Rosalind C. Morris

Part 2 | Session 11 | 04 Jul 2024 | Other Anthropologies and Anthropology's Otherness

A Conversation on Disciplinary Futures

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Disciplinary Anthropology has been subject to recurrent waves of auto-criticism. At least since the mid-1960s, it has been grappling with its colonial legacies and related epistemic structures. These exercises in reflective self-reformation have taken several forms, including: 1) the historicization of the discipline and the investigation of its imbrication with various imperial projects and colonial practices; 2) the critique of universalist theory, and especially structuralism; 3) the disentanglement of race science, racism and biological anthropology from social and cultural analysis; 4) the development of various "reverse" anthropologies; 5) the embrace of non-European anthropologies and ontologies.

Running through these many efforts has been a concern with the discipline's grounding concept, namely "otherness." The notion that field-research is an exercise in self-knowledge achieved through a detour through otherness, and that anthropology is itself a "technique of homelessness" (Lévi-Strauss, Balandier) has been indicted as fundamentally Eurocentric. Yet, the concept and problematic of otherness, of the other and alterity (and the related German terms, *Fremd(heit)*, *Andere*, *Alterität*), vary greatly across the different discursive traditions as well as the critiques of the discipline.

At various moments, a shift to the idioms of *différance* (via deconstruction), multiplicity and the otherwise (via the new ontologies and post-Kantianism more

generally) have been offered as escapes from the colonial burdens still weighing upon most disciplinary anthropology. But this does not yet constitute an analysis of these distinct concepts and their respective entailments. That task remains to be undertaken. In this discussion, Rosalind Morris explores the intellectual histories within which otherness has been conceived in anthropology, and argues for the politico-ethical as well as conceptual necessity of retaining this concept at the discipline's core.

Readings

Claude Levi-Strauss, 'The Return,' in *Tristes Tropiques*, pp.373-398

Johannes Fabian, selection from *Time and the Other* (ch.2), pp.37-69.

Trinh Minh-ha, 'The Language of Nativism,; *in Woman, Native, Other* , pp.47-78.

Jeanne Favret-Saada, selection from *Dangerous Words* (pt. 1), pp.3-28.

Iris Darmann, 'Der Fremde im Widerstand gegen das Verstehen oder: Hermeneutik und Ethnologie auf dem Prüfstand erneuter Kritik,' *Philosophische Rundschau*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2005), pp. 21-39

Kien Ket Lim, in "Of Mimicry and the White Man: A Psychoanalysis of Jean Rouch's *Les Maîtres Fous*," *Cultural Critique* 51 (2002): 40-73

Michael Taussig, 'Reflection,' from *Mimesis and Alterity* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.236-249.

A. Lynn Bolles, 'Decolonizing anthropology: An ongoing process,' *American Ethnologist* 50 (2023): 519-522.

Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of

Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation–An Argument,' *The New Centennial Review*, 3.3. (Fall 2003): 257-337.

Jacques Derrida, "Differance."

Fritz Kramer, the Red Fez, Introduction.

In Conversation. Kitty Scott and Kader Attia, 2014

Rosalind Morris' *work is addressed to the histories and social lives—including the deaths and afterlives—of industrial and resource-based capitalism in the global south. Those interests extend to the technological and media forms that attend or undergird these economies and the forms of subjectivity produced in their midst. They also encompass the racialized and sexualized political logics and structures of desire accompanying these phenomena. Morris' recent writings on these subjects are grounded in deep ethnographic research in southern Africa. Believing that ethnography is a mode of extended listening and learning from others, and that textual practice is a dimension of analytic practice, Morris's work encompasses a variety of forms and media. It reaches from scholarly articles to essayistic prose and ethnographic monographs, and also includes the documentary film We are Zama Zama (2021), as well as expanded cinematic installations and a narrative film. She co-authored libretti with Yvette Christiansë for the Syrian-born composer Zaid Jabri. Currently, Rosalind Morris continues to work on "Anatomy Lessons of a Miner". This project draws on her work as a filmmaker, media artist and writer. Her interdisciplinary thinking makes "Anatomy Lessons" a device for thinking creatively and ethically about the worlds that have been shaped by extractivism. See also:* Leuphana Fellows