North. The Laotians, nothing. The Thais weren't there yet, only in Funan, a Chinese province. The whole area was Cambodian at that time. Then, because of Kublai Khan, you know, the Mongol empire, they invaded south, and south, and south, and south, they chased the Thai - what they called the Tai, T-A-I,- a small minority, chased them down, and they came down to the Cambodian territory as a small unit. And then later on, I think they were helped by a Chinese general who was defeated by the Mongols, you know, Kublai Khan's army. And they plotted. They tried to attack Cambodia again and again, but they didn't succeed. And later on they used tricks. They sent spies to become priests...

ML- ...aah...to try and infiltrate...

HY- ...yeah, infiltrate, to become priests. And because we were Buddhists, we saw priests as, well, as soon as you put on robes of a Buddhist priest you have a passport, you have the licence to go everywhere, do everything. And at that time we allowed only two priests to become permanent archbishops in the Angkor area. They gave all sorts of information to the Thai army and they waited. Because of that the Cambodians at that time abandoned the Angkor temple, because, even though in our history we had lost some parts of the country, but not completely, this time we lost everything. And the people kept pointing at each other, because of the weakness, the weakness of this. And they abandoned Angkor and moved south, moved in to the seaside. With Hinduism you have to practice, and you have to have the monasteries, this and that. If you don't have that I don't think you can survive. But the Buddhists, because most of them moved to the south and continued to practice Buddhism generation after generation and they survived. Hinduism, most of them were forced to go to Thailand at that time. That's why, as I told you, some of my ancestors who believed in astrology, they said that from this certain month to that month the whole Angkor city will be burned, like fire, - they didn't say it would be war.

So my ancestors believed in that prediction. According to the prediction it was said that if you want to get away from that and survive you have to go to the north or to the east. So my ancestors moved north. And they survived. And the people from the northwest and the west, they were forced to go to Thailand. I've tried to find for five years, I've just found during the summer [a book] called "Asia: It's People and Cultures", something like that. I have the book at home and I have found a little trace in there written by an American scholar and historian that confirms what my grandfather and my great-grandfather told me, that Angkor Temple was lost to the Thais because of the treachery, because of the betrayal.

ML- ...those priests were Thai?

HY- Yeah. They were Thai spies who probably came as laymen and stayed in the temple, learned the Buddhist principles, and became priests and moved up, you know, vertical mobility, they moved up.

ML- So when would that have been? The twelfth, thirteenth century?

HY- That's in 1210, maybe 1215, because in 1232 Angkor was turned upside down.

Cambodia is one of several states in Southeast Asia that was historically influenced by India. Though it is not precisely clear when this process of Indianization began exactly, there is much evidence that an impact was being strongly felt during the first five hundred years of the Christian era (Coedes, 1964:14; Chandler, 1983:11). As Chandler notes, this influence was not determined by either force or colonization (unlike, for example, Chinese influence on neighbouring Vietnam), and this may account for the seeming ease with which Indian culture infused and blended with that of the native Khmer populations of the period (1983:14). A religious pantheon, a written language (Sanskrit), Hinduism, Buddhism, and ideas on architecture, science, politics and aesthetics were among the contributions made. One Cambodian dynastic myth has it that the country traces its origins to the marriage between a foreigner and a dragon-princess whose father presided over a water-logged kingdom. The foreigner brings her fine clothes to wear, while the dragon-king in return drains the country by drinking up the water, gives them some land and changes the name of the country to 'Kambuja' (Chandler, 1983:13). The origin of the name itself may be related, Coedes suggests, to a group of people, the 'Kambojas', in India or even ancient Iran (1964:47).

The combination of contact with India to the west and China to the north, the development of trade and diplomatic missions with these two nations, and the advances brought by more efficient irrigation and rice cultivation served to establish a number of

scattered, yet prosperous princedoms throughout Cambodia. By the ninth century A.D. these began to be consolidated into a kingdom, and what came to be known as the Angkorean empire.

The series of kingships that spanned the period from 802 to 1431 began with Jayavarman II and the institution of the devaraja cult borrowed from India, which links the king (raja) with the gods (deva), specifically the Hindu creator Siva (Coedes, 1964:101; Chandler, 1983:32). It was during this time that the great temple-cities were built in northwestern Cambodia, of which the famous Angkor Wat is one. Angkor (an adaptation of a Sanskrit word meaning 'city'), and the devaraja monarchies came to be embodied architecturally by these elaborate complexes which were part monument to royal parents and ancestors, part cosmogram representing the mythical Mount Meru, home of the gods, part burial place for the king, and part public works project (in the form of royally sponsored irrigation works). The Angkorean empire became at several times during this era the most powerful in Southeast Asia, sending diplomatic missions to China and extracting tribute from areas that we now know as Thailand, Laos, Malaysia and Vietnam.

Though Buddhism had been a part of Khmer culture since the beginnings of Indianization, and while many monarchs had respected or even studied Buddhism, it wasn't until the thirteenth century and the reign of Jayavarman VII that it was formally taken as the state religion. There were still many references to Hinduism, however, and as Chandler notes, it was a very workable syncretism in which Buddhist iconography and inscriptions existed alongside Hindu gods and goddesses, and where ascetics devoted to Shiva and Vishnu "were given cells on the temple grounds alongside Buddhist monks and learned men" (Chandler, 1983:61).

The thirteenth century became a time of great change and upheaval for the empire, with incursions being made into it from the growing Thai empire to the west, the Mongols to the north and the Vietnamese to the east. While Cambodia would still retain a royal

court its actual sovereignty would largely be determined by other nations of the region for the next few hundred years up until the middle of the nineteenth century when it would be determined by the French (Chandler et al, 1987:123).

One of the most significant changes for Cambodia originating in this period was the transition from Mahayana Buddhism, the school that Jayavarman VII had adopted, to Theravada Buddhism.

There are numerous schools, sects and denominations in Buddhism (see eg. Bapat, n.d.; Dutt, 1980; Kimura, 1978), but we can speak broadly of there being two main variants, Theravada (the Way of the Elders) and Mahayana (the Greater Vehicle). Theravada is also known by Mahayanists as Hinayana (the Lesser Vehicle), and as Kimura points out this seems to have its roots in earlier Mahayana forms professing a certain doctrinal and practical superiority over other, particularly older, schools (1978:115). The terms also refer to geographical divisions, ie. Mahayana Buddhism is practiced for the most part in the 'northern' countries of Asia (China, Japan, Tibet, Korea, and including Malaysia, Indonesia), while Theravada is practiced in the 'southern' countries of Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, Laos, Sri Lanka.

The two schools embrace some differences in belief, practice and bodies of Buddhist teachings. It is generally believed that Theravada Buddhism holds to scriptures and practices that are more contemporaneous with the historical Buddha, that it is an 'original' Buddhism as opposed to the 'developed' Buddhism of Mahayana (Kimura, 1978:ix). The very terms Mahayana and Hinayana do not exist in early Buddhist texts, but appear only in later Mahayana ones, hence it is preferable to speak of Theravada rather than Hinayana (ibid:7,69).

Chandler suggests that the adoption of Theravada Buddhism was the result of a number of factors coming together at the time of Jayavarman VII's decline. Unlike Brahmanism and Mahayanism of the time, Theravada was more of a 'people's religion',

their adherents practicing austerities and a dedication to poverty and humility, rather than the worship of superior kings and gods. The devaraja system fostered a very vertical, hierarchical arrangement of society, whereas with the decline of empire and the breakdown of that society, Theravada offered a more 'horizontal' arrangement, perhaps a levelling of society. Along with this there had been increasing contact between the Khmer of Cambodia and the Mon-speaking Theravadins of the Thai plains for half a century, which might also have much to do with the very swift and widespread conversion (Chandler, 1983:68).

Though the kingdom itself would experience a great deal of turbulence extending up to the present era, Theravada Buddhism would be the consistent core of Cambodian society (at least until 1975); so much so that for example, when the Angkor complex was, as Chandler says, "discovered" by French adventurers and missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, the Angkor Wat "contained a prosperous Buddhist monastery inside its walls, tended by more than a thousand hereditary slaves" (ibid:29); and that in the late 1960s fully ninety-five percent of the population was Buddhist.

Sixty-nine Needles.

ML- What is it that you have on your necklace that you wear? Are they three Buddhas?

HY- Well, no. In the middle here is Buddha, it represents the Buddha. And these ones are the saints.

ML- Which saints?

HY- The first one is Mokala. Mokala is very powerful in terms of magic. Now it represents the [monks] who went into the jungle, they went there before the communists took over. You know when you're ordained as a priest you don't have to stay inside the city, you can live in the jungle, you don't eat meat, you eat only fruit, sesame oil, vegetable oil, this and that. Gives long life, too. This one, another one, is named Kasapa. He's a saint, too. Again, the same as Hinduism and Buddhism. Mokala is Buddhist, he's a saint, but according to the religion he likes to fly, to go down to the sea, to go everywhere. And Kasapa is very gentle and soft.

ML- Kasapa?

HY- Yes.

ML- So one is sort of a compassionate form...?

HY- Yeah, compassionate. And the other one is, I don't know, very active, and, comparing to Christianity...I don't know...

ML- Hmmm...Like one of the disciples, say Peter, would be 'laws and rules', and another one would be a more compassionate type...

HY- ...Yes. Maybe like Saint Augustine...would be like Mokala. Something like that. So for us, we are Buddhist, OK, but in one way we are hard-side/soft-side. The soft side is Buddhist. The hard side is very Hinduistic. Yeah. That's me! Even my family. You know, it's very hard to believe, ummmm...I don't know how to put it. You are an anthropologist. I...I can speak [about this to you]. Even my own generation, some Cambodians, they live in the city, they know everything about the city, they didn't go outside, they didn't learn, to see where you come from. Like the same as some Black Africans and Black Americans, about their roots they don't know anything. With me, my family, we hated the French. Anybody that controlled Cambodia, we hated them the most, my family. And up to my grandfather, my father, even to me, well, we don't hate all of them. We hate authority. Any representative of the French government: we hated because they were very unjust. I don't know.... We believe in modern ideology, modern things, but, in the 'black side', something we couldn't see, we still believe in that, because it's a part of our culture. The same as magic, some African people - even Europeans - like Gypsies, they still believe in that.

ML- Well, and even people now, here, they'll say, oh, I believe in science, I don't believe in magic, but they'll still read astrology in the newspaper, or buy the books at the store...

HY- ...like my father, before he died, he met a saint in the jungle. Because like I told you, in my family, we had three elephants, and we would spend over two months a year in the jungle, in remote areas of the mountains, camping there, doing the fishing, hunting. The same as other people we in the big city, we enjoyed modern things, cars, this and that. But once a year we had to do that.

ML- How long would you spend?

HY- About two months in the summer...

ML- With brothers and sisters?

HY- Uh, yeah, well, I don't have sisters, all brothers, yes. So, we were five, but only two in my family [would go]. Again, according to astrological principles, it depends on what date you were born, your astrological sign, what time you were born. And my dad said, you can have that, and my second brother, you can have that. The same as in Africa, you know, when the time comes, the ceremonial circumcision, well, for us we do a different thing. We do almost the same in terms of form, but different in content. [.....]
[Here the tape ran out but to fill in the blanks, drawing from notes I made in my journal: It so happens that Horng's grandfather had one time discovered a saint, a hermit while travelling in the jungle. It is considered very good luck to come across one of these contemplatives, and if you do it is considered appropriate to ask them to perform any sort of religious devotion or rite that you might want eg. perhaps prayers for a relation who has died, or, as in this case, to perform a coming of age rite. On one of the family's summer treks into the jungle this is what they did.]
...in the body...

ML- There are 69 pieces of these small needles? Like acupuncture needles? [in his body]

HY- Yeah, but smaller than that.

ML- ...and they're made of copper...gold...silver...?

HY- ...and stainless steel...

ML- ...and he [the hermit] put them in your body?

HY- Uh...well, no. Again, I guess still in the West you believe in the full-moon days, the spirit of anything can come up. You see the Buddha was born, became enlightened and passed away on the same day, the full-moon day of the sixth month. And the saint picked that day, the full-moon day, 12 o'clock at night, he performed the ceremony for me. He put a big cup of rice-sesame oil, he put around all sorts of gold, this and that. Sixty-eight [needles] altogether and one stick, sixty-nine, is the 'leader'. He put them all in my hand. He prayed from six o'clock up 'til twelve o'clock at night. At twelve o'clock, you know, the full-moon is high. He slapped me, and all the needles were gone.

ML- Really?

HY- Yeah. They got into my body, one way or another, I don't know.

ML- So, where were they, the needles were in your hand?

HY- Yeah, put in the hand with the rice-sesame oil.

ML- So you just held them like that [indicating the hands cupped over each other, right over left]

HY- And he prayed, he prayed from six, the sun is setting, until midnight, the full-moon day, then he slapped me and bang! Gone!

ML- They weren't there anymore, they were in your body?

HY- Yeah. I don't know where. But most of the time maybe one or two are here...or here [indicating upper chest and back]. But the big one is here, in the left arm.

ML- How come, why the left?

HY- I don't know.

ML- Can you feel it?

HY- Yes!! If you don't mind I can show you. [removes his sweater to show the upper inside part of his left bicep] Yeah. Right there. You can push your finger.... See? You can push the needle. See that?

ML- Oh yes! Amazing!

HY- You can see both sides here [pinches the skin on both of the pointed ends of the needle, highlighting the length which is about an inch and a half long.] You see that one, that's gold.

ML- So they were in your hand, and...

HY- ...and he slapped.

ML- Now, what is it for, is it...?

HY- It's...I don't know... Like for the Africans. But this one is for, well, after you do that you have a lot of principles you have to observe, a lot of precepts. If you compared it to your social life, it's a kind of moral obligation, a moral principle. Like you're not allowed to steal somebody else's wife, somebody's girl-friend. If you know that that lady has a husband or boy-friend, you're not allowed. Absolutely not allowed. You're not allowed to have sex on the full-moon days. You're not allowed to eat or drink certain things. Lots of principles.

ML- Do you still follow those principles?

HY- Oh yeah. I still keep them. Like this one...[indicating an old 10-pointed ring he wears]

ML- I was going to ask you about that.

HY- Remember what I told you about what we believe? That there are ten directions in the world? This represents the genies. The east for us we consider the greatest direction. And then we have six here. Which makes eight.

ML- And then one above and one below?

HY- ...to make ten, yes. That represents the gods, the angels, all spirits, you know. Genie we call it, genie. The spirit protects each direction in the world. Before there was something in here, the magic stuff in here, but when I went to Paris I...you know, if you carry that you have more strict [rules] than the ones I just told you. You're not allowed to, you know the string that the ladies use to dry their clothes, their underwear. You're not allowed to touch that. You touch that you're going to have terrible things, you're going to have nightmares, headaches. It's like, I don't know, it's the cultural belief, of religious, animist belief. You know it's the same thing as you believe in the Western way in bad luck number thirteen.

ML- Like in some of our buildings, in the elevator there is no thirteenth floor, even though there, of course, is.

HY- Yes! You see here? The building there across the river? That's where I worked when I first arrived, I worked as security at night. In the morning I worked at General Building Services over there, and then at four o'clock I worked til after midnight over here, as a security guard. And the first assignment, a three month assignment, I worked as the one who had the big key, you have to make a tour [of the building] going up and down. There are eighteen floors there. But there's no thirteen! You see I went up and down, up and down ten times. And I couldn't find the damn thirteen. And there has to be a thirteen. I go on the first floor, I have my key, put it there. Second floor, so and so. And when I get on the elevator I count, yes, there are thirteen, but no thirteenth floor. It goes from twelve to fourteen.

ML- It's funny in this culture. Some people say, oh, I'm not superstitious!...

HY- Yeah, but they don't realize that. They don't notice that. You ask the people in the hotel about room number thirteen. They'll tell you nobody likes to be there. No way. Except maybe people from our area. maybe. And they don't ask why. It's very hard to tell somebody...[about their own superstitions]. You are an anthropologist, OK, I've studied anthropology, too. And we talked about social change, this and that, especially about cultural anthropology. If you don't see where you are, you don't believe it. And if you do believe it you don't ask for explanations from the people who never believed it. And sometimes people don't believe you, they don't try. Sometimes they say you're stupid. I don't know...

In the jungle, there are alot of wild animals. The panther always stays in the trees, you know the trees have alot of vines, and lots of leaves. Sometimes he hides there. That's why we have ten directions. East [etc] and up and down. Down some people say there is nothing there, but there are holes, and the poisonous snakes, they

can come out of there. And if we go, according to the Buddhist principles, underneath the ground, underneath there are lots of poisonous snakes, and there is another genie who protects that world there. That's why everytime we camped, we had to get close to the water source - because you are staying there for two months you can't get lettuce or things from home - you have to depend on the roots, wild vegetables. And if you don't learn from your elders, you won't know, you might eat something poisonous. So we had to find water sources and very close to the area where we can find our elderly teacher. He always told us the story that you can't expect the city to always be glamorous and abundant. One day you're going to run. [Editorial note: Was this a reference to the Khmer rouge regime that would eventually come?] We had water here, something to eat, but at the same time at night we have an enemy. The tiger will come here to find food and water the same as us. So, one way or another, you make a bonfire, but if he's hungry he won't care about a bonfire. They would come around because we had six or seven dogs. The dogs were good at smelling them. If the wind is blowing a certain way and you don't notice the tiger coming, the dogs will know first. And the elephant, too, will give you signals...

ML- You had elephants, too?

HY- Yes. We had three. To carry our stuff, everything. And we used water buffalo to carry the cart. And every night before the sunset my grandfather would ask me to get stones, ten stones. And then he would burn the incense and a candle, hold his head up to the East, and we would sit there and do the prayers. After that he would stand up, and throw the stones with all his strength. East, North...

ML- Aaaah, the ten directions...

HY- ...Yeah...West...so and so. And up there, he would try his best to go the highest that he could, up to the top of the trees. And down there, he didn't go 'down' there, he'd throw to the pond. You see? [laughing]

ML- [laughing] I get it [to throw it to the 'underworld']. I was going to ask you something. When you took your anthropology course did you learn about family diagrams, kinship diagrams?

HY- Yes.

ML- Here. I did this one to show you where I am. This is me, I have one sister, here are my parents. My father had one, two, three, four, five, six brothers and sisters. My mom only had four. And his father, I don't know much about him, but he was from China. My last name is Ling...[writing out the Chinese ideogram for 'Ling']

HY- Oh my!...'Ling'...

ML- Do you read Chinese characters?

HY- No.

ML- And my mother's family were from Ottawa. They were dairy farmers, my grandparents.

- HY- That's the same as me! My family were farmers. Landowners. Farmers. We had lots of farmland, and cattle, water buffalo. As the same in other cultures, we depend on land. Because land, our bodies, again you go to the Buddhist principles, even Hinduist principles, our bodies are composed of four...
- ML- ...elements?
- HY- Yeah, elements, but the technical term is 'corpuscle'. The first one is the soil, and then the sea. That means that the soil, the earth, is solid. The sea is water. And the heat is the sun...
- ML- ...'fire'?
- HY- Yes, fire. And then the atmosphere, the air. You see, oxygen comes from the sky, what we call in our language 'sky'. If you don't have the wide open sky you don't have air, you don't have the essential. So all human beings, anything in the world, is composed of those four elements, the four corpuscles. So after we pass away, we die, where do we go? We go into the ground. That means everything goes into the ground, our bodies become the soil, the liquid becomes the sea again. Our breath becomes the air, all the heat that we used to have. It doesn't just disappear. It goes to become the heat of the environment, the sun. So we believe in that kind of thing, we believe in the soil, in the earth, in the land, as if it's your mom, because without them we couldn't survive. So even when we are still alive we have a very close relation with the earth, with the ground, with the soil, even with our mom and our dad, our ancestors even if they are dead. Sometimes it sounds romantic a little, but that's something that we believe in. The cattle, the animals, this and that, all these are just friends. Just like the equipment, all kinds of things that help us to build up our lives, that's it. So we believe in that. Some people don't like that, they say it's nonsense but that's what we believe.
- ML- So everything is connected? As a farmer you have the land, it's part of you as well...
- HY- Yes, connected.
- ML- I was going to suggest maybe we could do a diagram like this of your family. Do you want to?
- HY- OK...[hesitates]
- ML- Is it complicated?
- HY- No, not really...
- ML- Well, we can try it. And then what we can do is refer back to it if we're talking about different people.
- HY- OK. [pulls out from his knapsack some books and photo albums. Some of the books on Cambodia are in French.]
- ML- Oh, some books!

HY- Yeah, some more.

ML- That means I can practice my French!

[NB: The kinship diagram would have to wait for another day.]

Is there a place for 'mystery' in ethnography?

Donoghue (1983) suggests that we live in an era in which we tend to act as "zealots of explanation", we seek to reduce all uncertainty about occurrences by 'domesticating' what we find outrageous: "one of our strongest motives...is to explain everything and preferably to explain it away" (ibid:11). In so doing we, in effect, 'neutralise' human experience and expression.

And of course, if we can't 'domesticate' something we often simply banish it from consciousness or at least from open discourse.

This drive to domesticate betrays, he says, a certain presumptuousness, that is, we presume "to know what reality is, and that it can be fully represented in plain sense and ordinary language without admitting mystery":

"The one risk our society isn't prepared to take is the risk of confessing that it doesn't know what reality is, or what distinguishes fact from illusion. It isn't willing to admit that, as the poet Wallace Stevens said, 'the squirming facts exceed the squamous mind'." (ibid:119)

All this is not to say we should celebrate mere mystification, obfuscation, or dwell in a state of innocent bewilderment. Ethnography shouldn't be simply a parade of enigmas, obscure or inscrutable observations and statements. But when we are met with flying saucers, needles mysteriously placed in the body, a doctrine of 'corpuscles' and, indeed, the number thirteen do we need to simply rationalise and/or dismiss them? As Donoghue offers, we don't need to "know" mystery, "but to be open to its action upon (us)":

"Acknowledgement of mystery doesn't mean that we sacrifice our intelligence for some higher cause or that we cultivate the exotic pleasure of believing something because it's impossible. Wittgenstein put this well by saying that 'what is

inexpressible - what I find mysterious and am not able to express - is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (ibid:120).

In acknowledging mystery we may do much for the imagination, to widen the realm of possible explanations, and to admit a wider realm of human experience.

May 1956.

ML- Was that given to you...the necklace with the three Buddhas on it? Where did you get it?

HY- This one? Well, this...in 1956 I was in high school. That was 2,500 years of Buddhism. You know there was a big ceremony in every country, and my country, too. So all the young people had to be ordained as priests, as Buddhist priests. It took me three months to learn all sorts of precepts, this and that, to become a priest for one month.

ML- Really! So you studied...basically everybody became a novice monk? In 1956?

HY- Yeah, as part of the family tradition, part of the family instruction to do that. So I got it from that time.

ML- Did you go to a monastery to study?

HY- Yes. You know, every eighth day, every fifteenth day you would go there. The priest would teach you to...you had to remember the recitations...

ML- Different sutras?

HY- Yeah. Like, before you eat you had to do different recitations. You would have to sit on the chair, the grass, anything, and do the prayer, the recitation. And food, people would offer you food, you would take the food. You know, when you become a Buddhist priest, the same thing as a Catholic priest, you have five precepts, like you are not allowed to steal things. Very strict. If you bring the food to put it in front of me. If you don't hand it to me I couldn't eat. Unless you hand it to me, the gesture, the invitation, that you give to me directly, and that I accept it from you, and then I can eat, otherwise, no. If you don't offer it to me, just sit there and talk, the time goes on way past 12 o'clock, I still can't take it.

ML- Because, then in a way it would be 'taking' the food...?

HY- ...Yes, without permission. And then, before eating, again, you will do the recitation, saying that the food is part of the material plane, that we have to take as input to support yourself, in order to survive. Not, you eat this because you like the taste, not because you eat this to increase your sexual tension, so and so. You know, to remind yourself. Everything is like that. You know, if you sit on a chair you do the same thing. The chair is soft and smooth, a comfortable thing for the time being. It's not that I sit on this because this is made from leather, because it's smooth and nice and comfortable. It's not in that sense. Everything is like that.

ML- Hmmm...
There are five main precepts?

- HY- Yeah, you're not allowed to kill, you're not to steal, not to have sexual abuse, that means in the sense of not to steal somebody's wife or girlfriend [ie. not to abuse sexual activity], not to tell a lie, and not to become alcoholic...
- ML- ...always following the 'Middle Path'...
- HY- Yeah. And after that, a little higher, you have eight, eight precepts. Then you have ten precepts, then thirty, then two hundred and twenty-seven at the top.
- ML- When you were studying in 1956, to become a novice monk did you have to take...
- HY- Yeah, all two hundred and twenty-seven precepts. You had to remember all that. Then there were the criminal ones, four of them. And the next one would be second-degree of thirteen.
- ML- I don't understand. Do you mean...?
- HY- The first one means that, of the five precepts, if you kill somebody, your priesthood is automatically eliminated. And the second one, if you had sex with a woman, your priesthood would be eliminated. The third one is if you order someone to kill somebody, that too is like the first one. And the fourth one, part of this [indicating the left-most of the three Buddhas on his necklace]. Because, you see the hermit here, the Mokala? It's very powerful, in terms of magic power. He can hide himself, he can.... You've heard of the priests in Tibet? The same thing, that's the fourth one. Some of them they stay in the jungle [ie. in Cambodia], they do meditation, they can do anything that they want. They reach a stage of sainthood. But even though you reach that, you're not allowed to say, 'I have reached sainthood', 'I can sit and do meditation and I can fly like birds', you're not allowed to say that. Even if you reach that stage. But simple priests, even if you do the meditation, and practice...some people, they haven't reached any stage, but they say they've reached the mystic, that too. If you declare...you know, the same as in our school here, plagiarism. That means that if you did this kind of 'plagiarism' it means you would lose your priesthood, because it is part of a lie. You would have to declare yourself in front of a committee of priests, and they would put you in the temple for at least three months, until you purify yourself.
- ML- Are you now technically still ordained as a priest, as a monk?
- HY- No. Now as a layman. As a layman, normally in principle, you always observe the five precepts. Very strictly.
- ML- Because I know of a fellow who was studying Buddhism in Nepal, and he was married. There was a special kind of ordination for married people.
- HY- Yeah, but that's part of the Mahayana, the Tibetans.
- ML- Ah, but this is Theravada...
- HY- Yes. It doesn't happen here. Nobody would force you, but you couldn't stand it because your behaviour, your conduct would be very sexually oriented or very strong in that sense. You could go to your superior in the priesthood and tell him directly that, sir, I think that now I feel bored in the priesthood, I would like to be

a layman, to be defrocked, I would like to liberate myself from the priesthood. That you can do. But as long as you are in the priesthood you are not allowed to do anything. It would be sinful.

You see, 99 percent of us have been through that kind of training, mentally, physically. And when the Communists came in they killed the people and put the blame on us, the Cambodians, the original, indigenous Cambodians who were scared about sin, about killing, let alone killing people. That's why sometimes I feel sad, I feel betrayed. If I don't go to school, to try to learn something, at least to learn how to say, to tell the world that what happened over there is not the fault of my ancestors or the ancestors of somebody else. It's the fault of Communism because they took all our kids and trained them. When they came back they looked like me, you know, Cambodians, curly hair, dark skin a little bit. When they came back they killed the people, and the world knows nothing about that. They make it look like it was the fault of all Cambodians. I still would like to go to school and learn how to tell the world that, no, it's not the way [the movie called] The Killing Fields projected the image of the Cambodian people...

ML- You mean you feel it gave the impression that all Cambodians were that way? I mean, that was just Pol Pot and...

HY- Yeah, and we have to know who are the Pol Pots, where they came from. It's like I was telling you the other day about the twins. Two twins, they came from the same family, genetically speaking they are the same, everything. But when they grow up they are dispersed because of war, because of an accident, this and that. One of them was raised by the priests, one of them was raised by Mafia gangsters. When they grow up they look the same, but their behaviour, their conduct is completely different. And you blame who? You blame the parents?

ML- Did you always want to be a journalist, when you were young? What made you decide to do that?

HY- Not really. My parents had passed away when I was young. My dad passed away when I was seven, and when I was thirteen years old, my mom passed away. So, I lived with my brother, my uncle, auntie. Because I was a little talkative, you know. I learned a little fast, according to my brother, and I was talkative. He said, why don't you go and take something where you can talk a lot, and you can become a diplomat. You have what we call in Cambodia "the heaven's gift", or something like that.

ML- Oh, like here the Irish say the gift of blas, or the gift of gab...

HY- You know, in my country they use the honey wax, the sticky stuff that you use for candles. They mix it with another kind of chemical product, to make it soft. Then they put it...underneath here [indicating the top of his mouth].

ML- Oh, in the roof of the mouth...

HY- You have different things here. You know, like the palm-reader.

ML- So, it's a kind of fortune-telling?

HY- Yeah. You get a picture of the character of a man.

- ML- You take a beeswax impression, and you can read it?
- HY- Yeah, and mine was like a flower, a jasmine flower. My brother, the one who was a medical doctor, his looked like a tiger or lion head.
- ML- Who did that for you?
- HY- My grandfather. And he said that, your career will deal with something that is involved with talking, to make people listen to you. And when I grew up I talked and learned fast. I had to learn recitations by heart, like multiplication tables, two by two make four, something like that. And most of the time, if somebody was reciting loudly I would stop. I wouldn't say anything. I'd just keep quiet and listen. And the next morning I could do the same thing!
- ML- So you've got a good memory!
- HY- When I stayed in a boarding school. If my roommate was talking alot, or reciting loudly I would turn off my light and just sleep. The next morning I just turned the pages a bit, this and that. I would go to school and I'd do the same thing [as well as him]. He'd say, 'dammit, I want to kill you' (laughing).
- ML- So he was studying all night, but you went to sleep! You just needed to hear it once or twice?
- HY- Yeah. They got mad!

It has been said that Cambodia, before the Khmer Rouge regime of 1975-1979, was "the most Buddhist country in Southeast Asia" (Jackson, 1989:68). In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries perhaps over 100,000 men were members of the order of monks (sangha), "more than a third of the able-bodied men" in the country (Chandler, 1983:81). In the contemporary period, at least in the late 1950s to the late 1960s - the last period for which there are statistics - there were estimated to be "53,400 fully professed monks plus another 40,000 novices or temporary residents in 2,800 monasteries" (Williams, 1969:161). The armed forces at the time numbered 34,000 (ibid).

The real significance of the sangha for Cambodians can be only partly recognized from these figures because, in fact its influence extended into many other domains of

society. In 1968 for example, there were 1,615 primary schools and 590 secondary schools run by the monks providing roughly half the staff and accomodation for education at these two levels. Much of the village medicine and therapeutic practice was conducted by the monks, and in rural, isolated areas the monastery served as a "news and information centre, sometimes housing the only radio, and the only men able to read and interpret newspapers" (Williams, 1969:162; see also, Ebihara, 1966). As Williams suggests, it would seem reasonable to suppose that the influence of the sangha and Buddhist teaching would have a great effect on the "national attitude and character" in both religious and secular matters. Furthermore, it was an accepted and desirable act for every male to enter the order for at least some period of time during one's life. Though there has long been a tradition of an order of nuns in Buddhism there does not seem to have been the same social expectations, or benefits, that would encourage a woman to enter the order as there were for men (Gombrich, 1988:104-105).

The full-moon day of the month of Vaisakha is considered the most sacred date on the Buddhist calendar because on that day three significant events in the life of the Buddha occurred - his birth, his enlightenment and his death or parinibbana, "the final extinguishing of the flame of desire of an enlightened one" (Rahula, 1974:145). According to the Theravada Buddhists the parinibbana happened in 544 B.C., though there is some debate about this among other schools (Bapat, n.d.:v). Nevertheless, it was decided by the Buddhist Synod to consider the full-moon day of May 1956 the 2,500th anniversary of these three events. Many Buddhist males from all Buddhist nations entered the sangha around this time to commemorate the anniversary.

The rules of conduct for a Buddhist are encoded in a series of precepts, beginning with five for the laity, the Panca-sila, emphasizing moderation in all one's actions. Members of the sangha follow additional precepts that pertain to more specific aspects

concerning the conduct of a monk. A greater number of precepts are invoked depending on the level of one's ordination.

The four 'criminal' precepts that Horng refers to comprise those set of offences for which a monk or nun would be forced to leave the sangha. These are known as the parajika offences (Gombrich, 1988:104). One etymology has it that this term comes from a word meaning "entailing defeat" or "to be set aside", that is, to be defeated by one's desires and to be excluded from the order (ibid). The four offences are: having sexual intercourse, taking something not freely given, intentionally killing, or inciting to kill, any human being, and falsely claiming special or miraculous powers. Within the sangha, particularly in Theravada Buddhism, there is a tradition of 'village dwelling' and 'forest dwelling' monks. Village dwelling monks would stay in the monastery and tend to the needs of the community in and around it, while forest dwelling monks would exercise the option to live an ascetic, contemplative existence in the forest (Gombrich, 1988:156). While it is an accepted fact in many contemplative traditions that such ascetic conditions and practices may result in the practitioner being able to perform certain mystical feats - and of course, such things need not be experienced solely by forest dwelling monks necessarily - in Buddhism these are considered side-effects, not the goal of contemplation. The Buddha's teachings strongly advise against mistaking such events for true insight (Rahula, 1974:68).

It is not clear just what the condition of the sangha is in Cambodia at this point. In 1975 when the Khmer Rouge came to power they worked quickly to obliterate all references to Buddhism in Cambodian society, as Buddhist ideals and practices "contradicted vital aspects of the revolutionary doctrine" (Jackson, 1989:68). As Williams had presciently noted in 1969, such a regime would deny the first principle of Buddhism, "the uniqueness and the privacy of the individual mind" (1969:163). All monks and nuns were defrocked, many were killed, others were sent to communal work camps. Many monasteries, shrines and other religious sanctuaries were destroyed.

While these particular atrocities ended in 1979 with the Vietnamese invasion which ousted the Khmer Rouge, and while, as of this writing, it has recently been announced that Buddhism is once again the state religion and can be practiced openly once more (Asiaweek, February 23, 1990), it is difficult to say what the effect of that period on the faith and the monastic orders has been. It may be the task of those with "the heaven's gift" to carry forward the 'ways of the elders'.

A Birthday Party for the Elephants.

HY- ...It's all a part of my past. Like my brother. I learned a lot from him. He was very intelligent, very inquisitive, more than me, this guy.

ML- Did he study medicine in Cambodia?

HY- Yeah, he studied in Cambodia, then he went to France, he went to Paris.

ML- Do you find in your family that there are some people that you are closer to than others?

HY- No, to me they're all almost the same. Only... the reason that I'm very close to him is that during my high school years I lived very far from my province. I lived in Phnom Penh. He practised in Phnom Penh, he had his own clinic. So I was very close to him, and helped him a lot, in terms of testing, this and that. I told you that we tested animals? We would get two rabbits, two...?

ML- No, I don't think you...

HY- That was his part of, I don't know, a psychology, medical practice, sociology, anthropology, something like that. He talked about freedom, the freedom of human beings, the freedom of animals. To relate it to the strength, the mentality, to the intelligence, everything. He got two chickens, from the same family, the same age. Two rabbits, two dogs, two pigs. Got them from the same families, two each. And he separated one from each and raised it captive, he made a cage for each one. The other one was raised loose in his back yard. There was a big fence there. He left them loose, he let them eat, he let them play. The other one was raised in the cage, was captive. No freedom. The other one had freedom. Each two by two. Every three months he would test them. Test in terms of intelligence, force, strength, how strong. And in terms of intelligence and cheerfulness. Every month, when the time came, he would deprive them, not feed them for at least about six hours, or sometimes the whole day. No water, nothing, no food. And then after that he would open the cages, let the guys in the cages get out. Mix with the other ones. They'd fight with each other, play sometimes. Then he would feed them, throw it around and let them eat, let them fight with each other, group by group. And after they ate they were thirsty. He would put a big pot of water in a cage with a small door. In order to reach into the cage they had to fight to get through.

You see the whole day, sometimes six hours, most of the time he asked me to note down what I saw, any kind of phenomena that you would see. When they were fighting for food, or playing. Most of the time, the animals that were raised outside the cages showed that they were faster, stronger, more intelligent, more cheerful, screaming, yelling all the time. The ones that were inside the cage were the opposite case. They were slow, they couldn't fight for food. They got bullied.

ML- So that was your brother's study...on freedom...

HY- Yes. Because, he said, we can relate this to freedom. Outside the animal has freedom, it can walk, it can run, it can do anything. The ones inside, they couldn't do that, because they were caged. And because they couldn't do that they weren't strong. Outside you practise, like if you practise sports, the person that plays sports alot is far stronger than the one who does not do that. In terms of strength, in terms of health. My grandmother didn't like this, though.

ML- No?

HY- Because old people, they are soft and gentle. And we are Buddhist. The way we did that [the experiment], they didn't like that we terrify the animals. We kept telling grandma that this was our way of studying things. [We would say], you know, the people who make medicine for you, this and that, they have to do this kind of thing. She would say, no! no! I don't believe that! You're not going to give me an injection, I don't like it if you do it that way.

You know, old people like that they know nothing about this kind of thing. Well, she knows alot in terms of her own way, but in that kind of thing, no. Because her generation was different from us. She believed in an injection, but if you tell her that it is the result of this kind of testing she'd say, no, I don't like that. Her mind was a different thing.

ML- Which grandmother was it, your father's mother...?

HY- No, my grandmother from my mom's side. She didn't like it because she saw the way my brother did the experiment as cruelty to the animals. She considered it sinful to terrify them like that.

Well, she's right in her own way. It's the same as here in Canada, and in the Western world, the animal rights activists. It's the same idea. The way we test the rat, the monkey, this and that. For her, she never ate meat. She would eat fish, yes, only a bit of chicken and pork maybe. The same as my mom. She would never eat beef, or water buffalo, even milk she never touched.

On my mother's side and my father's side, they were big land-owners. Both sides had lots of land, and livestock. Normally they would have five elephants, but by the time that I grew up there were only three. Because when they get old we let them go. They didn't like the noise of the city, the cars, this and that.

ML- You had them in the city?

HY- Yeah. Well, like in Ottawa here...

ML- This was in Stung Treng...?

HY- Yeah, in Stung Treng, in the province. We had property in the city, like in Ottawa here, and then we had about 15 kilometres from the city a ranch, a farm. All the cattle, the elephants, the livestock there.

But once in a while, about once a year, during the rainy season beginning in May and June, when we had a lot of watermelon, and sugarcane, bananas, once a year we would make a birthday party for the elephants.

ML- Oh really?!

- HY- Yeah. You see, to us, especially my family, we considered them members of the family. Because of transportation, heavy stuff...
- ML- They're supposed to be very intelligent, and very sensitive...
- HY- Oh yes, very sensitive. You know, we call them 'tractor' [laughing], 'the living tractor', because you don't need to change spare parts, you don't need to oil them, you only need to take care of them like a human being. If they need a bath you give them a bath. Cut their nails, brush their teeth. Their teeth are very important, because they eat grass, they eat branches. Sometimes a big piece of wood gets stuck in there. And their nails, big nails, you have to cut them otherwise if he steps on a stone he might get cut, it gets swollen, gets infected.
- ML- So what would you do specially for them at the birthday party?
- HY- Well, at the beginning of the rainy season, our family would pretend that once a year at that time [it was their birthday], we would perform a ceremony for all the three of them.
- ML- Was it just your family that did that?
- HY- Some other families would do that kind of thing also. But in my area, because my family was a very old family, generation after generation, (even in the West [of that region] we had built a stone temple which we still respect, still observe), my mom used to make wine for them.
- ML- Wine?! For the elephants?! (laughing)
- HY- You know, over there we have big jars, earthenware jars, the same as in China. We would put pineapple, watermelon, banana, all kinds of things. Sugarcane, we would cut it and bang, bang, smash it. And put it in the big jar with some water, and keep it for about 48 hours. It would become fermented, a little sweet. They could drink the water and they could eat the whole thing. And when they had it they would get crazy, I mean, not in terms of 'crazy, get drunk', but...
- ML- ...a little happy...
- HY- Yeah. And they would play with the kids, our friends and neighbours, who would have some pieces of sugarcane or watermelon. They would lay down, let the kids on their backs and walk around and come back. They would play like that. But the caretaker would always stay close. Because some kids are naughty. Or maybe just out of curiosity they might pinch them, this and that. If they get mad it's terrible.
- ML- Are elephants very easy to train?
- HY- You have to catch them when they're young, six, seven months old until about. From six, seven months old to three years... that's the period you can catch them and train them.
- ML- Because they live quite long lives don't they? Fifty, sixty years?

- HY- Oh, longer than that. Eighty, ninety years old. That's why at the age of sixty you let them go.
- ML- Would they be OK in the wild then?
- HY- Yes, but during the summer, there's no good grass, no green grass, they have to stay very close to the ponds, where they have water and grass. And the elephants eat the elephant grass, what they call elephant grass. During the summer it grows high, like wheat. That's why they stay close to the water.
And the reason why we let them go is because as they get older they don't like the noise, we want them to go live in the jungle. But it's a funny thing, once in a while they come back, because they think of the other three, the younger ones here. They treat them like a family. They have lots of things like human beings, they're very intelligent, very perceptive. You know, when we prepare the thing like that [the party], they eat, then they lay down in front of my house, the property of my grandfather: and my father, there was big tree, a big pole. That's when we used to draw altogether and make the ceremony. They would kneel in front of that pole in front of my house. They have lots of expression, lots of meaning. Some people say, no, they're just animals. No, they're not 'just animals', they have emotions. They would think about my grandfather, that's what my grandmother used to tell me. They would think about him, the same as family, they used to be all together. You see, everytime you saw an elephant, especially the two older ones, to us, even though they're not related to my grandfather directly, you can feel. How about my grandmother? Her husband, when her husband is gone, when she saw the elephants, she saw exactly the same thing as when her husband, my grandfather, was still with them.
- ML- So when she sees the elephants she makes a connection with your grandfather?
- HY- Yes! And the elephants remembered her. Everytime they would come, it would fall on the same day, they would stay two, three days, or a week or so.
- ML- The elephants would come back? After your grandfather died, after they had been set free?
- HY- Yes. Every two or three months, sometimes. But most of the time they would come during the same period that we had the celebration. Maybe sometimes, one way or another, the caretaker would go and find them. Maybe it was coincidence. I don't know.
- ML- You know, I think animals are far smarter than people usually give them credit for.
- HY- Oh! Well! I'll give you another example.
The first one [the first elephant], when he got very old, he got into the pond in the summer to get all kinds of weeds and food like that. Because of the muddy ground he couldn't get out. He couldn't get out of the pond and stayed there for two or three days. A tiger jumped on him and bit him.
The other three guys at home here felt uneasy. They pushed back and forth, and rubbed themselves against the poles. You know the big trees that we would cut the branches off and turn into poles for wood? They would rub back and forth, screaming and yelling. And the caretaker knew. He talked to my father, talked to

my grand-uncle, I mean the elder brother of my mom, and said, they [the elephants] told us something about the other two, there's a problem somewhere. They put up all the supplies, you know, the food, the guns, and left at night. In a day and a half they found him. The tiger couldn't kill him but he bit. The other guy maybe stayed close around to try and help, so the tiger ran away. But he was wounded and had to stay in the muddy pond there. So they got a big, big rope, got down there, wrapped it around him. And all of the four, the old guy and the three, dragged him out. The took care of him, stayed about a week or so. And when the supplies were gone one elephant came back home with the caretaker, got more supplies, went back, took care of him until he was healed.

ML- And then brought him back home?

HY- No. Left him there. But once in a while he would go take a look. It's, I don't know, the way, the way of my family. We live on the land, the land is part of us, we live with animals like that. When they die, they die. But the ones that are still alive are part of our family. Because through them we manage to do anything. We don't have to work very hard. We have somebody to help. We sell livestock. And once a year we would like to go camping in the jungle according to our way of doing things. Those elephants would bring you anywhere you want to go, peacefully, nicely. Without them we couldn't go in those parts. And we would lose a part of our family tradition if we didn't do that.

ML- It's interesting...we used to have a dog and I was very close to the dog. And I'm sure there were things that she 'knew'...

HY- Oh, yeah. We used to have dogs too. We had horses too, but since no one was interested in training them...and sometimes they would kick people...that's why we sold them.
But again, that was part of the traditional family belief. We had all kinds of animals, we had land. We used to have servants, or what you would call servants. We used to hire mountain people, hill tribe people, to take care of the livestock. We always called them caretakers. They were part of family, too.

ML- In my studying a little bit of Buddhism it seemed to me that it was an important part of all beliefs that you should have a reverence for all life, and all animal forms...

HY- Yes. The Buddha defined five hundred different kinds of life forms, human beings and animals, low to high. That means, he went through different experiences to know that all kinds of life, different lives, different animals, big or small, everything is nothing. Just the cycle of birth. You become old, die, and the cycle goes on and on. During your time you are reborn, sometimes as different animals. It's nothing, nothing very important. So it is to end this kind of birth. And there's no other way to do that. There's only one way. Firstly, to eliminate the desire to be reborn again. To become a Buddha, that's it.

"Wanderers, these four great truths have been made known by me after I had realized them through my own superknowledge. What are these four? In this first case, wanderers, a brahman speaks thus: 'No living thing is to be harmed.' So saying, a brahman speaks truth, not falsehood. Thereby he does not think 'recluse' or 'brahman' or 'I am better or equal or inferior.' Moreover by fully comprehending this truth he comes to be one going along with mercy and compassion towards all creatures." (Anguttara-Nikaya, ii, 176-177)

"And as for your saying that for the sake of Dharma I should carry out the sacrificial ceremonies which are customary in my family and which bring the desired fruit, I do not approve of sacrifices; for I do not care for happiness which is sought at the price of others' suffering." (Buddhacarita, XI, 64.)

"In many a figure could I, monks, talk a talk on animal birth, but this is as far as I go; it is not easy to describe in full, monks, so many are the woes of animal birth." (Majjhima-Nikaya, iii, 169)

"Whatever monk should intentionally deprive a breathing thing of life, there is an offence of expiation." (Vinaya-Pitaka, iv, 124)

Reverence for all life forms, compassion for all sentient beings figures as perhaps the central guiding principle in Buddhism. The manner in which this principle weaves its way into practice is itself bound up with the multiple crossing threads of daily life.

It seems too clinical to speak of 'a complex set of relations'. It belittles the richness of the connections, the bonds, the "webs of significance" (to borrow from Weber, via Gcertz, 1973:5) that are apparent in the braid of associations that might describe the relationship between, for example, the elephants, Horng, and his family. There are resonances far beyond what one might see simply as obligatory adherence to a religious precept.

A list of 'elephant facts' seems a wholly insufficient way of amplifying these resonances, and yet they are so literally and intricately polyphonic that the only way to describe them (as opposed to simply 'listening' for them) is to arbitrarily isolate certain lines and reassemble them afterwards with one's own 'ears', in a sense to sing some parts and hope for a whole in the echo:

- The capture and training of elephants for work, in particular for the lumber industry in Asia and Southeast Asia, is traditionally a very slow, gentle, patient, caring process (Freeman, 1981). Generally, one caretaker establishes a rapport with a single elephant and this relationship is maintained 'for life'. It may be ten years after capture before an elephant actually joins a work-force in the forests hauling timber. By this time it may be almost twenty years of age, and will have a working life of some thirty more years. In each year there are nine months of work and three months of rest, i.e. from June to the end of February they may work, and from March to May, the hot season, they rest. Each working month is itself often composed of eighteen working days and twelve rest days, usually in the form of a cycle of three work-days, two rest-days.

- Elephants are highly social animals, and it has been reported that it is a habit among them of pulling the tusks from the mouths of their often long-dead companions, carrying them away, and smashing them on a rock or tree. They will also often cover a recently deceased companion with branches and earth.

- At the height of the Khmer empire there may have been 200,000 war-elephants in captivity. In 1975 it was estimated that there were less than 1,000 used exclusively for domestic work and perhaps only 10,000 left in the wild (Freeman, 1981).

- Elephants appear in their earthly form in much of the iconography and ornamentation found in temples and shrines in Cambodia, and importantly, in the more celestial, divine form of Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Siva and Parvati, borrowed from Hinduism. Among other things Ganesha is the 'lord of the obstacles' (Giteau, 1976:260) who is able to overcome hindrances and clear a path for those who invoke him. His blessing is "beseeched at the outset of any personally significant undertaking, from the building of a house to the performance of a dance, besides so many other occasions in the course of our entire vulnerable existence" (Perera, 1984:76):

"He is more than merely approachable: even the irreverent can find him endearing. He's pot-bellied and he loves sweets. Bequeathing energy, he understands how

sweetmeats can pep you up, so long as they are absorbed in the right form and proportion. When decorating his shrine you remember how he also loves the green of durva grass, and the flowers you give him are always red, to symbolize his blessing of life's blood" (ibid).

- The relatively long life span of an elephant is comparable to our own and is an apt mirror of our own life-course: we are born and raised in sociality, we spend a substantial amount of time learning - whether formally or informally - we work, we retire. And as with any human-to-human relationship the connection between one being and another is a meeting-point where all other past, present and future relationships on either side potentially intersect.

When we celebrate, as for example a birthday, we simultaneously give thanks, honour the specialness (the divinity perhaps?) of the individual, and remind ourselves, whether consciously or not, of both our continuity and our mortality.

The Ways of the Elders.

- ML- Hmmm.
Remember once you told me that it was your grandfather who took you camping in the jungle?
- HY- Yeah, my grandfather, who did the prayer and threw the stones...
- ML- Was that your mother's father, or your father's father?
- HY- My mother's father. He lived a very long life.
- ML- How long did he live?
- HY- He lived ninety-, well,...my grandmother ninety-six years old when she passed away. My grandmother was older than him, one year older. Both of them were cousins. They got married to each other. My grandfather was ninety-five. Only three days difference. My grandmother died first, some kind of, we didn't know exactly what kind of disease, like a fever. In about four, five days she passed away at the age of ninety-six. And they kept her body at home for three days, for the funeral, the services, waiting for friends, relatives to pay their last respects. And then they brought her coffin to be burned. Some of them they burn, some of them they bury, like in the Chinese tradition. But hers they burned. Incineration. And then they came back home. My grandfather came back home. He went to sleep at night. He slept smoothly. And the next morning he died too. No disease, nothing.
- ML- I've heard and read a lot about that kind of thing. The way some people decide it's just time.
- HY- It's just time, that's it.

And you know, their life was not the city people's life, not completely like that. It wasn't primitive, or indigenous like the people in remote areas. But what they liked...they liked to be free. They liked to be free. And whatever they did, they did slowly. They would keep saying, oh, never mind, take your time...never mind, take your time. By the concept of an industrial society you can't live that way, but for them it was, never mind, it's OK. Always like that, with the kids, with all of us, with the servants, the caretakers. Never mind, that's OK, but be careful next time.

And they liked the sport. Like walking. Wherever they would go, both of them. Talking.

And diet, they rarely ate food from our industrial product. They didn't like canned food, no. They had property, and grew all kinds of vegetables, legumes, potatoes, this and that. And they cooked it themselves. And the rice, the rice that was ground by a machine, they would never use that. They used the old method, you know, they built with a big piece of stone, a grinder, and a box. They would just

get the skin off. You know the second part after the skin is a dark brown, the bran. That, according to my brother, has lots of vitamins A and B, especially B...

ML- ...and if it's polished too much you lose that.

HY- If that's gone it's no good.
And if you asked them, why don't you like the nice, white, clean rice. We don't like the taste, that's what they'd answer. They said they like this taste. They didn't know how to tell us why, but for us, like with my brother, he could say, if you get rid of all the bran all the vitamins are gone, there's nothing in there. And the vegetables they grew there they didn't like to use chemicals on them. They used some kind of grass they would cut and dry in the summer, and they would throw in [the hole they dug in] the ground. Bit by bit they would throw in there, throw in there, bit by bit. And during the rainy season all they would have to do is dig there and they would have fertilizer, natural.

ML- Like a compost...

HY- Yeah. The old people were like that. They used bone, of course, they would burn bones, too, of any kind of animal. Like if you are going to grow a tree, any tree, a fruit tree, coconut tree. They would dig the ground then put bones in there. Until the rainy season came. And then you could dig in the soil and grow the food.

ML- Why did they say they used bones?

HY- They would say, because when we put that there the tree will grow fast and have big fruit. They know only that. But for us, because the bone is calcium, for us...

ML- That's our explanation...

HY- But for them, they would say, that's what our ancestors, our parents used to do. It's good, so we keep doing that.

So, the way they ate, the way they practised. They would walk, do this and that, move around. But they never forced themselves...

ML- ...not like, I have to go jogging, I have to eat right...

HY- No, for them it was more relaxed.

And they liked doing meditation. On the eighth day, the fifteenth day, the full moon day. The whole day they would eat just fresh vegetables, this and that. And they didn't want anyone to be too close to them then. But if somehow, someday lots of relatives would come, they would get out of the house, just the two of them, and go to the cemetery.

ML- To do meditation?

HY- Yeah, meditation, to keep quiet over there. That was the secret of life for them.

But when the grandfather and grandmother from my father's side came.... They were very ..business-type persons...a little aggressive. And they had a short life.

Same as my father. When he was fifty-eight years old he had a heart attack. It wasn't a heart attack because of disease. It was because at night he wouldn't sleep. For weeks and weeks. During the daytime he was smart, smiling, doing this and that, the same as anybody. Only my mom knew something was wrong. And we tried to persuade him (my brother did because I was too young) tried to persuade him to go to the hospital. He'd say, no, I've got nothing, I'm fine. But then at night he wouldn't sleep. Only, after about six weeks he died smoothly. Still strong, fresh. He loved business. But somebody cheated him. It was very hard for him to do something [about it] according to the law and rules and regulations, so he used a short-cut method. He burned down their business. There was nothing else he could do. But he felt so much remorse.

He was a good merchant, selling stones, gems. You know in Cambodia there are alot [of gems]. You might have seen in [the newspaper] last week about the Khmer Rouge. They let the Thais, the Laotians, the Burmese get in to find sapphires. And they have to pay 'taxes', twenty dollars or two hundred dollars, I don't know, per person. Before it was very rare, just the people who knew the value. The Thais and the Burmese would get in there. And smuggle them through the border. Now that the Khmer Rouge occupy [that region] nobody can get in to cut the wood and to get the stones. The Khmer Rouge are very strict. Now if you want to do business you pay the 'tax'. That's what they do now, before, no.

So, my dad was travelling alot in the north, bordering with Laos and Vietnam. And now bordering with Thailand the Khmer Rouge intercept, because Thailand is a good market, in order to export to Europe. In Thailand there is a little, but [gems] are not as abundant as there [in Cambodia]. To do the business, well, most of the people who dig the ground to get the gems, to get the stones are not rich people, just simple laborers. Most of them don't have land. Like if you own the land they will ask if they can dig the ground, but they have to pay for it. Most of the people were poor. My father would loan them money, he was a nice guy. He knew that most of the people were poor. He knew that they go there because they would like a certain amount of money to buy foodstuffs, a certain amount of material things for themselves and something for their families. And my father would say, I can give you money, how much would you like, so and so. On only one condition, if you have good stones you won't sell to anybody else. Keep it for me. He would give the same price as anybody. And those people were very sincere, very trustworthy. Whenever they had problems they would run to my father, the same as with me right now. My father was very perceptive, very sensitive to anybody's problems. Because...we were not rich but because we had property we didn't need much. We didn't need anything, to cut somebody's throat to get anything. We did business in our own way. If you want something, like if you had some land but didn't have the water buffalo in order to do [the work] my father would say, well, you can come and talk, you can get two water buffalo to do the job, and next year however much you want to give us in rice or whatever you want, that's fine, or you can save up and buy the water buffalo, you can do that by installments, whatever you want, we will reach it by agreement. He always accomodated these people. And his name was always good everywhere. And when those people found good quality [stones] they would always bring them to him. Because, they would say, today, if I sold this to somebody else I would lose a good contact, with him. And if I need some help in the future with money or something I couldn't call on him anymore. So they built up a kind of 'bridge'.

There is a passage in Napoleon Chagnon's Yanomamo that has always held a certain poignancy for me. It involves his response to the death of one of the members of the group he was living with, someone who was killed by a raiding party from a rival tribe. Up to that point Chagnon had been feverishly doing the work of anthropology, assembling genealogies, peering into people's cooking pots, making notes, and making more notes. But on this particular evening something changed:

"I remained in my hammock and gave up collecting genealogies. As darkness fell Damowa's brothers began weeping in their hammocks. I lay there and listened, not bothering to tape record it or photograph it or write notes. One of the others asked me why I was not making a nuisance of myself as usual and I told him that my innermost being (buhii) was cold - that is, I was sad. This was whispered around the village, and as each person heard it, he or she looked over at me. The children who inevitably gathered around my hammock were told by their elders to go home and not to bother me anymore. I was hushuo, in a state of emotional disequilibrium and had finally begun to act like a human being as far as they were concerned" (1983:187).

I bring up this ethnographic tangent because it raises the question of the place of 'silence' in fieldwork, that there are times when silence is the only appropriate response, and that in attempting to communicate this gap or space in ethnography we can really only talk 'around' the silence. Many of these conversations have been punctuated by such silences.

There is, for example, a fuller story to the death of Homg's father mentioned only briefly here and, as will become more apparent in other of the conversations, it involves a life-long condition of being continually restrained and constrained within a society dominated by French colonialism. In addition, there has been a great amount of suffering and personal human loss in Homg's life, losses from the war in Southeast Asia in the 1960s, losses from the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979, and losses upon coming to Canada.

When we write we seem to operate on the assumption that there are to be no silences, that our task is to fill in the gaps between experiences, to leave nothing unsaid. But it would appear that an essential part of dialogue is to provide a space for silence, silence that permits the other to speak, and which permits one to rest in the unsaid.

Ceremony and Nourishment.

- ML- ...Did you not sleep very well last night? You didn't sleep very well the night before, you said...
- HY- Well, I only had a little time to sleep, three hours, three hours and a half, that's it. I woke up early to do some work. I had to go down to the kitchen, to the table, to work. Otherwise I would disturb my wife and kids.
- ML- I remember you telling me once that meditation was important for you...to keep things together. Do you do a regular meditation in the morning or...
- HY- Before I sleep, no matter if I'm tired, I have to do some meditation. I lay down, close my eyes, and then I do a meditation.
- ML- Just as you're going to sleep?
- HY- Well, I do a prayer first.
- ML- What prayer do you do?
- HY- Well, normally we, according to Buddhism, we wish ourselves and our families to be happy, to be without [sickness] so and so. And at the same time we wish all our friends and our neighbours, all people, to be friendly with each other, including animals. If we used to be enemies with each other, be it cats and dogs, this and that, to be friendly with each other. By doing that we remind ourselves, well, we're just human beings, we just come to this place, this world, we're just passing through, we're not staying here forever. When the time comes we will go. Meanwhile, why should we quarrel without reason. I mean, if you don't respect me, if you become my enemy, I will tell you not to do that, but.... It's just to bring some reflection into your life, away from the activities of the whole day.
- And then, like I told you before - I still learn something from my grandfather and my father - I 'put' a fence around my house, you know, like 'locking the door', and I [turn to] the ten directions, and go to sleep.
- Sometimes if my little baby doesn't feel good I'll do a prayer with her. It just takes three minutes, four minutes and then you can get to sleep.
- ML- Does it help you to get to sleep? I mean, I know that meditation is much more than just that...
- HY- Yeah. Again, in order to do that you have to concentrate in yourself...
- ML- ...until you bring your mind to rest...
- HY- ...close to your [self]. Don't go far away, to the activities of the daytime, whether it was bad or good, or sweet or bitter. Get out from there.

ML- You just concentrate on a point...

HY- Yeah. If you can't do that then you do something like, close your eyes, breathe in, breathe out, that's good too. You know, if you get terribly mad, or you're upset, you can't sleep, that's the way to do it. If that one doesn't work then you count, one...two...three...four, five, six, seven, until you fall asleep (laughs).

ML- I remember a meditation teacher that I knew of said that one of the best meditations to do, for almost anything, was the breathing meditation, just concentrating on it [one's breath] coming in and...

HY- ...yeah, coming in and out...

ML- ...he had said that that was one of the key meditations that the Buddha had done.

HY- Yes. And about pain, if you have a headache, you use that system too. You breathe in and presume that the good air, the fresh air, like very powerful medicine, will go down to the pain and will clean it out. When you breathe out, it will come out. In and out, in and out, in and out. The more you breathe in and out, biologically speaking, you get more fresh air, more oxygen in your body at the same time.

[.....]

ML- Do you do a meditation in the morning and at night?

HY- It depends on if we have time. Normally, you do it before the sun sets at night and before the sun rises in the morning, or before you go to sleep at night. Those are the most appropriate times. Because it is quiet. To do meditation you have to be quiet. Even at school, sometimes I get stressed. I'll go to the washroom, stand against the wall, relax. I mean physically relax, mentally concentrate. Especially if you have anxiety before going into an exam (laughing).

ML- Do you have a particular meditation that you do? Or do you chant... or simply concentrate?

HY- Concentrate. I stand against the wall on one leg...

ML- Why do you stand on one leg?

HY- Well, to me I like to stand on one leg. I change from one to the other. If you use two you get too relaxed. One leg, you have to be careful. So standing on one leg relaxes the spinal cord, the brain.

[.....]

ML- Do you teach meditation to your children?

HY- They're still young. It's very hard to talk to them [about that]. Sometimes when they get upset I tell them, you don't need to fight when you get upset. With the boy I tell him to go downstairs and do the lifting [lifting weights] downstairs, if

you want to kick anything, kick downstairs there. To get out all your frustrations, this and that. If it's the girls I say, well, go to your room, put some music on, listen to whatever you like the best. And as soon as you listen to the music, it makes you, like a flower getting water, relax. And to think about life, that everything's beautiful, sweet and nice, like the sound of music. Stay there until everything calms down. It's just a way to make them go the first step, to look to the direction of meditation.

ML- To focus?

HY- Yes. If you can do that then one day.... Well, if you do some reading, like in the book The Art of Living.... It relates to our daily life, the worldly life, in industrial society. Of course we are human beings, we have material lives, we need this and that to make our life easy. But at the same time if you have too much we have to spend too much energy, physically and mentally, to take care of those material things. Or sometimes if we want too much, we have too much desire, that will cause problems for you too. That's why we have to balance. To balance. That means, to be happy with whatever you have. That means, your own capacity to earn money to satisfy yourself in terms of material things. If you can have it, fine. If you can't then you don't need to use bad means to get it.

ML- Now, I imagine it was very different in Cambodia. Did you learn meditation from when you were very young? From your father or grandfather?

HY- Not really.... When I was about thirteen years old. You see, when my dad passed away I was still young. And when they did this for me [indicating the needle under the skin in his arm - see conversation 3, "Sixty-nine Needles"]. I didn't think it was anything, just that it was something that my dad wanted to give to me. And when my mom passed away I was thirteen years old. I had to be a little priest, what they call a novice. Because when you haven't reached twenty years old you're not allowed to be a priest. You have to be a novice, a beginner. Because when you reach twenty years old that means you are an adult, you know what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad. You are entitled, or you have the capacity, to retain and to observe two hundred and twenty-seven principles.

ML- So before that you are trained as a novice? Did you do that when you were thirteen, or...

HY- Well, at thirteen it was to take part in a ceremony, a religious ceremony, to bring my mom to the tomb.
You see, when my mom passed away I was ordained as a little novice, at thirteen years old. So when the coffin of my mom was brought to the cemetery they put a big string, a white string... tied to the coffin, and I had to drag it in front. It's a kind of legendary story in Buddhism. About one lady, in her current life she had done a lot of bad things, stealing, things like that. Her one son would like to become a priest. She didn't want him to. She cursed him, so and so. So at the end of her life she was brought [near] to hell. And she was yelling and screaming, asking for help. And she kept [calling] her son who was a priest. And from far away in hell, maybe a couple of hundred metres, she saw a flame. It looked similar to the saffron robe of her son. She tried to rush to that flame. And a man there said, it's not your time yet. She said, I know it's not my time but I wanted to see that colour, the colour of the saffron robe of my son who is a priest. And

that struck in the mind of the guy, are you sure you have a son who is a priest? She said, yes, my son by the name of so and so has been [training to be] a priest since he was, say, five years old, and by now he is a priest. So the guy says, OK, you sit down here and I will check. The same as the way the Justice Department checks to see whether something is true or not. And then he found out that it was her son who was a priest. And then she was released. All the good things that her son had done through his life, as a novice, as a priest, he had dedicated to his mom, wherever she was. Always the good things were done for her. So she was released from there, but she was on probation. From now on she had to do certain things, like we were talking the other day, like doing community work.

All the Buddhists, we believe that you should spend at least a short period of our life to be a priest, a novice. To pay back everything to our mom and our dad. Or at least, even by doing it for a short period, a week - I was a novice only a week - we... well, we consider it as merit. When we deprive ourselves of food, we compare it to the law of supply and demand, and when we eat less, and then the people will kill the animals less.

ML- So there is a chain of effects...

HY- Yes, a chain of effects. And secondly, we reduce our passion, our desire, our craving. You see, like good food, good things that smell good, perfumes...

ML- ...and the Buddha had said that that was one of the three...'traps' [obstructing one's enlightenment]...

HY- Yeah, traps. Craving, desire. And another one is...

ML- Ego? The 'self'?

HY- Self, yes. Everything is "me", there is nobody else, except me. I'm the best, I have to have everything no matter what. If I have to kill you [to get it] I don't care.

So, I was ordained as a novice, for a week. It's terrible when you're thirteen. You're used to eating in the evening. As a novice you're not allowed. You can eat something from six o'clock in the morning up till noon. One minute after noon you're not allowed, no solid food. You can drink tea or coffee, but no meal.

And doing the prayers. Up at six o'clock in the morning. You have to do that. Thirteen years old, that's the age where you eat alot. So it's like they put a rope around you, the discipline.

When you walk you look only, well, in the ancient times they had no measures, they used the length of your arm, from here to here [indicating from elbow to end of middle finger]. You are allowed to look [that far] but no further. The reason why? Again, it 'closes' your sight, not to see something that will cause your mind to move. You can look around here but not there. Like in the city if you look at the beautiful girl in the skirt (laughs) that's terrible, you've let your mind run away from you. Or if you see something that doesn't please you, that is undesirable, you hate it, that makes your mind.... You see, because your mind, if you can concentrate your mind like that, it will be like a pure, white piece of paper, or a

white cup. Your mind will be like that if you can close it. But if you see something...that distracts you, it makes you have desire, and that desire is like a kind of black paint put in your mind there. And that's why when you walk you're not allowed to look more than that.

ML- So you were in a monastery for a week, after your mother died?

HY- Yes.

ML- I didn't quite understand...at the funeral...there is a rope...that you pull...connected to the coffin?

HY- The coffin, yes. You see, when the person is dead they're put in the coffin right away. Then you invite the priests, four, eight, or twelve, or at least one, to do the prayers every hour. You see, during your present life you have done some things bad, some things good, almost balanced, fifty percent good, fifty percent bad. Near the end of your life they want you to concentrate, not to think about the bad things there. Like the example I gave you about the lady [in the Buddhist legend], she had done lots of stupid things. But after she passed away, after she died, she was brought to the hell. But since she had a good memory, as soon as she saw the flame she thought about her son. That reminded her of something [good]. Because of that reminding she was released a little bit. So because of that near the end of your life you have to concentrate on the good things. With that concentration and meditation you will see only the bright side of your life, not the black side. And that might shift the balance. You will go to a good place instead of a bad place.

You see, we don't know, when my mom passed away, if she was bad one way or another. So at the end of your life the priests do a prayer to ask the soul, of her, that now you are gone, you don't need to be worried about your children, your property, this and that. Concentrate on your way to go to another world, in a good place, a higher place, not 'down there'. That's what the priests keep chanting.

That's for her. And for us who are still alive, the prayers will teach us that that's life, the cycle of life. To be born, you grow up, you become old, you pain, you die. The cycle of life is like that, nobody can get away. To remind us that, we know that our loved one is gone. We feel sad, we cry, this and that. But by doing that it doesn't work for you, it doesn't do any good. Some people try to kill themselves, this and that. It's not good. Because that's life, you have to think about it. All of us one day will be in the same situation. If you want to make sure you can ask, whose family is there that can tell us that there's no member who has died before? Any family has somebody who has died. So why should we become so sad, to try to do some sort of stupid thing, kill yourself, this and that. That's the prayer.

The first part is for the one who is gone...

ML- And it's the priests who do that, who lead it?

HY- Yes. Because I was very young I couldn't learn a lot of recitations, but at least I learned a couple of them, the three essentials. So, I put the robes on as a priest, and took the rope, the white rope...

ML- ...and walked...?

HY- Yeah, in front of them. And in front of me, another priest. Either four or eight in all, I can't remember.

ML- Do the priests carry the coffin?

HY- No, just the white rope.

ML- Who...?

HY- Our relatives, the family.
So that's why I was ordained for seven days.

ML- Did you have to go and stay in the monastery?

HY- Yeah. Everything like a priest. Get up early in the morning before the sunrise, do the prayers, before you eat, before you do anything.

ML- This would be at five o'clock, four o'clock in the morning? You would do prayers, and then what was next?

HY- A morning meal about seven o'clock.

ML- So what would you do after the morning meal, up to twelve o'clock?

HY- During that time you had to do the prayers all the time, go to the church with the elder priests, burn the incense and candles. I was told to recite the meditations, meditations reminding the soul of my mom not to come back, not to worry about us, we're OK, so and so. You have only one thing [to do] that is to go to the good place.

Because the relationship between mom and son, or mom and daughter, is very close, especially the young ones. I think every culture believes that you don't go away right after you die because you don't know you are dead. You try to come back home. Only, one way or another you will find out. Like if my mom tried to find me, if she saw me, for example, she could listen to me. But I can't hear her if she wanted to say something. It would be a one-way communication. So when I do the prayer like that it reminds her that she is no longer here in our world, she is in a different world. And the first thing to do is just for you to concentrate on the good things in your present life.

So, from the first day to the seventh day that was the period when the soul of the people who have died are still around. After seven days they have to go through the period of the second stage. That's what we believe in Buddhism.

And then after that, one hundred days, a grace period. And after that you will be told to do this and that.

ML- So there is a hundred day period after the initial seven days in which...

HY- The spirit can still come back.

And once a year, on the anniversary we used to do the prayers, have good food, all kinds of fruits, this and that.

ML- Every year?

HY- Yes. It's, well, it's part of the custom, one way or another. Or it's a religious habit. We used to do that, so we do that. I think it's for peace with ourselves, for our family. They're gone but we still think about them.

ML- Is there always one member of the family who would become a novice after someone dies?

HY- Yes. Anyone of us, but most of the time the young one. Because...

ML- ...they haven't done it before?

HY- I'm not sure about that. But most of the time the young one because the parents will have had a [close] relationship with the youngest one, most of the time. Because of course we believe that the soul can come back during the seven days after he or she dies. The soul is still around. I don't know if you believe that or not. The Greeks believed that, in spirit.

ML- I think I do believe that. I think there are a lot of things [at work] there, there are a lot of reasons why we have customs like that. Part of it has to do with the fact that we are used to having someone around, and if we're very close to them, and all of a sudden they're not there...we can't make sense of it in our brain, our mind. On one side I think that's part of the reason for our customs. And as far as spirit goes, if one believes in spirit...

HY- You know the other day I think I was telling you, the Europeans, the French family.... When the time comes for the anniversary of her husband's death, they put out food, set out the table, put out the chair where he used to sit, they sit all together and eat. Why do they do that? Why do they do it that way? At least they have something in their minds one way or another, this day, this date, is when he passed away. And we can ask the question, why didn't she choose a different date, why does she do it the same day he passed away? It means, firstly, we all have customs. And secondly, we believe in those customs. And it doesn't hurt anybody. It pleases her. And secondly, it reminds the kids, her own children, that was your dad, that the way we live now, maybe a majority of this is because of him...

ML- ...it makes a connection between people.

HY- Yes, a connection.

There is a marvelous story by Victor Barnouw called "Incense in the Lab" (in Spradley and McDonough, 1973) in which an American scientist, presumably Barnouw, is conducting experiments into malnutrition with an Indian colleague, Narayan, in a lab somewhere in Bombay State. The fictional 'Barnouw' is at first "amazed" at the many rituals that go on in Narayan's household - though he is seemingly oblivious to the rituals they practice in the lab, such as their periodic breaks for tea (not to mention the 'rituals of science' that they must have also observed). However, he later becomes a little less understanding when ritual comes into the lab itself in the form of dashahara, the celebration of tools, the inanimate aids to one's work. What the American Scientist failed to realize was that nourishment, or malnourishment, may not only be of a 'material' sort.

Buddhist belief speaks of 'four nutriments' (ahara): the material 'foods' that we take in (including foodstuffs, drink, air, etc.), the interaction of our senses with the external world, consciousness itself, and, volition or 'will' (Rahula, 1974:30). Indulgence in any of these to an extreme would constitute unreasonable 'craving' or 'thirst' (tanha), the cause of the arising of dukkha, or suffering (ibid:31). But in the practice of the Middle Path these nutriments become "generative forces" for the existence and continuity of life (Lhalungpa, 1984:17).

We speak of ritual and ceremony as a means to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity in the world, to regulate social relations (see eg. Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili, 1979), in a sense, to solidify the world, or to make concrete that which is forever slipping away. We imply this is a kind of trick we play on ourselves, to seek comfort in an illusion of permanence.

But perhaps beyond this they are also a means to witness the transient. To celebrate, literally 'to frequent', whether it is in the form of a practice of meditation, an initiation, a birthday, or a funeral rite is to nourish by calling to mind again and again, that which is, in Buddhist terms, arising and passing away. Ceremony and ritual become what

Perera calls "a shared food that nourishes both the spirit and the senses, offering punctuations of release, reminder, supplication, and thanksgiving all in one" (1984:74). These 'punctuations', remembrances, memorials both extend the individual into a wider sphere than the self, and provide identity for the self within that sphere. They may be formalized and cyclical, but, as Perera suggests, "the subtext always remains human" (ibid).

Life in the Embassy Community.

HY- I think I told you the story...well, probably not...that sometimes we played. My boss, sometimes felt disgruntled with me, well, not me alone. Like sometimes we would organize football [games], all the members of the staffs, not all, not the high ranking personalities, not the lower ones but the ones like me, a press attache, in the middle. We were still young. Once a month we would invite all our colleagues of the same rank, all the press officers from each, either one or two depending on the size of the embassy. We used to go to a restaurant and eat, like a business lunch. We would talk about our business, our work. Sometimes we had problems with the authorities, with the police, especially with the MPs, military police.

ML- These were people from all other embassies?

HY- Yeah. And most of the time the Russian embassy wouldn't come directly but would send people from Novosti [a Russian news agency], the newspaper, it's like a private paper but really the same as Izvestia, the same, it belonged to the government. And they were sneaky sometimes, they didn't want to pay [and other things]. So sometimes we played games [tricks on them].

We printed up cards. We're not supposed to do that kind of thing, but we had to teach them a lesson.

ML- You printed up...cards?

HY- Yeah, invitation cards, in the name of that guy.

ML- To the Soviet ambassador?

HY- No, the Soviet press attache. We printed up invitation cards in his name. And invited all the people to come to his house. Like a party. .

ML- That he knew nothing about?! (laughing)

HY- So we did alot of stupid things like that. It was all very secret to do that. We had it printed in Thailand. The other copies we burned and threw in the Mekong river. We just tried to embarass them. If you invite them [to something] they will go there. But they never invited us back. For lots of reasons, security, and this and that. If he invited all of us to go to his home I guess he would have problems. With his boss, maybe OK. But behind him, KGB. Even the drivers were KGB.

So, all the people, when the time came they dressed nicely and went there..

ML- ...went to his place for a party, but he knew nothing about it...

HY- He didn't know anything. His wife and he were cutting the grass.

ML- So, what happened?

HY- He ran!

ML- He ran away?

HY- No. He ran like hell. He phoned the embassy, phoned the restaurants to get everything. From other friends at the embassy...

ML- To try to put a party together...

HY- Yeah! (laughing)

ML- Did he ever find out who...

HY- Maybe yes, maybe no.

[.....]

HY- We had lots of fun sometimes. It's not really good to do that [ie. the practical jokes]. But one way or another, sometimes you have to do something stupid like that to these kinds of people [ie. people who took themselves too seriously or were too puffed up with themselves].

ML- Do you think sometimes we need to do things like that...because the formal and organized stiffness of the diplomatic service...is something that holds you in too much...so we do these things to break down...

HY- Yeah, break down the rigidity. And also, in talking about cultural anthropology. We know if we go to a meeting we have to dress in our national costume. But the way you behave, you know you can't behave the way you do at home. You know, like an Indian custom of having a curry with your rice and putting it on a banana leaf and eat it like that. You couldn't eat with your hands. The international agreement on protocol, signed in, I think, 1938 in Switzerland - they have a guideline for all diplomats to follow. Of course, if I invite you to my house, my embassy, I would show you our habits, our customs. And all the people invited to that embassy would have to do something like that. You know, like the Indian custom with the curry, the rice, the banana leaf, eating it with your hand. But if another host country invited you [and that was your custom] you couldn't do that. That's the way, you have to bend. That's diplomacy.

ML- So sometimes it was too rigid.

HY- Yeah. But in some circumstances we still played. We played with the Chinese communists and the Soviet Union. Like everytime we had a meeting...the people who organize the conference will know the exact number of people from the embassy will come. You have to give them a call and give them the names, so and so, for security reasons, and for everything they have to set up in order to receive you.

So most of the time, at the high peak of tensions between the Soviet Union and China we used to do stupid things. We would get in and rush, rush, rush, get in and sit, occupy all the chairs. We'd leave two chairs close to each other.

ML- So the Chinese and the Soviets would have to sit next to each other! (laughing)

HY- Sometimes we would get the gloves, you know, boxing gloves, two red boxing gloves (laughing)...

ML- ...and you'd leave them at their places at the table! Would this be with the diplomatic people from high up in the embassy?

HY- No, just the press attaches.

ML- That's funny!

HY- But sometimes the people who were organizing [the meeting] would throw them away, saying they knew who did it. We were just young, in our twenties.

In James Clifford's attempt at "redefining the biographical subject" he suggests that biography, ethnobiography in particular, is "probably less often true to the way life is than to the way we might like it to be" (1978:45). He describes that we strive to construct a 'unified personality', a single identity for the person, when in fact we are a 'multiple of selves'. He goes on to suggest that this does a great disservice to the subject and the reader, and that we might do well to encourage more 'open-ended life studies' which more fully portray the richness and complexity of our 'selves': "a self that cannot adequately express its numerousness is a prison" (ibid:44).

And indeed it does seem to be the case that we are different selves at different times. Circumstances, context, age and era create or demand different responses to differing situations.

We might ask, for example, to what extent each of us suggests or embodies 'the trickster' when the occasion seems to call for it. To upset convention and protocol in what may be a tense situation, to mediate extremes, or to correct a perceived imbalance in the

social order is to summon the spirit of 'the trickster' in everyday life. We summon these other aspects and recognize a fuller self in this 'numerousness'.

Then again, one shouldn't make too much of the motif.

And besides, we must keep in mind that the biographer too is a 'multiple of selves'. As Hilda Kuper warns, biography may not be "six characters in search of an author" but "six authors in search of a character" (in Langness and Frank, 1981:153).

Dealing with the Bear.

[We had been talking about some of Homg's experiences during the war, the Vietnam war. Many of them - being in a bar with a friend when a grenade went off, being caught in the cross-fire between two factions fighting in Laos, getting stuck in Sepone just before the Tet Offensive and contracting malaria - were very frightening, unsettling. They were memories that returned when he first arrived in Canada. They were, as well, disturbing in the telling and the hearing.]

ML- You said that when you first came to Canada sometimes you would get flashbacks, you'd get fever, from some of the things that happened to you...

HY- Yeah.... It's because.... If you close your eyes, you know, your memory flips back to there, as if you were back in that situation. But you're not there. And after you went down through your memory and you say, oh, I'm not there, I'm here, it becomes frightening. Frightening because...I could have died there at that time, but I did not. It's like you are chased by a big bear, for example, nearly grabbed by the bear. And then you reach a big car. And you feel safe. But the bear is still in front of you.

ML- I see what you mean.... Because the bear is still there, and your memories are still there.... They are talking a lot now about post-trauma stress syndrome...

HY- That's exactly it...

ML- Did you do anything, meditation or anything, that would help push that away...or help deal with it?

HY- Most of the time...if I was asleep in the middle of the night I would have to get up, walk around a little bit, drink cold water. If I couldn't go back to sleep, do some reading. Or just pretend to read something until you get tired and go back to sleep.

ML- When did they stop...or do you still get...

HY- Oh...I think about three months later on. I got two jobs, sixteen hours a day. You have no time for that (laughing).

ML- Has it ever popped up again?

HY- No.

ML- Do you think that you...that maybe in your own mind you had dealt with it at that point?

HY- Well, one thing. Again, we are Buddhist. According to Buddhism we have the method to control the mind. But whether it is good for you [whether it works for

you] or not depends on your own practice. We were taught to control the mind in the sense that...how to bend your mind away from the attraction. For example, a beautiful woman, trying to persuade you to do something. Of course, if you are young you can't get away from that. But you have to turn your way of thinking. By doing that you have to concentrate your mind sometimes on the bad things. [interruption in the tape]...two thousand years ago, three thousand years ago when you died they just threw you away, they didn't bury. You can see the corpse. After one day, two days the face is not the same, body is swollen, all the blood has come out. After three or four days it becomes spoiled, bacteria, worms, this and that.

ML- Was this a meditation?

HY- Yes. A meditation on the dead body. You put that beautiful girl into that situation, just say there's nothing in there. Everything will go like that.

ML- Is it partly...so the mind looks at why it's attracted to things...and has to see that it's all transient? Is that the idea?

HY- To turn your mind away from the things that [distract you]. We practice doing that. How well you do depends on yourself.

ML- So after you started working the flashbacks faded away?

HY- Because, firstly, you are too tired, you don't have time for that. And secondly, you try to tell yourself that, no, that's a black chamber, you have to get out from that black chamber because it doesn't do anything good to you.

"There are two extremes, monks, which he who has given up the world ought to avoid. What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasures, devoted to pleasures and lusts - this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless. And a life given to mortifications - this is painful, ignoble, and profitless. By avoiding these two extremes, monks, (I) have gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom,..." (Buddha's Discourse on the Eightfold Noble Path, in Lester, 1973:33)

According to Buddhist teachings, both attractions and revulsions are two sides of the same thing, namely 'desire', 'craving', 'thirst', the root cause of suffering in the world.

Both the desire to have something and the desire to be rid of something are, from this point of view, distractions or traps. The Eightfold Noble Path, or 'Middle Path' (Majjhima Patipada) lists a series of eight factors which define a way of self-discipline between the

extremes of excess and denial. Of these eight it has been said that 'right mindfulness' (sati) is the key element (Rahula, 1974:67; Lester, 1973:33).

'Mindfulness' does not refer only to meditation, at least not in the simple sense of a meditation as we generally think of it, something practiced in a formal time and place. In fact, it has been said that the practice of mindfulness is more important, strictly speaking, than practices of meditation (ibid). As Rahula notes, meditation itself does not refer to a specific ritualised practice but the development of an on-going awareness:

"The word meditation is a very poor substitute for the original term bhavana, which means 'culture' or 'development'. The Buddhist bhavana, properly speaking, is mental culture in the full sense of the term. It aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, indolence, worries and restlessness...and cultivating such qualities as concentration, awareness, intelligence, will, energy, confidence...." (1973:68)

And so, the anthropologist asks a question, half-expecting to hear about the 'techniques' of meditation, and receives a lesson in mindfulness.

An Encounter with Canadian Medicine.

HY- I was told that I had a cancer. Did I tell you?

ML- No.

HY- Liver cancer. The first year when I arrived here. I used to have malaria, two, three times, back at home. Every year, like the clock. When its time came, with a difference of maybe a week later or a week before. It would come back...in the springtime. Whenever you got it, it would come back in the same month.

ML- Was this from after Sepone?

HY- Well, maybe. But I had it before that, from the Tonle Sap once in the summer, well, during the vacation. We went down there. We went with a small boat. And we got stuck there and couldn't get to a health unit on time. It took three days to come back. So I got it there.

ML- So when you came here...

HY- I was going to the college. I got stuck with it. All my friends were scared. Because you get shaky. Your temperature goes up and then you get shaky. The fellow who lived next to me, you know I didn't feel well, and he asked me this and that. I said, I've got fever. He said, why don't you go to the hospital. I said, no, I couldn't go today, I have homework to do, so and so. And at night I got shaky, the temperature going up. I had two blankets. Still it wasn't coming down. I asked him to sit on me. He couldn't do it. Because I was shaking he was frightened. I got two people to sit on me, still shaking. Then, no, he said, I don't want to see you like that. He called the ambulance. And they brought me to the hospital. And they didn't give me anything. They just said, no problem, you just go back home. Because if you drink lots of hot water and keep warm, the temperature might go down for a while, and then later go back up.

And they gave me an appointment to go back and have an X-ray. I got the X-ray, and I was told I had liver cancer. And that I would die within six months. It was terrible, Michael.

ML- What happened? Did you...

HY- I didn't go back to school. After about two, three days I told my teacher that I was sick. I thought, what the hell, why should I go to school, I will die anyway. My wife was still in a camp, my little kid was still in a camp [refugee camp in Thailand]. I will die within six months. Why should I go to school. And when I went to sleep on that day I could still hear the voice of my brother. Because he always took care of me. After I went to the Tonle Sap, stayed three days, came back to the health unit. They just gave me a pill to calm things down. Two days later I went back home and it was my brother who took care of me.

ML- The one who was a doctor?

HY- Yeah. And he said it can get into your liver, the malaria virus can get in there. He gave me cyanide, right in here. And the other one is quinine, you know, the yellow one. It took me three months to eliminate it, but it was still in there. He told me, one day you'll get very sick, you might die from this one. Because once it's in your blood it's very hard to get out.

ML- So what did you do after what happened at the hospital?

HY- Well, I thought, my brother, nobody is better than him. His voice was still ringing in my ears. So, the next day I phoned my teacher that I couldn't go to school, I was still sick. I went running around, back to see the nurse, asking her if she knows of some doctor who might know about the malaria. She said, I've heard of that one, I'll try to do my best. She gave me a hint, to find a list of [people dealing with] tropical diseases. I had to go back for chemotherapy in two weeks. So at that time I was scared. I heard 'chemotherapy' and I got scared. And I believed my brother. I said, it's not cancer! So I went through the list and found a guy, a Canadian guy. He used to work in Cambodia for two years. And in Laos. So he knew everything about that. I went to see him, I told him. He said, I know about that. I used to work in Kratie for two years. He said, don't worry.

I didn't tell him about what the other doctor said. I hated to have the bloodtests again, X-rays again. But I had to do it. And right away he gave me a prescription. They didn't have quinine there. It had similar content. Very bitter. And he gave me some kind of solution, to mix with water. Two big tablets every twelve hours. I took it for only three days, drinking a lot of water, and with rice soup, didn't eat anything but rice soup. And everything went down. My eyes were no longer yellow, my fever went down. I kept taking it. And the next week I went back to see him. And he said, everything's gone down, good. And he got the bloodtests, sent them to the lab.

So I lied to the first doctor.

ML- This was the one who wanted you to come in for chemotherapy?

HY- Yes. I lied to him. I said I couldn't go because I had an exam. He said, OK, you phone back after the exam and we'll find another date. So I came back to this doctor and he gave me another prescription for another week. Everything had gone down, I had a good appetite again, this and that. When I came back for the second time I asked him about the X-rays. I said, how about in the long term, do you see something wrong, very serious? He said, no, not too serious. You know, it was like he lifted a mountain from my body! I said, do you think I have cancer or something because of the black spots there? He said, no, not really. And it came to my mind that what my brother told me about why your body gets yellow, your eyes get yellow. Because when human beings, when we eat food...in the liver we have what they call 'bile', and what they call 'biliary juice', a bitter one, inside there. And when you eat the biliary juice will drop, like a faucet, to eliminate all the waste from the food. When you get fever and the temperature goes up, forty, forty-one, forty-two, forty-three degrees, the temperature is too strong for you, too hot. That means your brain cannot control this valve ['faucet'] here. And then it

opens and it all drops, and accumulates. Since your body, your system, cannot absorb all the biliary juice it comes out, through your blood, and you get yellow here. And in your liver, when it drops too much, it gets dark, and when you get an X-ray picture it seems like an abscess, it would look like cancer. That's how my brother explained it to me.

So when the doctor told me that, because we saw in the picture small rings, black, like that..

ML- ...that was just from the bile accumulating in that area?

HY- ...yeah. And he said, no, not really [it doesn't seem like cancer], wait and see, you finish this series, this set [of medication], come back and we'll check you again.

So I saw the pictures from the X-ray, I asked him everything, and combined it all together and said, no, I don't have cancer. I came back home, I ate normally, went to school again. But I was still worried. I looked at that former doctor as a big giant...a big tiger, waiting to bite me. But I still had hope with this other one, because he used to be there [in Southeast Asia]. So...the words of my brother were still ringing in my ears. I said, I still hope I can go to school. So the third week I went down there [back to the doctor]. He got the results from the tests, everything. He said, you're almost completely recovered. I said, are you sure? He said, yes! I said, can you give me another series [of medication]? He said, no problem. He gave me another one. And before I left I said, sir, do you think I have cancer? He said, oh, no, no, no.

So I sat down. I said, what the hell...am I dreaming or what? I still think about his face [the first doctor]. He still said I had cancer, six months, and I will die. And he [the other doctor] said, no. And my brother had explained to me this and that. So I said, no, this doctor spent four years over there, my brother, my own brother, he knows a lot too. So one hundred I divided in three. You know, sixty percent 'yes' and only thirty percent 'no'. I said, no, I'm not going to die, no. And I kept taking this medicine, this and that, and in about three months it was completely gone. And up till now, no more. Because of cold weather, the malaria, it would never survive the cold weather. Gone, completely gone. So now, you see, instead of six months...!

ML- ...it's been how many years...

HY- Yeah! When my late wife came, I told her. She cried. We cried...altogether. And I told her one day, I'm going to get dressed nicely, make an appointment to see that doctor, and buy a big bouquet of flowers, just go and see him. She said, why, why do you want to do that? I said, just to tell him I'm still alive, that I'm not a ghost (laughing).

ML- Did you go?

HY- No. When I told my wife she said, you're crazy, don't do that. I said, no, he could have taken my life, he predicted my life, like it wasn't even a human life, like a small fly, six months, it dies. She said, well, that's fine but he's a doctor. I said, but the doctor is stupid, he shouldn't have said that.

- ML- Do you think that's a problem with medicine here. That he didn't take the time to look at other things he might not have been familiar with?
- HY- I agree with you! I agree with that! Because most of the time the medical doctor, the expert in the field, decides for you, for us, you have to do this, you have to do that. We ourselves, we have no idea, no choice to go find other advice, to find somebody with good advice, to tell us what to do. That means we depend everything on him alone. But if he is like the guy who stayed there [in Southeast Asia] for four years, maybe I can spare my life with him. Because from my background, from my brother, maybe I can [compare] all that he told me with what I learned from him, from my brother, and then you can make a judgement...
- ML- Yeah, you can make a judgement instead of a judgement being made for you...
- HY- ...instead of him. You see, if I was stupid, too frightened, without reason, I would have gone back to him and had chemotherapy, for nothing. For two months. You know, your blood, white cells, red cells, some would be gone by that. And your hair would be gone. And he said I would live six months. Terrible. That's why when my wife said, don't fight with him, he's the doctor, I said, he's a doctor but he's stupid. I said, it's nothing, I would just like to have an appointment to see him...just bring a big bouquet of flowers, go there. And when he says, can I help you, I would say, no, I don't need you to help me. I just came to say thank you, do you remember me, six years ago, remember what you predicted about me? I would just like to know what is the answer. One day I met the second doctor. He said, you look great now. I said, yes sir, because you helped I completely recovered. I asked him, making a joke a little bit, can you tell me that anybody would expect that because I had malaria and the high fever at that time, that I would die in three months, six months, a year. He said, no, nonsense!
- ML- Because he was sensitive to wider issues, because he saw the symptoms in a different way.
- HY- Yeah... Two years in Cambodia, two years in Laos. He had seen alot, had learned a lot, that guy.

We are slowly becoming more aware in Western, industrial medicine that there are not single but multiple factors that influence one's health and the processes of disease and healing. In particular, we are recognizing that mind/brain/body should be seen as a single integrated system, not three separate ones, and that a change in any one part of the triad will have implications for the others (eg. Engel, 1977). We are coming to see that there is a certain complementarity between what we call physical and mental health, and not simply

in the sense of the so-called 'psychosomatic' disorders, but in the effect that state of mind and attitude have on the outcome of so-called 'physical' disease (see eg. Dossey, 1982; Engel, 1981). It is perhaps a beginning recognition of what has long been considered a truth in Buddhist belief, that "all that we are is the result of what we have thought" (Dhammapada, chapter I, verse 1.)

Much of the work on the mind and health has been done in the area of stress research and the effect of stress on disease susceptibility, immunity, and prognosis (see for example, Rogers, Dubey and Reich, 1979; Sterling and Eyer, 1981).

Pertinent to our story is the growing awareness that the refugee experience itself is especially stressful, to a greater or lesser extent depending on one's own vulnerability, the availability of family, social and cultural support networks, the circumstances under which one emigrated, personal coping strategies, and the demands of new languages, habits, lifestyles, and personal interactions in a different society (Nguyen, 1982a; 1982b). Consulting with health professionals is one specifically important and yet potentially very stressful site of interaction. More than one researcher has noted that, aside from the expected tensions that accompany such a visit, Western health practitioners have on occasion "dismissively categorized" Southeast Asian patients and overlooked specific complaints (Nguyen, 1982b; Kinzie, 1985).

Taking this all into account, it is not difficult to imagine the effect of doctors who are seen as threatening, or to admire the particular strength and resolve it takes to challenge their authority and seek other opinions.

Horng's Father.

- ML- ...So, your father moved to Stung Treng [from Battambang], and your mother's family was already from that area?
- HY- Actually, my father took the family name of my mom.
- ML- Really? Does that happen often in Cambodia?
- HY- Not really.... Because...my father was a very adventurous person. His father, my grandfather, was a kind of district chief. And there's always conflict between a former district chief and the present one, this and that. When he retired, the guy who came to power was a little rude sometimes. And he [the new district chief] had a son who was a member of a gang, this and that...
- ML- ...corrupt?
- HY- Corrupt. And he fell in love with my aunt, the eldest sister of my father. So there tended to be conflicts between the old one [ie. old district chief, his grandfather] and the new one. And my father didn't like the family either. My grandfather and my grandmother never liked the family because of the conflicts, firstly, and secondly, because of this gangster...
- ML- ...who might end up being part of your family?
- HY- So, this guy fell in love with my aunt. They had a big orange farm. Everyday my aunt and her cousins would go there. pull the weeds, take care of this and that. And one day the guy stopped her in the middle of the road and grabbed her.
- ML- Really? A real scoundrel.
- HY- Yeah. They had tried to make arrangements, but she didn't agree, the family didn't agree, but he still had something in mind. So one day he went out there with two members of the gang, and grabbed her, in broad daylight, about four or five o'clock. The rest of the girls, the cousins, ran back home and told my grandfather. So my grandfather talked to the elders, you know, the older people, and made arrangements to go to [this fellow's house] and bring my auntie back home. But after that my grandfather never let her go anywhere alone. You see, at that time because of dignity, the honour of the family, when a girl was grabbed by somebody, especially at that time, whether she had been molested or not - in fact, she wasn't, he treated her well, put her in a rickshaw and asked somebody to take her home. But it was shameful, people spread the word, so and so. It hurt the feelings of my family. My grandfather, this and that, they were older, they could handle it. But my father, no. He was quiet, very quiet, and he could be very nice. But when he became nasty he could be very nasty.
- ML- So he was very angry about this?

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HY- Yes, very angry. And wherever he went he heard from friends, or their friends, about the gossip that went around. My grandfather had tried to do something through official means, but because the father of the guy had become chief of the district he was very influential too. You can see the conflict between the former and the current chiefs of the district. So the French [authorities] wouldn't do anything, they just said it was a simple matter, don't waste our time. But for us it was a cultural thing...

ML- ...of course, because of the shame...

HY- The shame. So day after day, month after month, my dad couldn't stand it. So he used a short-cut.

ML- What did he do?

HY- Well, he was very good at sword-fighting. He never used the long ones. He said, if you use the long ones, if you get to close you are at a disadvantage. He learned how to use a short one. He learned with a stick, quietly, somewhere, somehow. He was a tough guy.

And one day he couldn't stand it. He was going to go after him.

So in the daytime when my grandfather took a nap, and my grandmother wasn't at home, he slipped in and got his sword, and that kind of small rock, to sharpen it, with sesame oil. So he took that and I guess he ran to the farm, the ranch. My youngest auntie saw him, but she couldn't stop him. So she woke my granddad up, told him the story...

ML- ...that your father had taken off with those things?

HY- Yeah. And my grandfather went after him and brought him home, asked him not to do that. My father said, oh, OK dad, I won't. It was nothing, I just wanted to clean it, make sure there were no stains. But my grandfather had a feeling, because for two years nothing happened and people had spread the word [gossiped], and they had felt humiliated. So he didn't mind, he came home smiling, this and that. As soon as my grandfather left, you know, he liked smoking and he left to go talk to the neighbours, he slipped through the window, got it [the sword] and ran away again. So he went and found him that day. Cut him in three places. Poor guy.

And there were two gangsters who were always with this guy. One of them you would call the axe gangster, the other one, the stick gangster...

ML- An axe gangster and a stick gangster?

HY- Yeah. A big stick, with eight corners, angles [at one end], for hitting somebody on the head.

ML- And the other one has an axe?

HY- An axe, yeah. So when my father was on his way they [came up to him] and said, hey, I want to talk to you. The guy with the axe came, he [my father] said, hey big brother I have nothing to do with you. I have something to say to Moon [the

head of the gang], I had [no quarrel] with you, or you. I consider you a brother. You have nothing with me, I have nothing with you. And the guy didn't move, he stood in the way. And the other guy hit him with the stick and he fell down. But still he just said, please, both of you, I have nothing to do with you, just with Moon. And now it was the turn of the guy with the axe. He threw it and almost hit him. So my father had no choice. He took his sword and pretended to threaten this one, but he cut the other guy right here [indicating the Achilles tendon].

ML- So he couldn't walk.

HY- He cut him first, the one with the stick, and then went after the other one, but didn't cut him. Because he knew that if he went for one first the other would hit him. So he [made it look like he was going for one of them] but actually went for the other one.

ML- So he had the element of surprise, in a way?

HY- He grabbed the other one and said, I told you not to harm me but you didn't want to listen. So he just put a little, here [indicating a small cut to the cheek]. He didn't cut him too much, just one slip here. And he forced them to go sit together and he tied them up. Then he went to the other guy, Moon, and cut him.

ML- Three pieces.

HY- When he came back he untied one, gave him some money, told him to go buy some straw mats, but not to say anything. Buy it, come back, and go to Moon. So he took them, I suppose to wrap the body in, got a pole to make them carry it.

ML- So he made them do the work...

HY- Oh, yes! The first guy couldn't walk very well. But he took a shirt and wrapped it around him, like a bandage. They waited until dark.

And the guy's father could feel something was wrong, the chief of the district. He paced back and forth, because the sun had set, and his son had not come home yet. Some kind of instinct or something...

ML- He knew something was up?

HY- And as soon as he saw the two guys carrying the pole, he screamed, he hadn't even opened the door, the gate, yet. He asked the guy, who did that? You know, he can feel. He asked the right question. Who did that, who killed my son. And both of those guys couldn't answer. But my dad said, me. You know me? You have to pay the price, you have to pay the price, for what your son did to my sister. And I tell you, don't run to the authorities, keep quiet here, take care of everything here. I will go home, I will kneel in front of my dad, and I will go to jail, that's it. No screaming and yelling, if there's screaming and yelling, you too will get [something]. He gave a wave 'good morning' and he ran home. Terrible for him.

He ran home, hid the sword somewhere. He went upstairs, he kneeled in front of my [grandmother], told her what happened. He said, I had to do that to protect the

family. Because we have nothing left now. Our family was a good family, my sister is not a prostitute. We couldn't do anything, so I had to sacrifice myself.

My grandmother cried. So she grabbed [some things], got some money for him, and I think some bracelets, things like that, gave him best wishes. My grandfather never talked to him, just tears. It was very hard.

So he ran. He ran away from Battambang. He walked, he never took a bus, anything. He walked from one place to another, called everyone he stayed with 'mom' and 'dad', he was very nice, perfect. He walked, you can see, from the west to the east. He walked for three years.

ML- Three years. From Battambang to Stung Treng. Just living with people along the way, and working for them?

HY- Working for them, yes.

ML- How old would he have been then?

HY- I think about eighteen.

ML- So he would have been about twenty-one when he eventually got there?

HY- He went to see my uncle in Samboc here, near Kratie. They had a big lumber company here. And he worked there. Once in awhile my grandfather, on my mom's side, would come to visit my uncle my grandfather's cousin, and they got to know each other. My mom would come down once in awhile. They got to know each other. He became like a son to my uncle. He took the name. He said, well, I don't want to go back home, I want to set up a family, so and so. And he was nice, a very nice guy. Calm, quiet, very helpful. If he became nasty he could be very nasty, but not until...he had lots of patience...he used to say when the blood comes from my eye, that's it, I can't stand it anymore. Tears, OK, but when blood comes from my eye. He used to say to my brother (I was still young) it's like a spring. When you feel strong you can push it down and hold it, but when your strength goes, it is too much, it will push you back.

So, he got the family name from my uncle, the cousin of my grandfather on my mom's side, and then he fell in love with my mom, so and so.

It was sad. You know, that's why every summer when I lived in Phnom Penh...that's why I had to split, one summer I had to go to Battambang, one in Stung Treng. It gave me the chance to be familiar with the Laotian language, and the Thai language [Battambang being close to the Thai border, Stung Treng to the Laotian border].

ML- To visit your grandparents? Did your father ever see them again?

HY- Well, after everything calmed down. There's a period, I think six or seven years...

ML- ...like a statute of limitations, no one could do anything to him...

HY- But still he wouldn't stay there.

[.....]

HY- My father was of the generation that studied and went to school with the French. But he still never got along with the French. He was jailed by the French several times. But the French still needed him because he was...sometimes they would have trouble with the Thai robbers. They would cross the border, you know, grab all the cattle, this and that, cross back over the border. Sometimes the Cambodian military soldiers and the French couldn't do anything. They had to ask my father to go follow the Thai robbers, the Thai gangsters. He would say, it's not easy to go and arrest the Thai gangsters who had crossed the border [back in to Thailand]. It's not easy, I have no function, nothing. They would say, you won't go? He'd say, no, enough is enough for me. But still the French tried. They said, if you don't go that means you are a part of those gangsters. And so unfairly he was jailed.

Always they put him in very bad situations. He was like the chief of the village, the chief of the district. That was his job with the government. But he couldn't stay long. Because the same as me, he was some kind of social activist. And with the French authorities he would say, that's wrong, you can't do that. But the French they didn't care about anything. If you pay tax or you don't pay tax you get jailed. If they hate you, they don't like you, they would try to find a law, some kind of arbitrary law, just to get you, and my father didn't like that. He said, if I stay as a chief of the district that means I am part of you, the French authority. I have to shut my mouth. But I can't shut my mouth so I have to get out. As a simple citizen, as a businessman, selling diamonds, this and that. And when he was forced to go across the border to arrest the Thai gangsters he said, it's not easy. They may kill me. Because if I go and get him he may cut my throat. So I have to cut his throat, or their throats. It's sinful. But if I don't do that you will jail me, and also accuse me of being part of that.

So he had no choice. And then it made enemies at home, because my family is Buddhist, he was Buddhist. And especially my grandmother, [mother] of my mom, was a very religious person, you see? So he was always in a hot spot all his life. To me it is a different thing. I'm always in a hot spot, even right here, but nobody forces me, I force myself to do somethings.

Sometimes he would quarrel with my mom, well, it wasn't a quarrel but just...well, he would say, honey, how am I going to do this...If I don't do it... And she would say, just forget about it. He would say, forget about it? I would have to stay in jail, would you like that? And jailing at that time was awful...

ML- ...awful for the family too?

HY- ...yeah, honour, dignity, this and that.
So he had no choice but to do it a different way. That means that he took everything on himself in terms of the sin or not sin. I would just like to keep my honour. But I have to go over there, I have to do something over there. Instead of going to jail here and letting the people look down on the family.
You know, the French at that time, they wanted my father to arrest them alive. But it wasn't that easy. [It was a situation of] if you don't kill me, I kill you. So they said, OK, if you kill him then just bring the head back. You know the same as the Chinese movies, the swordfighting!

ML- So...what did he do?

HY- Well, one time he did. Because he had no choice. They [the French authorities] treated it like [hunting] a tiger, an animal, instead of a human being. They said to get the head, or at least the ear. You know, if in two, three days, or ten days, everything spoils, get the ear.

ML- ...And it was the French authorities who made him do this?

HY- They did.

Because they could recognize somebody by the face, or the head, or at least the ear. So one day he came...he had the head of...a Thai gangster. He came late, the office was closed. So he had to take care of that. He was not allowed to get in the house. And because our property was very large, very long, he had to take a mosquito net and sleep at the end of the property in the jungle there...with the head of that robber. My mom had to cook for him, my brother had to bring the food to him.

ML- Did your mom know what he had?

HY- Yeah, yeah. They felt upset and my grandmother knew about it. They had tears, tears. But what could they do, they knew it wasn't my father's fault, but we had no choice.

So...the next morning - he had to stay out there Saturday, Sunday - Monday morning he brought it in [to the authorities]. Then he came home, and my grandmother and father, ooh, they had a big quarrel, this and that. So according to our custom we had to invite the priests to come over to our home and do the prayers, and we offered food, this and that, just to...

ML- ...purify?

HY- Yeah, to purify. And another thing is to appeal to the soul of that robber, telling him that now we prepare food for him, you know, the 'four resources', for our part, you know you are not our relative but my husband has happened to do this thing because somebody else on top forced us to do that. Because, you know, in the Five Precepts you are not allowed to kill, but at the same time, you're not allowed to order somebody to do the killing, you see?

ML- So in a way it's a greater transgression, not just to kill, but to force someone to kill?

HY- Yes, to force someone to kill.

And then we invited the priests to do the prayers and offered the four resources, and then dedicated the soul of that person. What you have done is you have sinned but your sin is involved with the sins of my father, to have committed a crime, a sin. So from now on between you and us there is nothing, these four resources are what we offer to you.

ML- What are the four resources?

HY- You know, human being resources. We have cloth, you know, clothes, this and that. And after that we have shelter. And we have food and medicine. Those are the basic human needs...

ML- ...which you offer to the soul...of the gangster?

HY- Yes. And you offer it to the priests, but normally, according to Buddhist principles the priest will take it, consume it, and he will do the prayers and transmit that to him, invokes his name, so and so. And asks him that, if you have committed crimes accumulated from the past up to now, you have to pay the price in the 'new world' there. But after you have paid everything, like being in jail, you have finished your sentence, you will be reborn again. But no hard feelings between you and my father, because it was not him that killed you.... And that's the way we have to do that. If we don't do that, well, our conscience.... Especially my mom and my grandmother will never get along with my father.

But they knew it was not him. Every time we had to do that. He did that because the French ordered him to do it. Then we have to pay the price for it. That's my life, you see?

The experiences of Homg's father speak pointedly and painfully of the situation in Cambodia under French colonial rule, particularly at its height after the turn of the century and through to its decline toward the middle of this century. The background to these experiences suggests an era in which Cambodians were forced to choose between, as one ancient prophecy put it, "being eaten by tigers or swallowed by crocodiles".

Though there had been some French missionary work in Cambodia since the eighteenth century, and notably some exploration of the interior by the naturalist Henri Mouhot (who suggested in the 1850s that the country should be taken by France as it would be a "magnificent jewel in her crown"), actual political involvement in Cambodia only became formalised in 1863 with the establishment of the country as a 'protectorate' of France. Ostensibly, this status was granted to aid Cambodia in repelling the territorial advances of Thailand (then, Siam) on one side, and Vietnam on the other, though it would seem that it was meant more to serve French desires to control the whole of the Southeast

Asian peninsula. Vietnam had become a colony in the 1850s, and it has been suggested that Cambodia was then seen as a strategic buffer between it and Thailand, where the British were establishing a presence (Shawcross, 1979:43).

Towards the end of the century, as France sought to consolidate Southeast Asia as 'Indochina' (imperiously ignoring the varied cultural, political and historical differences in the region), Cambodian sovereignty was steadily eroded. While the Cambodian royal court still 'led' the country, it became more apparent that real control was increasingly in the hands of the French. In 1884 one treaty read: "His Majesty the King of Cambodia...accepts all the administrative, judicial, financial and commercial reforms which the French government shall judge, in future, useful to make their protectorate successful" (Chandler, 1983:143), and by 1897 the French resident superieur held the power to issue royal decrees, make official appointments and collect taxes (ibid:146).

What the French saw as a "civilizing" and "rationalizing" mission served to disrupt Cambodian society in many ways. By playing off branches of the royal family against each other, which in turn subverted the relations between them and their entourages, which in turn upset the relations between the entourages and their followers and ultimately the mass citizenry, the French were able to interfere on every social level (Chandler, 1983:144). As greater numbers of residents and colons were brought in to staff the bureaucracy and put down roots, Cambodia became simply an "efficient revenue-producing machine" (ibid:148).

An elaborate system of taxing basic goods and services was developed in order to finance numerous supposed 'public works' projects and to generously sustain the colonial administration. The Cambodian populace reportedly paid the highest taxes per capita in all of Indochina (Chandler, 1983:159). Those who were too poor to pay taxes were forced to provide corvée, ninety days per year of free labor, though even those who could pay were often required to contribute their services. The disparity between the incomes of French and Cambodian officials was also very great:

"A French official could earn as much as 12,000 piastres a year, with exemptions for his wife and two children, such an official would pay only 30 piastres in tax. Cambodian officials were paid less for similar jobs and were the first to have their wages cut during the depression of the 1930s. A Cambodian farmer, on the other hand, with no salary other than what he could earn (at 30 cents per day, or 90 piastres a year) or what he could sell his crops for (seldom more than 40 piastres a year), was saddled with a range of taxes that totaled in the 1920s as much as 12 piastres per year. He was taxed individually and in cash payment in lieu of corvee; his rice was taxed at a fixed percentage; he paid high prices for salt, opium, and alcohol and paid abattoir taxes when his livestock went to slaughter" (Chandler, 1983:156).

While the administration built an extensive system of roads through the country, there was very little else provided for the Cambodian people as a whole. The French did very little to develop medical and educational facilities for the population or even the basic services of running water and electricity. While the road network (built by corvee labor) was meant to provide more efficient communication links throughout the country, it in fact removed the French from participating in day to day Cambodian life. The roads made the use of cars easier and more efficient and so officials did not have to stay in villages but could live in the relative isolation of Phnom Penh and had only to make periodic forays into other regions to collect taxes, etc. Coupled with this, the administration installed many Vietnamese immigrants in the bureaucracy and encouraged Chinese merchants to dominate the commercial sphere, thereby forcing the Cambodians into ever more subservient positions.

There were other ways in which the administration demoralised the population. In 1924 an overly ambitious official by the name of Bardez was beaten and killed when he pressured and antagonized the villagers of Krang Laav into paying their taxes. The French decided to punish them by cruelly insulting the entire village:

"Moving swiftly through their puppets in the royal family, the French saw to it that (the King) sent his eldest son, Prince Monivong, to the area with a French political counselor to communicate his discontent. This took the form of a royal ordinance changing the name of the village from Krang Laav to Direchan ('Bestiality')" (Chandler, 1983:159).

Later, in 1943, the administration attempted to effect a 'modernization' of the written Cambodian language by replacing their forty-five letter alphabet based on a cursive,

Indianised script with a romanized one. This was another effort aimed at 'rationalising' and 'civilizing' what the French considered a 'primitive' culture. The architect of this 'reform', Georges Gautier, felt that this would in some way "improve Cambodian thought processes", though in the end it was resisted by the Cambodians as an attack on "the essential character of their civilization" (Chandler, 1983:170).

These were some of the circumstances that ultimately led to the growth of nationalism in Cambodia, a movement which gained momentum in the aftermath of World War Two. But these were also the conditions under which many people (those born in that 'betwixt and between' time of the colonial era's peak and before its decline) were confined their entire lives. These were the conditions that forced people to act in ways that compromised their own values and beliefs, and to atone for or reconcile those actions in whatever ways they could.

A Memory and a Cooking Lesson.

- ML- ...I was thinking of my own life the other day, when I was very young, and I was going to ask you...what is the first thing that you can remember from when you were young, what was your first memory? Do you remember it?
- HY- In what way?
- ML- Just as a young child. Do you remember what the first thing was you recall?
- HY-[long pause].... Yeah.... I can remember about my own character. I remember how I behaved, what I did. What I liked to do at home, to do at school. Six, seven years old.... See this [indicating a scar on his finger]?
- ML- Oh, were you cut?
- HY- It was not cut by a knife.... You know the turtle? A turtle bit me.
- ML- Like a snapping turtle?
- HY- Yeah, a big one. You see we eat turtle [indicating with his arms the approximate size, about an 18 inch diameter shell]. You know I told you about the elephants? That we had to hire the mountain people, the hill tribe people, to help take care of them? They would eat turtle, they would eat them a lot, because there are a lot of big lakes, this and that. And it's very good. They would kill them and then roast it.
- ML- How would you roast a turtle? Do you take the shell off?
- HY- No. You leave the shell. You dig the ground. Well, you cut the throat first. They use a small stick...it's cruel, but that's the way.... They punch it through the nose, because if you don't do that you can't cut the throat...you put it through the nose and then you can pull out the head. When you pull out the head you can cut the throat, you see? When you cut the throat it dies. After that you dig the ground, you put banana leaves in, you put it [the turtle] in with some soil on the top, you put the wood on and burn it, and roast it. The same as with fish. You know the big, big fish [eg. large 25 or 30 kilo lake carp]? They use mud...to put around it, then they make a big bonfire and burn it there. You calculate maybe half an hour to cook. When it's cooked you just crack all the mud, the skin comes right off, and it's very tasty. Because the juices are still there. Normally they use some kind of tree they take the sap, and it makes the fish very, very tasty. You know, you cut the tree, like maybe [about the size of] a pole, you scratch the outer skin [bark], put it in the fish's mouth [quite a way in], like a handle, and at the same time the sap from the wood gets into the fish and makes the fish very tasty. And the outside part of the fish is put in mud, and you burn it...
- ML- ...and then it hardens, and when you take it off it takes off the scales?
- HY- ...the scales, everything, it's clean.

And one day he caught a big one like that...a turtle...

ML- This is one of the hill people?

HY- Yeah. And they made a hole through the shell and tied it with some rope...

ML- So it was still alive?

HY- Yeah. So I was playing with it. I sat on the top, he went back and forth, this and that. I sat on top and he moved around. I was seven years old. Then I said, why doesn't he go? Maybe he got tired? And I went bang, bang, bang, and he wouldn't go...

ML- ...hitting on the shell?

HY- Yeah. I thought, what's wrong with you? So I just pushed, pushed, two or three times like that [poking with his finger the space into which the head retracts]. The third time...!

ML- He grabbed you! Oooh, that would hurt!

HY- (laughing) Yes! You see, I would never cry, because...to me...that's the way I am. Like if I was not allowed to do something, if my mom or my brother [said I shouldn't do something], I wouldn't forget about it, but I would just keep asking why, why am I not supposed to do that. If there was a big person there I wouldn't do it. But when I got out I would try to do it. If I did it and found out it hurt or it's not right, if it gave me some sort of negative reaction, I would say, oooh, but that's fine, that's why you're not supposed to do that. That's it, I'll never do it again. But first of all I had to try. That to me was normal.

And I was told not to play with the turtle. And I was told that when it bites you can't take it out [eg. your finger] until it is raining with lightning, this and that, and he will open his mouth.

ML- Oh! So they told you, never poke a turtle because if he grabs on he won't let go until there's thunder and lightning, a storm?

HY- Yes. And when I got bitten I thought, oh, I'm going to die! And I just kept quiet. He wouldn't let go, and the blood was coming out. But I never cried. I said, I was told again and again not to play, now I know why that is. I pressed my teeth together, and tried to pull, but he won't [let go]. The blood was coming out. So I still sat there, I don't know how many minutes. And then the guy came, you know of the hill tribe people, and said, (excitedly) why are you sitting on him? I said, I was playing with him. But he saw the look on my face, my face was not clear...

ML- ...you looked worried?...

HY- Yeah, I looked worried and it hurt. I was tempted to cry, I wanted to ask him to help. But he could feel something was wrong. What's wrong, he said, is something wrong? Get off or he'll bite you. But I still sat there. I couldn't say anything. And he kept saying the same thing as he got closer. Then he said, the turtle bit you, I know that! And he tried to turn me away, but my hand was still

in there, and the blood. And (laughing) I still remember his face. He didn't look frightened. You know what he did? He took a small knife and punched his bum...

ML- ...the turtle...

HY- ...you know, at the tail. And he opened his mouth!

ML- (laughing) and that's how he let go?
Oh, but that would hurt, though. I mean, that looks like quite the scar...

HY- Yes, it cut like a knife.
And he didn't want me to put on, I don't know what you call it in English, the French word is..., you know, the red liquid?

ML- Iodine? He didn't want you to put iodine on it?

HY- Yes, iodine. No, he just grabbed a flower. There are some here at the Experimental Farm.

ML- What do they look like?

HY- We call it the Ten O'clock, Ten A.M., flower. You know it's small, tiny, with a red, yellow flower. Usually the flower blooms from ten o'clock in the morning, during the summer.

ML- And in Cambodia? You call it Ten O'clock flower? How do you say it in Cambodian?

HY- Phkar maung dop. I think, p-h-k-a-r, mong, m-a-u-n-g, and dop, d-o-p.

ML- Ten O'clock flower. It blooms in the morning at ten o'clock, and stays the whole day?

HY- Stays the whole day. Then when it gets cold, it closes. The next morning it will do it again.

ML- So he used some of this flower?

HY- No, he used the whole flower, and bang, bang. When you bang it, it becomes like a jelly. When you crush it, it becomes like jelly, very cool. And he just put it on my hand and wrapped it with an old cloth, and that was it. You can do it, I can still do it if I have to here. At the Experimental Farm you have something like it. It's like this [drawing a five-petalled flower, something like a cloverleaf], I think the flower is something like that. It's yellow...or red. And the leaves go down the stem...

ML- I wonder what it is? I'll have to see if I can find it.

HY- The leaf itself, when you cut it there's a jelly-like thing inside there. You crush it up, like in [a mortar and pestle], you put a little salt in...

ML- Oh, you add salt?

HY- A little bit. Or maybe if you've got no salt, no problem. It stops the bleeding and will close the wound. He put it on me, I think, probably in the morning...yeah, I remember about 10, 11, 12 o'clock, because it was blooming at that time. And then in the evening, about five o'clock he took it off, made a new one, left it on for the whole night, the next morning the wound was closed, that's it.

ML- That's impressive.

HY- Yes, a very, very good one. Maybe if I find it one day here I can tell you.

That was very impressive in terms of my own experience. And we were taught by these people. The same as the Indians here in North America, and the Inuit, they had no chemical products, no modern medicine, this and that, but they used everything in their own jungle, in their own environment, to sustain their lives, to do everything they can.

Like, once a year we would go into the mountains, the jungle, to go camping, sometimes a month or so. We were taught how to recognize roots, which ones you can eat, which ones you can't. And when we ran out of water, or when it was in short supply, we were taught how to recognize a vine...

ML- ...to tap?

HY- Yeah, a big one, well, not too big. When it's too big the juice inside will come out a little...

ML- ..too thick?

HY- Too thick, and with some kinds of different chemical compounds that make it not good to taste. Most of the time about this size...

ML- ...about the size of your calf [in circumference]?

HY- Yeah. It grew like this [out of the ground], and in order to get the water, the juice, we had to cut here first and leave a stem, about that much...

ML- So you would have to leave some out of the ground...

HY- ...so it can grow again. And then you cut about two metres, but before you do that you have to point the stem at your mouth, because if you just cut it the water will come out.

ML- So you cut here and here [indicating a length, like a hose, held above the head]...and then you take this part, the top part...?

HY- No, the bottom part. Because if you can't turn right away the juice will come out fast. So you cut here and here, leaving a stump, near the ground, and you take this one [indicating the lower part of the length to be cut], point it at your mouth. And if the part above is too high for you, you get someone to cut it for you, and swoosh, the water comes. A metre is good enough for you. And then you cut

another length for your friend, and if that's not enough, you go to another one. We were taught all kinds of things.

ML- What else did they teach you?

HY- We were taught how to use the bark of a tree to fight against leeches.

ML- How did you use that?

HY- You would cut the bark off the tree, a piece of it, and some of them had lots of sap. And you rub on your feet and hands here. It smells a little bit, but to the leech it's poison. As soon as they touch it, there's some kind of chemical compound that would wound the leech.

ML- So would you put that on before you went into water?

HY- Into water, yes. And when you walked into certain areas. They taught you that dry areas with some kinds of rocks, in that area there will be no leeches. But near the ponds, where the ground has lots of moisture, leeches will be there. And so we would say, in this area there will be lots of leeches so we'll have to look for that kind of bark. And sometimes we would put it here [around the face, neck and side of the head] because sometimes the leeches would be on the trees, they could smell us, and drop [on us], and sometimes get into your ears. We were taught lots of things.

ML- The hill people that you're talking about, they would be from where?

HY- They were in only some provinces, not the whole area [ie. not the whole country].

ML- So they would be up in here [as we unfolded a map and scanned the north, western, northwestern and northeastern regions of Cambodia]?

HY- Yeah, in Kompong Speu...around here...

ML- In the Cardamom Mountains?

HY- Yeah. And also here, in Phum Sok...and also Siem Reap here...and in Stung Treng around here...and Kratie. That means in the peripheral areas, mountainous areas.

ML- I guess there would be different groups, they're not all the same group?

HY- Yeah, different groups.

ML- Do you know any of the names of the tribes, the groups?

HY- There were the Khmer Loeur....

ML- Were the Khmer mountain people?

HY- Here...near Kratie they were called Khmer Loeur.... But within that there were the Phnong, number one...number two are the Kha...number three are the Rader...and Charai. And in Kompong Speu...they were called, I think, the Samre...in Pursat, the

Por, the Chuong...and in Siem Reap, and Kompong Thom, around here, the Kui, Samre, too, I think, and probably the same as here [ie. in Pursat], the Por Chuong . But most of the time they call these people by the collective name of Khmer Loeur, Khmer.

ML- What does 'Khmer' mean?

HY- 'Khmer' means 'Cambodian'. To us, you see, the whole of Cambodia we divide into three parts. Number one is the upper part, with the Khmer Loeur, then here in the middle, Khmer Kandal, and this one here, this part is Khmer Krom.

These three 'parts' of Cambodia refer to rough geographic divisions, but more to the point are also descriptions of the people who in a general sense inhabit these regions.

Khmer Loeur refers to the 'upland', 'hill' or 'mountain' people; Khmer Kandal refers to the people of the plains; and, Khmer Krom refers to the lowland people in the southeast of the country. This latter term is also used more specifically to describe ethnic Cambodians who live in southern Vietnam in the broad area of the Mekong delta, a region that at one time was part of Cambodia. Some people still refer to it as Kampuchea Krom (Becker, 1986:55).

There are, or at least were, many native hill-tribe groups in Cambodia, occasionally called collectively the Phnong, (though one source suggests this term may be a slur meaning 'savages'; Steinberg, 1959:49) and comprising many different ethnic, cultural and linguistic affiliations. The most comprehensive tally lists 76 separate tribal names (Lebar, et al./HRAF, 1964:94ff). As the highlands and mountain regions of Cambodia are often bordering with other nations - Thailand in the northwest, Laos in the northeast, Vietnam in the east - many of these groups in fact were not bound strictly within Cambodian territory. As an interesting historical aside, it has been noted that traditionally coronations of many Southeast Asian kings required the attendance of leaders from these aboriginal groups, for example:

"The Jarai are important to the Khmer and the Khmer to the Jarai in a symbolic way.... A great sorcerer, the Sadat of fire, lives among the Jarai, and it is his prerogative, his duty, to protect the Khmer Sword of State. For centuries, sadats of the Jarai were probably invited to participate in royal coronations. Lowland kings believed that part of their right to rule derived from ownership of all the territory of the kingdom, which they inherited through distant kinship to leaders of aboriginal groups... By participating, the sadat fulfilled a cosmological requirement for the Khmer king" (Provencher, 1975:182).

There was however, for these hill-tribe people also a history of having been enslaved for use in the royal courts (Becker, 1986:122).

As a result of the events of the past twenty years or so, much of the information in the anthropological literature may be dated, and it is not clear now what the effects of war have been on these peoples. Some sources suggest that many of the hill-tribe people were enlisted, coerced or seduced by the Khmer Rouge into fighting in their armies (Jackson, 1989:236-237; Etcheson, 1984:85). They later became victims of violence when the regime turned on them and other 'minorities' (Becker, 1986:122-123). It is not clear from present information just how many of the refugees who have fled the region are from these groups.

The Anthropologist and the Journalist.

HY- ...down the middle.

ML- What you're saying about being a journalist is a good point. We talked about this before, that being a journalist is like being an anthropologist in many ways, because you have to be down the middle.

HY- Yes. And you have to be a little.... ...it's very hard to be neutral, very hard to be objective. Unless we learn, to me anyway - and it's not because you're studying anthropology that I say this - 'anthropology' [in some sense]. By anthropology I mean you look at the people, the good side and the bad side, no matter how bad you try to look at it, and see it, and finally, ask the question 'why', and things like that. Why he or she couldn't do better in this way. And because of that we feel a little sympathetic with [people in that kind of situation].

You know, it's the same as with some Canadians who used to go work in the Third World. They never realized, before they went there, that they may see something strange. In Canada everything is at our fingertips, you see. And still we speak of basic needs here. Basic needs in Canada are not the same as basic needs over there. And when you go over there you see lots of things like that. Some people with very soft minds they say, oh my god! And when you work very closely month after month, year after year...if you don't live with those people, you don't work with them, you don't have any feeling, you [might] say, don't tell me about that, I don't care about that. But when you work closely with people you are one of them, you are part of that situation.

And as a journalist, like I said before, it depends on what kind of journalist you are, it depends on what side you're on.

ML- In a way, that's been also a problem in anthropology, because an anthropologist tries to find out from someone what 'their' story is, or what the conditions are in which they live, in their culture. And in translating it to something [ie. not just literally translating, but representing], for this culture, there are difficulties in making the right connections.

HY- Well, if you study only one place, only one tribe, you cannot generalize, not even within the same country. Firstly, because of traditions [between] tribes. And secondly because of economic bases, for example the people who raise cattle you can't compare with the people who do the fishing. Even the cultural values are not the same.

ML- It's like some of the stories you've told me, say, about your family, and the people who worked for you, the hill people, it's very different. They're Cambodian as well, of course, but your experience is very different [from theirs].

HY- And yet they were still like friends, like family, because they were very sincere, very honest. Very, very honest. That's another point. When the Communists took over they used their philosophy, you know, the Communist philosophy to brainwash

these people. These people always kept their old, old values, not to betray the boss, you see. They knew nothing of international problems, international politics, nothing about the outside world, just the small world there. With us, they came to work with us, they didn't ask for money, didn't ask for anything. But we had to use our philosophy to find out [what they wanted or needed]. They didn't want to tell us what they want. We would ask somebody to find out who was their best friend, you see. And when we found out we would make friends with their friend there, ask their friend what they want. And that person would say, this, this, this. You wouldn't buy expensive clothes for them because they wouldn't like it. Most of the time if it was something we were wearing they might say, we like this one. And you might say, oh, well, I will buy you one. They would say, no, this one. If you said, it's old, they would say, no. You see, if you bought a brand new one, the same brand, the same thing, even ten of them, they won't take the ten, the new one. Just the old one that you are already wearing.

ML- Why was that do you think?

HY- I don't know.... They looked at us like brothers, or parents. And, for example, if you gave it to them they would say, this is from my brother, or my adopted brother, he likes this shirt and I said I liked it, so he gave it to me. If you bought a new one, well, it hasn't belonged to anybody.

ML- I see what you mean. It's a gift coming right from you to him, whereas if you were to go buy him one, he could just as well go and bought it himself. It's something personal. So maybe it has to do with their idea of what gifts are, what gift-giving is.

HY- The same as maybe in the Canadian North, the same thing. And if you said, well, you work for me, I'll give you thirty dollars a month, so and so, they would say, no, we don't need the money.

ML- So they wouldn't take the money?

HY- No, they wouldn't take the money. They would take some, when they went home, but they had to be very new bills. If you wanted to give them thirty dollars a month, and they worked for a year, they would say, no. But if you went to the bank, got the new bills, put thirty dollars in an envelope, or ten dollars, and said, this is for your father, then, ten more dollars wrapped in a cloth, this is for your mom. And then for everybody in the family. And after that you buy something according to what their friend told us that they want. Lots of tiny things like that, because they stayed with us we knew what they wanted, what they liked. And after, when you added it up it wouldn't come to thirty dollars a month for a year, no. Maybe half that.

ML- But they would prefer that? Because they were gifts? Is that common...would there be the same kind of thing in your community? Or was it just the hill people?

HY- No, the hill tribe people, especially in certain areas. The people who lived on the hillside, those areas, when they came down to the city there would be a difference of about 3 or 4 kilometres.

ML- In altitude?

HY- Yes. And they believed that they couldn't go down and live on the plain, because that's where the gods dropped them, up there, and they have to live higher. So they have to live there. And because of that, generation after generation, they have their own values that were taught by their parents, because they believe that their parents were taught by the gods, somewhere, somehow. And they keep that, generation after generation, including moral values, this and that.

ML- Would you say those values are very different from...

HY- ...the lowland people, yes. But basically they still have the same line of cultural beliefs, values, this and that, except a little different according to the area. Well, the same as the rest of us, you know, anywhere.

ML- Were the hill people Buddhists, too?

HY- No, animist. But they didn't mind Buddhism.

ML- I remember reading about a hill group in Laos, the Hmong, who had similar values. Would there be a connection between them?

HY- Almost the same, only they have a different dialect, but again they would be like a different tribe.

ML- I read that, among the Hmong, they couldn't come down from the mountains, below a certain point, for extended periods of time, and that they had to have a door at the front and back of their houses so they could always see the mountains from any point. They never wanted to be separated from the mountains, and they never wanted to move to the lowlands. So if these people came to work for your family, they would come down for a little while? But they would never stay?

HY- Rarely would they stay. They would go for a year at the most. And once in awhile during the year, if his or her parents, mother or father, got sick, they would have permission to go there no matter how far. And then sometimes we would accommodate them, give them a horse.

ML- How many people would you have working for your family?

HY- Normally, five to six, seven, ten, it would depend on what work needed to be done. During the rainy season we would need many because we were farming.

ML- What would be on the farm?

HY- Growing rice, taking care of the cattle, the elephants, and the water buffalo. We had about 40 to 240, 250 water buffalo. They would train a group of twenty or thirty. They would train the leader, the big male. Wherever they went they needed him to protect them, especially during the months of December, January when they had the babies. You know the tigers would always come around and disturb them. Water buffalo were much more intelligent than cattle. The cattle were very much cowards. If they smell a tiger they will just run like hell. Water buffalo, no way.

They would defend themselves. They would give a signal and all the little ones, and the females would stay inside, all the big ones would be on the outside. Like a fort.

ML- A circle? Like the elephants?

HY- Yeah, the same thing, make a big circle. And every little while two of the big guys would get out and circle around. When they get a little further away from the group their [sense of] smell is greater. They have some kinds of communication system. When they smell stronger they would give the signal to be careful, and he would run around. That would mean that a tiger was somewhere around, because he could smell it. And they could be very terrible, very fierce. One day, you know, one tried to kill a tiger but the tiger was very strong. It jumped on his back, grabbed on and bit everywhere. He was a male, a big one too, but he couldn't shake him off. So he ran to the water, the pond, and lay down under the water. When he lay down the tiger was still grabbing onto him but he [the tiger] couldn't breathe! So when he finally jumped off the other two or three [water buffalo] hit him with their horns. And the tiger couldn't get away, he stayed in the pond there, because he couldn't get away, all of them surrounded him. And he stayed there for a week, he was nearly dead because the leeches ate at him, sucked his blood.

About a week they were lost, about fifty of them, so the hill tribe people went to look, and in about one week they found them. And as soon as they sensed the hill tribe people the big guy gave a signal, a sound through his nose, shp, shp, shp. And the guy knew something was wrong, but he couldn't get closer, so they had to climb up the tree. One climbed up here, one climbed up there, and tried to observe. The two guys climbing the tree couldn't see the tiger because there was lots of grass [in the pond]. So he came down and tried to chase them out. The females and the little ones ran. They were trying to chase them home. But the two big guys stayed, pacing back and forth like that. They wouldn't leave because they wanted to fight the tiger!

ML- Would you say there is one animal that was more important than any other for most Cambodians at that time? You told me a lot about the elephant before, and so I thought that maybe the elephant was very important.

HY- Well, that's true, partly because of the economic base, the commercial base.

ML- Does it have anything to do with religion as well? [i.e. elephants figure prominently in much of the iconography of Angkor Wat, for example].

HY- No. You see, before we had trucks, for lumber, the elephant would take what we cut and drag them to the stream. And the water would carry it downstream. The people with small, small boats would follow the logs. Or they would make rafts out of bamboo, maybe fifty pieces of bamboo, stack logs on top of that, then more bamboo, then more logs, in between, and they would keep doing that, maybe twenty logs, all tied together. Then they would use four men on this side [of the stream or river], four men on that side, and float them down the river. Then we would use elephants to carry them. You see, people who didn't have elephants would use water buffalo, with big carts, but they would have to use eight water buffalo [to do the work of one elephant]. But if you had an elephant you would use the elephant.

Apart from that...you see, with the water buffalo, most of the Cambodians were farmers, they could use them to plow, this and that. So...to us they were all like part of our family. That's why my mom would never eat beef. Because of the water buffalo, cattle, this and that. She would say, well, they help us, in every aspect of life, they help us, generation after generation. Especially the elephant. The old one, you see, my great-grandfather owned him. And when he passed away he passed it on to my grandfather, then my father...

ML- The same elephant?

HY- Yeah, the elder two. The younger one of the three I think my grandfather bought later on. You see, they live nearly three generations of our lives. So when they reach sixty-eight, seventy years old, they no longer work, we let them go. But one wouldn't leave. We treat them like...well, to me, like my grandfather, my great-grandfather. Because he worked with my grandfather, my great-grandfather. Both of them are gone. But he is still here. So we always loved him, took care of him, gave him good food, watermelon, this and that. I would work with a farmer collecting peanuts. Some of the ones he didn't want, say they were too small, I would put them in a sack and bring it for them. If a watermelon was broken I would say, don't throw it away, I will come back for it. I would get a big basket, get on my bicycle and bring it for the elephants. They liked it. Sometimes we would go help these people who had a sugarcane farm. We would get alot for them there. We had fun.

Franz Boas advised against working with "intelligent natives" because, as he implies, they may have formulated their own theory, or theories, about what we are up to:

"...his information, for this reason, is strongly biased, because he is not so well able to withstand the influence of formative theories as the trained investigator ought to be" (1964:15).

Similarly, Margaret Mead remarked that "the fieldworker is not in the field to talk but to listen" (1939:196).

Aside from the arrogance of deciding who is and isn't 'intelligent', and, as Geertz would say, the problem of using such a "compromised word" as 'native', except in its strictest sense (1983:56), Boas' advice would seem to suggest that fieldwork is a kind of confrontational pursuit, an interrogation. It is almost as if the other party in the encounter is on trial, with the ethnographer conducting a cross-examination, as if we can't quite trust

what they tell us to be the truth, and we would just like to hear 'the facts', thank you very much.

In Mead's case it is as if we are engaged in some high-stakes poker game in which we deceive the other to show us their hand while steadfastly playing ours close to the chest.

In trying to turn the encounter toward a more conversational attitude, and calling the standard ethnographic relationship into question, we need to learn to temper what Helan Page calls our "obsessive learning behaviour" (1988:178), and develop a more accomodating, receptive ear for what is said. In so doing we credit our partner not just with cultural competence, but also an analytical competence.

All this is not to dwell in Geertz's "myth of the chameleon fieldworker,...a walking miracle of empathy, tact, (and) patience" (1983:56), but to recognize the subtleties - mysteries, even - in teasing out an idea between two people, negotiating (perhaps, 'navigating') thoughts to create some sense of understanding.

"We are not...seeking either to become natives...or to mimic them. Only romantics or spies would seem to find point in that. We are seeking, in the widened sense of the term in which it encompasses very much more than talk, to converse with them, a matter a great deal more difficult...than is commonly recognized. "If speaking for someone else seems to be a mysterious process," Stanley Cavell has remarked, "that may be because speaking to someone does not seem mysterious enough." (Geertz, 1973:13)

As Tedlock suggests, "conversations will stand or fall on their own merits as the meeting ground of two worlds, not on the basis of whether the investigator got what he claims he had been looking for" (1979:395).

To converse is to shrink the distinctions between anthropologist and informant. And perhaps most importantly it is also to allow, if you will, the other to 'anthropologize' as well.

A Protest Song.

HY- The reason why he decided to do that was because he said, you can't let people suffer like that. You know, food is not enough. When you lack salt it opens the body to disease, because firstly they were swollen, they were sick, and he couldn't [stand] that. He was not a real doctor. My cousin, he was a nurse, a male nurse, but more than that, because in our system over there, if you go to school for two years you become a nurse. And then if you continue another two years, you don't get a doctor's degree but what in French they call a médécin ...

ML- Like what we call paramedics, or maybe nurse practitioners?

HY- In terms of skill, in terms of practice, he was alot more skillful than the doctor who would just have gotten out of school.

When he saw all sorts of things like that he couldn't stand it. I don't know, I guess because of the nature of his training, of his work [he was a singer]...you know, the people who like music, they're not like a soldier, who can kill somebody. It's like the ancient Greek ideology of training your mind, training your body. Train your body through exercise and train your mind through music. That applies to us too, because in Buddhist religion when you become stressed, if you have lots of anxiety, this and that, you have two things to do. Firstly, train your mind through meditation. And secondly, you have to do lots of exercise, the four positions, you have to balance, the four positions, sit, walk, stand and sleep, you see? That's the way to balance. But if you walk around for ten hours and you couldn't sleep, you couldn't even sit down, it's not balanced. And that will terrify your physical body. And it will torture your mental body. So you have to balance both sides. You can listen to music or practice it yourself, because when you listen to music you concentrate, like a meditation, because your mind is concentrating on what you are doing. Your ear listens to the sounds of the instrument. You try to attract everything to there, not to torture your mind.

ML- Is that why music was important to your cousin? He wrote that song while he was in a camp [ie. a Khmer Rouge work-camp]?

HY- He wrote a song and I think in it he talked about the government. For him there was probably no way [that he would live through the regime]. He had said certain things, and he knew that this regime wouldn't allow you to say certain things like that. He couldn't stand it. He spoke out and he got caught. That means he opened his weak point to the Khmer Rouge, to find fault, to find an excuse to kill him. And he said, OK, I accept it, but before I accept it this is what I want to say. He couldn't express it [through words], so he expressed it through song. At least he could say, I was born, I was raised in my family, I have never committed a crime all my life, all I've wanted to do was help the people. Now near the end of my life I have done something wrong. But what I did, what I sang, it had nothing to do with anybody...I just couldn't stand to see the people suffering.

ML- He was saying, he had no regrets for what he sang or what he was going to sing? And his song became like a folk-song...that other people would sing...?

HY- Yeah. I don't think they could sing it openly because anyone who did that, he or she would face the same consequences.

ML- But it did spread around to other camps?

HY- Yes. So the title was Koh Keo, Koh Kam. Koh Keo was the name of the place where he was assigned to be killed, or where they would put him in the river. You know that place, Tuol Sleng, the museum? In each region they had one specific place designed for the killing. So in that area, because it was near the Mekong River, you know they didn't want to kill and put the corpses where they would be seen by somebody, on the road. So they would just take them in a small boat down there, knock them out there. And that area was called Koh Keo.

ML- That's the island that's in...

HY- ...the Mekong River...just up from Phnom Penh here. You know, when you're going up towards Kompong Cham and Kratie, I think about 50 or 60 kilometres up the Mekong River from Phnom Penh. Not too far.

His dad came from that area, too. An island.... One of the bigger islands somewhere there.

The Khmer Rouge control of Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 presents a horrifying and vexing problem for anthropology with respect to our cherished notions about 'culture'. Here was a political regime that ostensibly sought to transform the country into an 'agrarian utopia', but which in fact created an oppressive and unspeakably cruel 'dystopia'. In a very real sense the regime's goal was to obliterate culture as Cambodians had known and lived it up to that point, and to replace it with a kind of grossly simplistic, 'anti-cultural', militaristic, totalitarian society. To the extent that it might be said to be a culture, it was a culture of terror.

There are numerous biographical reports which vividly and thoroughly recount the experiences of those who survived the regime, (see for example: Ngor, 1987; May, 1988; Schanberg and Pran, 1984; and, Szymusiak, 1986), and other documents detailing conditions of the period that have been discovered in the aftermath, (see for example, Shawcross,

1984; Etcheson, 1984; Jackson, 1989; Becker, 1986), but a brief sketch of some features of this 'anti-culture' might provide some context for the tragedy of Horn's cousin.

The Khmer Rouge 'officially' came to power in Cambodia on April 17, 1975 when their army seized the capital, Phnom Penh. The reasons for the creation and rise of the Khmer Rouge communists is very complicated and involved, and those seeking a more comprehensive explanation might find it by referring to Shawcross (1979), Etcheson (1984) and Jackson (1989). Let it suffice for the moment that they were able to seize control of a country that was already severely weakened - economically, politically, and socially - by the geopolitical turmoil of the war in Southeast Asia.

For the Khmer Rouge, April 17, 1975 marked the beginning of 'Year Zero', a new era for the country that would henceforth be known as Democratic Kampuchea. All references to, or memories of, Cambodia before this point were to be forgotten, obliterated, that is, all material, spiritual, technological - and human - identification with this history and culture was to be destroyed. Traffic signs, advertising and other public messages or location markers were painted over. The country was to become a classless, peasant society in which communal, agricultural work became the focus. One's allegiance was not to one's family, friends or faith, but to the Angka or Angka Locu, the 'Organisation', or the 'Supreme Organisation'. Words such as 'mother' and 'father' were banned. Buddhism was abolished, monks were defrocked and killed, monasteries and shrines demolished. Marriages and relationships could exist only if arranged and sanctioned by the Angka.

The cities were emptied of its citizens. Those who could read or write, speak a foreign language, who wore glasses, or who had some technical or professional skill were seen as reactionary elements, as enemies of the peasant revolution. Many who survived did so only because they were able to conceal their abilities, histories, culture. Those who could not were often taken to 'interrogation centres', tortured, made to sign confessions, and killed. Tuol Sleng, a former high school in Phnom Penh (now a museum and memorial)

was one such 'centre'. In many cases 'reactionaries' and 'traitors' were simply killed in the countryside.

To sing a song that was not written and approved by the Angka was, of course, also a 'traitorous' and 'reactionary' act.

It has been estimated that some two million people died during this period, from either execution or starvation (Jackson, 1989:150; Fawcett, 1986:73), and that perhaps as many as 700,000 more may have also perished as a result of the famine that followed the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime and the Vietnamese invasion in 1979.

It is highly unlikely that the events of this period have not in some way or other scarred the lives of anyone who emigrated from Cambodia in the past fifteen or twenty years.

The Linear and the Circular.

- ML- I wanted to ask you - because we got talking last week about things that were important to you, things that you remember and things that you want to teach your children - what things are important to you to pass on to your children about Cambodia, that is part of them here. What are the things that you would like them to remember, or what are the aspects of Cambodian culture that you would like them to...nurture?
- HY- Hmmmmmm....
- ML- Is it hard to say?
- HY- No, not really....
Especially our cultural values, Cambodian cultural values. In terms of ethical values and artistic values. Something, again, that is not Canadian law, Canadian norms, Canadian society. The same as other ethnocultural groups from all over the world. They can keep something.
- I'm teaching my kids the artistic things. First of all, I'm teaching them the Cambodian language. Secondly, about dance.
- ML- Is there a particular name for the dancing?
- HY- What I teach her [the eldest] is Robum-June-Por. Remember I showed you in that big book? There are seven dances. That was part of the royal dances, before. They weren't publicly exhibited before. They were part of a ritual ceremony, for the king, the queen, inside the royal palace. Once in awhile when foreign dignitaries, heads of state came to Cambodia. Like Mrs. Kennedy was there, former President DeGaulle. When they were in Cambodia we performed that ceremony. The main idea in the ritual ceremony is to perform to appeal to the gods, to bless the guests, wish them best wishes in terms of long life, prosperity.
- Normally there are seven girls because everyone of us was born on one of the different days of the week. There are seven days of the week, from Monday to Sunday. And each girl represents each day, the day of your birth. I've trained three now, my two daughters, and one other girl in Toronto.
- In principle you should have one, not two, one, three, five, seven. Not in pairs.
- ML- Oh, so it's always in a sequence of odd-numbers? Why is that?
- HY- I think it's because the first one can go solo. The 'three' is to [correspond] with the Triple Gem Teaching of the Buddha...
- ML- The Three Refuges of the Buddha, the Teachings [Dharma] and the order of monks [Sangha]?
- HY- Yeah. And the fifth, I think, refers to the saints, there were five saints around the Buddha.

ML- Oh, the five dhyani Buddhas?

HY- Yes, well, we call them saints. [By that we mean] the ones who sat next to the Buddha, who became enlightened. Not actually enlightened, not the same as the Buddha. But they reached the stage of the Buddha, the first fire. You know, when he first sat and he deprived himself, so and so, and he became skinny, but it didn't work, remember I told you? Then, that day he saw an angel who came down with a guitar? A vina.

ML- That was the story about the string?

HY- Yeah. And one came down, he played and tightened the string, this and that, and the song didn't sound good. And when he tried to tighten it again it broke. And the second one came and he didn't try to tighten it at all, and the song sounded awful, too [sloppy]. And the third one came and he tried to [tune] the string nicely, turned it up a little bit and it was too sharp, turned it down a little bit until he got a good sound so he could play the music. That reminded him...

ML- ...of the Middle Path?

HY- Yeah, the Middle Path. You can't deprive yourself of human body needs, you need energy. Your mind can't stand still because it will move around [ie. be distracted if the basic needs are not met]. Because the mind is still inside the body.

During that time there were five men, five priests that were around him, five followers. When he left them they said, well, probably one day the Buddha, when he has become enlightened, he will come back. And they were the first five ones to become enlightened too.

And so we keep that form...for whatever we do.

ML- So the dancing is originally based in the dances of the royal court? And that's one of the things you want to pass on.

HY- The oldest one did it when she was young, and now the second one, she's nine years old now. Again, there are ritual ceremonies...like the one we do to appeal to what we call the genie, a kind of protecting angel. Remember I talked about the ten directions in the world, like on that ring? It's comparable to the secular authorities. Before you build a house you have to get a permit from city hall. For us we believe that in each piece of land, one way or another since the beginning of the world, this piece of land has belonged to somebody, somewhere, somehow. That's, again, a part of the second Precept. You are not allowed to kill, that's the first one. And the second one is you are not allowed to steal. You see? If you take something which is not offered, or without permission... You see, everything is part of the Buddhist principles. We have to perform a ceremony appealing to the goddess or angel, protective angel, of each direction of the world, to tell them that from now on - like with the one we just bought in Aylmer [ie. land bought by the community for the eventual building of a temple] - that by government law, secular law, we have bought this land from somebody, we have done everything according to law and rule and regulation, but there is one thing we haven't done yet, the one thing that we can't see by our eyes, and so through you, the genie, the peacekeeper of the ten directions of the world, to you we appeal, because we have done

everything we can in the secular world, now we turn to you to tell you that we take this place to build a temple. You see?

If you are building a temple you have to have, like at the border, a kind of pole. That's why we use rock, because rock can't be destroyed the way wood, in twenty years it is destroyed. We use the rock...

ML- Because it has a kind of permanence to it? Do you put rocks around the perimeter of the temple?

HY- Just around the temple, not the perimeter of the land. The property is a different thing. But for the purpose of the Buddhist principle we have to put that there.

ML- Do you put them in the ten directions? Or four?

HY- Actually, we can't put ten directions, we put eight. Because ten directions, well, you can point it out but you can't [physically mark] 'above' and 'below'. So we have eight around [the building], and the ninth one, in the middle there, the top and bottom will be same one. Sometimes there is a big hole there where people can put gold and things. You haven't had a chance to go there?

ML- No, not yet. Maybe we can go together sometime?

HY- People put gold, silver, money, anything in there. When they built the Angkor temple it was the same thing. That's why I teach [my nine year old daughter]. You see, the priests do something else. And we laymen, and layladies, we do something else. Like back at home before the priests perform the ceremony they have somebody do a ritual performance.

ML- And that's what you're teaching your daughter?

HY- My little daughter, yes. The older one did that, too. It's something that, I think, is part of Brahminism or animism. They take eggs, fresh eggs, and turn left, walk three steps and they throw the egg.

ML- So this is something that you do at the temple? At the beginning of...

HY- At the beginning of [building]. When you build a house you do the same thing.

ML- Do you use it for any other time or festival?

HY- No. Maybe when you go to bury somebody you might do the same thing too. It's a symbol of choosing the place, a place to rest forever. And for that person [it's important].

You know, sometimes when they throw the egg it breaks, sometimes it doesn't. You have to break it on the ground. You have to do it until the egg breaks.

ML- So you have to take three steps...throw the egg.... With either hand?

HY- Either hand.

ML- So that's something you have them participate in? It's something that's always performed by a lay person?

HY- A lay person, especially a young girl, a virgin.
It's something...something to tell them, that's part of where we come from. We do that, it doesn't hurt anybody. It's not against the law. You remember one day I mentioned to you that in Western society they always keep something of their ancestors, in terms of ritual ceremonies, this and that. But it's not always clear [why]. Like in the House of Commons, the guy with the [sceptre]...

ML- ...who carries the big mace, who knocks on the door at the beginning of a session?

HY- Yeah. Why, why does he do that? If nobody reads about it maybe they don't even notice.

ML- True. People don't pay attention to our own rituals here in Canada.

HY- And like you talk about in anthropology, sociology, you know, about symbols. Each nation does the same thing. We keep [these things], and probably don't even notice, or don't want to declare that they do things like that. Remember the other day we were talking about animism? I think here they have the same thing. But again, here we have a different vocabulary designed to [talk about] it. Remember I told you about that European family where the husband had died? And every year on the anniversary of his death they prepare very good food, the national dishes, this and that. And before they eat they always leave his chair [empty] there, and put his fork, everything, the same as if he was still alive. And when I asked the daughter of the family what they mean [by doing that], she said, we try to remember, we have a good life here because of him. And we love him, and he loved us. But life is not simple. When the time came for him to go he was gone. But we still remember.

And that's what it means. Maybe it means something else, but she didn't tell me. But that fits, that coincides with our ideas.

ML- So I guess what you're saying is, that is part of what is important to you, to maintain and nourish those [values]...

HY- The same as with that person from Europe. They try to communicate with the person who is gone, they try their best to communicate with his soul, wherever they believe he's gone. Remember I showed you in the book the person who sits under the bodhi tree, or the person who sits by a small hut and burns incense, this and that? Again, they try to communicate to the spirit of some powerful figure in the past. Or some of them - like the bo tree, that's the tree that Buddha sat under and became enlightened - in that particular area, in that particular moment, that person has something in his mind, or her mind, because he believes in that, because he believes in the history of the Buddha, he sits in front of that. So everyone who believes in Buddhism knows the story. They will do the same thing. And that bo tree, there, becomes a spiritual symbol.
You know, it's about powerful figures. The same as John A. MacDonald. Or Louis Riel, for example. At the moment he was executed he was a traitor. But now, you see, especially for French Canadians and the Metis, he is like a hero, like a god. One way or another the people - where he is buried, no tomb, no nothing,

but at least a big tree - they say, that's where Louis Riel is buried. They sit in front of that and say, hey, he was [special] this guy.

ML- So these are the kinds of things you would like your children to carry on?

HY- At least to ask them to remember that part of you, that's where you come from. And then, by comparing to the cycle of life, how to treat their elders, and the younger ones. Because the cycle of life goes on and on. I don't mean that we don't appreciate the Western social life right here. But you see the way they treat their elders...

ML- They get forgotten...

HY- Yeah, they get forgotten. Like for us if you draw a line like this [ie. drawing a loop with his finger on the desk], you come back. But the way they treat their elders, the line just goes like that, from here to there...

ML- ...not a circle...

HY- No, not a circle. You've studied anthropology, sociology, you know about the cycle of life in different cultures, this and that. You look at history you see the powerful empires going up and up, and down. Up and down. Up and down.

But the way they treat their elders it's the same as drawing the line like that, an end. But to me I say, no, there's no end. It comes back here. The lines meet. But here they say, no, Canada is not 'there', we draw our own lines.

Again, if you keep doing that your children will do the same thing to you, and the children of your children will do the same thing to your children. It's not against the law, firstly...

ML- But it may not be the best way...

HY- And they might ask, what is the best way, better than this one. Well, most of the children who abandon their parents they give a lot of excuses. They say, my parents didn't want to see me. If they have something wrong, OK, that's fine. But if you close your eyes and think, your mom carried you for nine months. How much suffering did she go through? And from the time you were born until you were five, six years old, she came across a lot of trouble to take care of you. She couldn't sleep, couldn't enjoy life. She loves you, took care of you. You know, a diamond is very expensive, but you, you are the best, better than a diamond. And then when you grow up a little bit and go through your life at school, both your mom and your dad do everything they can. Your parents try to make you a person, a well-educated, well-behaved, well-socialized person.

Now, now you become an adult. You have a degree, you have a good salary. And they are going 'down'.

ML- You have to bring it back to doing something for them?

HY- The cycle is the same, only the physical appearance is different. They become old, you see, and they're not as strong in terms of finances, and in terms of health they

are very fragile, the same as when you were little. The physical appearance is different, but the condition, the cycle of life is the same.

It's like the sun. You are going up, here. Your father is going down, there.

[.....]

Sometimes I would take my children to nursing homes, this and that, to do the dancing. I didn't go to disturb somebody's privacy. I went through the right channels. I got permission from the head of the department or the head of the nurses to do that. You know it doesn't cost you a cent. I wanted to show my children the life cycle, like I told you. You can be wealthy, have a pension, a cheque, but the cheque, the money, the material things don't please these people. Human beings need more than that.

ML- It's interesting that your emphasis is on the 'cycle', the 'circle'. Like you said about taking your daughter to old people's homes, it doesn't cost anything, it's not against the law. There may be some of us who would rather ignore that. But it is important to you.

HY- To me, yes. Because that's what I learned from my family. I learned through socialization with my relatives. My neighbours. And through the school system. And through the society in which I lived before I came here.

ML- It's interesting that this is all connected to a set of values that is important to you. To me what I find interesting is that Buddhist values might start with yourself but they extend out to other people, so your sense of... 'responsibility', I guess... your sense of concern for other people is always flowing outwards.

HY- You see, what I'm saying is, if you can manage the family affairs in a small unit that means you can control everything in good order, according to rule and regulation. And then you, you do the same thing with your family. And then the whole community, a larger unit, will be in good order. And then you go up and up by unit to unit. So, then the whole of the city of Ottawa. And then the whole country of Canada, why not?
Again, I use the principles of Buddhism, the teachings of Buddhism. They went all over the world and never used guns, never used bullets. And things went smoothly. They don't use guns. Of course, when they are disturbed they have to fight back. I don't mean that Buddhists couldn't kill each other; they could. But so long as they are left alone they don't care.
I don't know.... That's my own experience, my own opinion. Again, it's not easy to teach adults. And especially here in a different land, a different culture. We just try to do something to help. Like you said about multiculturalism, often people only look at something from the outside [ie. the dances, costumes, foods], it's a very shallow thing [ie. a shallow appreciation].

ML- Well, liked the way you put it, that people, the dominant culture, look at other cultures like fruit, they just look at the outside. And speaking of that kind of thing, did you like the way those people in Toronto made the video about you?

HY- Well, I haven't seen the final stage yet. They interviewed me, asked me questions, took the pictures at the temple, at the school, my dancing school, this and that. And they asked me why I did the charity work at my own expense. I said, well, again, the Buddhist principles teach me that I'm working hard right now in my present life to earn my living, to support myself and my family. That's the present

life. You work hard, you gain material things, material wealth. But because Buddhism teaches me to believe in reincarnation, in another part of the world, in the second step apart from this world, I have to build up some kind of spiritual wealth because I don't know where I will go. I hope if I do lots of good things that I will go 'up', at least to be born again as a human being. But if I am born again as a human being I would like to be smarter, this and that, than I am now. That's what I'm doing. But now we are talking about religion, about something that you can't see.

In his book, The Metronomic Society (1988), Michael Young suggests that there are primarily two ways in which individuals and societies conceive of 'time', as a linear construct, or as a circular/cyclical one. As he goes on to suggest, our preferred notion of time reflects our notions of self and community, and these are given expression in our metaphors of time, our use of time, and how we conceive of ourselves in time.

Those who see time in linear terms - 'time as a river' - tend to emphasize novelty and the future, and our place in time as a point in a never-ending progression forward. Those who see time as say, 'a wheel', for example, tend to emphasize the recurring, the repetitive, the consistent: "the cyclical keeps things the same by reproducing the past and the linear makes things different by introducing novelty" (1988:4).

Young offers that it is one of the features of modern, industrial society to emphasize the linear over the cyclical, where our view of productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and self-worth are determined according to precisely measured units of linear time. For example, automobiles are assembled with an eye toward how much can be done in a specific amount of time, the emphasis being on how more can be done in less time; psychotherapy is conducted according to the clock, as if one's neurosis is bound by measured moments. Our view of history is one in which "nothing repeats itself". We are so obsessed with "the new, and the news, that we notice the unique more than we notice the recurrent" (ibid:14). Time has become so "contemporized" that we have little sense of a

past but only "a present which is being continually extended" (ibid:207). The individual tends to think of time as a 'trajectory', with a definable beginning point and end point, determined largely 'for oneself'.

Theravada Buddhism, on the other hand, emphasizes the cyclical, the connections between past, present and future. In turn, it emphasizes the connections between self and others. It is evident in the 'wheel of dharma' which the Buddha set in motion, in the cycles of the religious and social calendar (eg. the eighth, fifteenth and full-moon days of the lunar month are holy days), and particularly in the notions of karma and reincarnation.

For Theravadin Buddhists, the Buddha's teachings describe that existence is a continual cycle of suffering (dukkha) unless one comes to an understanding of the origins of that suffering and the way to cease that suffering. Specifically, our existence, our consciousness, is determined by the net accumulation of the effects of our actions, our kamma (in Pali; in Sanskrit, karma). Thus, in a grossly simplified sense, we might say that, because our actions affect others and vice versa, 'our' suffering becomes 'their' suffering, and 'theirs' becomes 'ours'. We are inextricably bound together in ways determined by the nature of our actions. This becomes more complicated and subtle when one considers that, according to these teachings, there is ultimately no distinction between the self and other (see Lester, 1973:26).

Kamma can be of three kinds: correct or meritorious action, incorrect or demeritorious action, and neutral or non-fruitful action (Lester, 1973:38). What is necessary for the cessation of our suffering is the development of an awareness, a mindfulness, of our actions, their causes and effects, and the enhancement of 'correct, meritorious action'. Mindfulness of our actions as they might affect others is thus a central concern in daily life, along with the belief that the development of perfect mindfulness will lead to the cessation of suffering. As Lester suggests, individuals may feel that perfect mindfulness may not be attainable in this life, but at the very least "the wise man looks to the conditioning of a

favorable rebirth, or... seeks to enhance his merit-status" (ibid:37). Hence, a concern for cultivating and maintaining rituals and beliefs that emphasize the cyclical serves to identify oneself as one 'being' connected with and responsible to others.

All this is not to suggest some sort of facile, romantic and moralistic dichotomy between linear and circular approaches to the world. As Young goes to great pains to emphasize, all our conceptions are 'representations', that is, our internal impressions and orderings of the external world. There is a danger in reifying our metaphors, our representations, as Berger and Luckmann (1967:106) have pointed out: "Reification implies that man is capable of forgetting his own authorship of the human world".

Furthermore, the distinction between the linear and the circular is not really an 'either/or' proposition. Young suggests that they are, if not entirely complementary ways of looking at time, at least dependent upon each other:

"As for the linear, in a sense it always contains the cyclical within it, and this is apparent even when we are most caught up in the cyclical. We can persuade ourselves that it is only the grand procession of the heavens, and that alone, which lightens the evening sky in the spring.... But we also know that no summer or spring is ever quite like another" (1988:231).

Nevertheless, it may be instructive for a society that generally tends to ignore or neglect the biological rhythms of its members and the geophysical, lunar and solar cycles of its environment, to examine the social and ecological implications of other cultural beliefs and practices which celebrate the cyclical.

As Young suggests, the linear metaphor of the 'river of time', that is ever-flowing in one direction toward an ever-present future, is only useful if one conveniently forgets the fact that "the water in the river returns as rain to its source" (1988:244).

Being Buddhist in a non-Buddhist Society.

ML- Is it difficult...to be Buddhist in this society, in Canadian society? Is it hard...is it a struggle, to maintain Buddhist principles?

HY- You know, I think that naturally, yes. When you are a minority, in any situation when you are in the minority it's not easy, it's not easy. But some people who know something about Buddhism they tend to be pleased to see something that is different. I'm not talking about the average person but some people who know something about meditation, about non-violence. In the world right now, as you can see, there are some people who do not want to know anything about this tradition, because they don't want to look at it, to find out about it. And vice versa with some Buddhist people, they don't want to read, they don't want to find out, they don't want to go into it and find out what is good, what is bad.

To me...you see, I don't mean that in Buddhism everything is perfect. But like in the modern world we have all kinds of powerful weapons and technology. You know, it's up to you to use it in whatever means, to whatever purpose. Some people say Buddhism teaches you to be weak, to not be materialistic, not to be masters of nature, so and so. Well..., if you look very closely the Buddha teaches you to believe in everything that has the truth in it. It is only you who are blind, who can't see the truth, who say something else. Buddhism never teaches you to be lazy,

ML- ...or to be weak...

HY- No....

ML- ...or to be submissive...

HY- No.

ML- And like you were saying with that incident with your daughter at her school, you don't have to take what people might say to you, you can stand up to it.

HY- Yes, you can stand up to it. You see, Buddhism always teaches us not to kill. Not to kill, yes. But in terms of self-defence.... If I stay at home with my family, peacefully, and you intrude on my house, try to rob me and kill my family, no. If you want to practice Buddhism, well, if you're alive you can do that. But if you are not alive, you have no soul, nothing, you can't. You're not allowed to kill anybody without any reason. You try within your means to use compassion, tolerance, patience and non-violence, that's the way. But if it doesn't work, well, we have to use self-defence, because there is no sense in one hundred percent of the people in the world getting killed. There is no reason. We are human beings. It's simple.

ML- I remember reading that the Buddha many years ago decided at one point that the monks should be allowed to learn things like karate, kung-fu and to carry sticks, because it was the only way of defending themselves against bandits...

HY- ...and wild animals.

You see, during his career when he was first becoming a 'priest', he lived in the jungle, he didn't live in the city any longer. He was doing prayers, meditations in the jungle, always in the jungle. And you can see, in the jungle in India, it would not be safe and sound. There would be poisonous snakes, tigers, panthers, all kinds of dangers. But during that time he used, well, part of Brahmanism was the use of magic. Even with the Buddha we have magic. There are some kinds of magic formulas in the guttas, the recitations. But sneaky people took some of those formulas and it became what we call the left side, the dark side [ie. the sinistral side of the religion], and that became magic. And they used those formulas against the spirits, against bad animals, this and that. You see, the Buddha, one day he was confronted by the elephant, what they call the King of the Wild Elephants. When the oil came from his body he became very cruel, very fearsome. And he wanted to crush the Buddha. And the Buddha used, what they say in Pali, bak, seven defensive formulas. If you go to the temple you will see. There are pictures on the wall. In one he tries to appease the nagra, the cobra king. Another one is a gangster, a bandit. Another one is the elephant. And the last one is the Mara, the Mara with the beautiful daughter. That was the last stage before he became enlightened. The Mara tried to stop him from becoming enlightened. In the abstract sense that means that before he became enlightened his soul, his spiritedness and his craving, desire, kept fighting with each other. And one [manifestation] of desire is trying to convince him that it's too tough, too painful, just forget about it, you don't want to be the Buddha. But the other side, the spirit side, says, no, remember when you were born, you walked seven steps and you said this will be the last birth for me, I will become enlightened, so and so. So these two things keep fighting with each other. That's the way. Until you become enlightened. It's analagous to any human being, like you and me. In our life we have one specific goal to reach, to achieve. But before we can do that there are lots of obstacles that will come into our mind, our path. You know sometimes we give up. But some people say no, I have to finish it, at any cost, I have to. Almost every life. In some case, somewhere, somehow you will have that kind of situation. I don't know.... Maybe it's not true. But to me it is.

ML- Is...the notion of enlightenment an important part of Buddhism in Cambodia? Is enlightenment something that you work towards in your life?

HY- I think, not just for Cambodians but for any Buddhist. Especially for Hinayana, the old school, what they call Theravada Buddhism. That's the whole objective. Because, you see, according to the teachings of the Buddha, the cycle of life goes on and on, there's no end. To us life is beautiful but if you look at it from another angle life is not easy, it's not beautiful, there are a lot of obstacles, a lot of suffering, so and so. And in order to understand that, and to stop the cycle of suffering, there is only one way: to find out the truth about life, why do we have this birth, the growing older, the disease, the old age, and the cycle going on and on. So according to Buddhism and the people who have collected, conserved, preserved something from the past, [by looking at it] you will see.

Enlightenment, nirvana [or niibbana, in Pali], means you are finished with all that. No suffering, no rebirth, nothing is suffering, nothing is desirable, everything is the best. But not 'best' in the worldly, material [sense]. [It is] that you prefer not to be born here, but to be born 'there', finished.

And to most of the Buddhist people, yes, I think it's important. It's a long way. Like before you reach the end to get a doctor's degree, a PhD. You're exhausted.

ML- And in this case it's something much more than a PhD.

HY- And you can't talk about the goal of reaching a doctor's degree with a kid, four or five years old, grade four, grade five. They know nothing. They just have fun and play over here, and that's what they think about. It's the same thing with this. Even the priests sometimes, who spend twenty, thirty years. A priest is a priest. You know, some have cravings, desires. Unless the priest - we say there are the left ones and the right ones - if he is the right one he will think about that. The more he gets older, the more he learns about Buddhism, this and that, the more he knows about the causes and consequences [ie. of suffering, desire].

ML- What is the 'left' one then? The 'right' one is the one who follows the path of...

HY- I mean, in terms of spirituality. Some priests become priests but with different desires, this and that. To be in the world, to have a status.

ML- Is that the 'left' side, the dark side?

HY- Yes, the 'left' side, the dark side.

ML- And the 'right' side?

HY- The 'right' side is the one who says, well, it doesn't matter how long it takes.

There are some weak points and strong points. Some of the Buddhist monks have been criticized because they have joined the priesthood just to have a good life, not having to work, having someone to support and feed you. But some of them give up the material life, the material things and say, I have to observe the Buddhist principles, and at the same time do lots of charity work, so and so, until I get older. Then they go to the jungle and spend almost every twenty-four hours in meditation. Some of them.... It depends... on what you do with your own life....

I am almost tempted to let this 'final conversation' stand on its own, though in a very important sense all these dialogues can and do stand on their own.

Although it was our last formal, taped conversation it is not a 'final' one, neither 'thematically', or in the sense of creating any sense of closure about the encounter. Nor is it a summing up of Horng's life.

Futhermore, it is the 'last' conversation only by circumstance; we have since had many more conversations (unrecorded, except in memory) and hopefully will continue to.

Ethnographic relationships have been described as 'student/teacher', 'employee/employer', 'friends or relatives', and some even see it as closely paralleling that of 'psychiatrist and patient' (Casagrande, 1960:xi). It may well be most closely related to this latter type, as long as one keeps in mind that both parties are simultaneously therapist (perhaps in its original meaning of 'one who attends'?) and patient. But, a (perhaps at this point unnecessary) warning: a simplistic reading of it as 'psychiatrist and patient' carries too many incorrect and undesirable colonialistic reminiscences and assumptions.

It may be 'psychological' in the sense that Crapanzano makes of it, that it is a kind of "confrontation" in which we struggle not so much with our partner in the conversation but with our own understanding. In this way it becomes an act of "self-constitution" for each party, and the ethnographic text itself becomes the site for "a dialectic of constitution and deconstitution, incantation and exorcism, creation and destruction" (Crapanzano, 1977:72). Or as I have been suggesting at the outset, it is a site for 'the anthropological imagination' to reflect, contemplate, imagine, and in the process, form and reform the self. This is what Crapanzano recounts in elaborate and sensitive detail in his conversations with Tuhami (1980).

Schafer (1980:49) has argued that even the psychoanalytic dialogue is not simply a "fact-finding expedition" or the construction of some kind of 'normative life-history', but a series of "hermeneutically filled-in narrative structures" involving 'transformation' on both sides of the dialogue.

Is it in any sense a 'friendship'? Evans-Pritchard (1964:79) felt that we fail as anthropologists unless, when we say goodbye, "there is on both sides the sorrow of parting". Perhaps, if we are fortunate, it is.

Friendship, says Paine (following from Aristotle), can contain elements of both the 'moral' and the 'instrumental'. On one side we 'desire the good for one another', and on the other, there is a notion of 'usefulness' for each other (Paine, 1974). The nature of the friendship is determined by the relative emphasis on either of these two dimensions. It may be expecting too much to presume a friendship, the relationship is after all usually contrived by the anthropologist, at least initially, and it may not have the time to develop in the way a fuller friendship requires. But at the same time we may want to consider that it is more important to desire the good for one another than it is to obtain some 'usefulness'. Empathy, Vandiver suggests, is the "quintessential quality" of biographical writing, and in bringing the reader to the subject, therein lies "a special kind of act: it offers a touch of friendship" (1986:64). This 'touch' of friendship may be all we can expect from most ethnographic encounters, whether they are face to face or through a text. But it may also be enough.

Ogni dipintore dipinge se, "every painter paints himself". So runs a Renaissance maxim.

In the ethnographic encounter there are always at least two brushes at work.

CHAPTER FIVE: ENDINGS.

Stewart, in her book On Longing (1984), humourously but insightfully titles her introduction "Hyperbole" and her conclusion "Litotes". It may be true for all of us to some extent that we begin with grand and hopeful intentions and pronouncements, only to then sum up with understatement and a clever or sheepish defence of why we haven't quite met all the goals we initially set out to achieve. This is often phrased as, "this domain of inquiry requires further study". It has also become a standard postmodern gambit to offer that there can be no conclusions, no closure, for to do so is to reassert an 'authoritative voice' which commands, decides and defines an ending, one which excludes all other possible endings.

Without embracing what may be a pretension (or a convenient escape-hatch) we might well agree that in speaking about human lives as told through a life-history there can be "no final truth" about a person (Pascal, 1960:195), and if there seems to be one it is only because we have created an illusion of completeness, what Kermode (1966) calls the drive to create "the sense of an ending". Mark Twain went so far as to say that a complete biography can never really be written because one's words and acts are merely external expressions of a much more complex life that is "led in (one's) head, and is known to none but (oneself)" (Kaplan, 1978:4). He may be right, as even the most candid of subjects can only relate a certain perspective, and the most cautious one chooses not to.

As Tedlock (1987) suggests, even the endings of stories are seldom final in any absolute sense, nor are they necessarily the most important part of the telling. Though he is speaking specifically of myth we might easily substitute 'story' when he says:

"If endings were what myths were all about, there would be no need for anyone to hear a given myth more than once in a lifetime. Every time a myth is retold from the beginning, it is as if the ending had been undone and things were undecided all over again" (Tedlock, 1983:333).

Stories, then, carry within them the seeds of other imaginable possibilities, the possibility of change. We might ask, to what extent do these conversations, these stories, change us. To what extent might they act as "an axe for the frozen sea within us" (Sexton, borrowing from Kafka, 1985:71), and in what sense can they be said to "weave into the fabric of our own lives" (Benjamin, 1969:86)?

Change, of course is not simply something we can 'will' to happen, nor do we necessarily always wish it to happen. Change is very seldom immediate, it requires time. And as we all have experienced, it may emerge unsolicited. It is effected by circumstances, ideas, or motivations achieving a critical mass, or developing a momentum. This is why memory, the act of remembering through the act of retelling, is such a critical component of stories and storytelling. Memory allows for events to resonate in the imagination, and these resonances, these echoes have a latent power to transform.

Hornig once said to me that the reason why it was important for him to tell these things was because, so much had been destroyed or lost in his country over the past fifteen years - books, official records, scriptures, architecture and most importantly, human lives - that there is a danger of losing its history altogether. And as he told me, "a country without a history is a tree without roots". Myerhoff (1982:103) noted in a similar vein that the importance of 'telling' is in the ability to "become visible" to oneself and others:

"[life histories] are opportunities for appearing, an indispensable ingredient of being itself, for unless we exist in the eyes of others, we may come to doubt even our own existence."

For the reader or listener too, there is this sense of 'making visible', what Hoffman calls the "parabolic dimension" of stories which, in allowing us to participate in the telling allows us to enter another world: "for a moment we experience another perspective, another possibility, which in itself reminds us that ours is not the only one" (1986:36). As Basso (1984) has described, in the context and practice of Apache storytelling for example, this

participation is activated by memory in such a way that the story "stalks" us, and makes visible our own fortunes and follies.

We should remind ourselves then, not to take these life stories for granted, as we do, say a catalogue of facts, for their power to transform is something that is always lying in wait in the imagination and memory. Nor should we, as the ancient Greeks advised, take the skill of memory for granted. The Goddess of Memory, Mnemosyne, was the mother of all nine Muses. When the daughters of Pierus foolishly challenged them to a competition in song the contenders were punished by being turned into magpies "who could only sound monotonous repetition" (Boorstin, 1993:482).

Myerhoff tells us that the importance of telling and retelling stories from memory was emphasized by Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlav who, when nearing the end, ordered that all written accounts of his teachings were to be destroyed. The words were to be passed on from person to person, from mouth to ear: "my words have no clothes.... when one speaks to one's fellows there arises a simple light and a returning light" (Myerhoff, 1982:116).

If we were engaging in a kind of 'performance anthropology' (or, an 'anthropology of the absurd') I might suggest that this thesis be burned after one has read it, precisely to make the point that it is what lives on and is passed on 'through memory that tells the story of a life, not merely the ink on the page. But in this instance the words and the stories of Homg-Yorn are too important to lose to those kinds of theatrics, and our memories are probably too poorly exercised to really 're-member' as well as we should.

There is a Cambodian proverb which says, "don't choose a straight path, and don't reject a winding one". It seems appropriate that, for good or ill, this document has unintentionally followed that counsel. It has been an attempt to examine the rhetorical, fictive ground on which ethnography is based, and to develop the argument that it is in fact at all times a kind of storytelling.

Perhaps more importantly, it has sought to bring to the surface the presumptions about authority in the making of an ethnographic text, and to redress certain perceived imbalances by stressing the methodological importance of life history research, dialogue and conversation.

It is, of course, not in any sense offered as an 'ethnographie nonpareil', or a template on which other ethnographies necessarily could or should be based. I would echo Dwyer (1982:286) in suggesting that this document is merely an "alternative" in the field of possible ethnographies, not a "model" to be emulated. My task and wish has been simply to help someone tell their story, and in the process tell a little of the story of ethnography.

Pellowski (1977:150ff) tells us that one of the most common devices for closing a storytelling event is to turn it over to the listeners.

With that in mind I will simply say, remember this man's story, and if you will, pass it on.

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