IN ANTHROPOLOGY, THE IMAGE CAN NEVER HAVE THE LAST SAY

Bill Watson		Pavel Büchler
and	*vs*	and
Michael Carrithers		Jakob Høgel

Edited by

Peter Wade

Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory

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*The ninth annual GDAT debate, held in the
University of Manchester on 6th December 1997*

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INTRODUCTION

Peter Wade

In his talk, Pavel Büchler complained that my last-minute addition of the words "in anthropology" into the debate motion confused rather than clarified the issues at stake. His quip that I was perhaps seeking to reassure my audience that what they would be getting was "anthropology" was not far out of line, since as his seconder, Jakob Høgel, rightly said the debate was meant to be about the nature of anthropology, rather than the nature and potential of words and images in any realm. As with other debates in the GDAT series, we are thinking about anthropology as a discipline, at a conceptual and theoretical level. I did not intend with this to open the possibility of ruling Pavel's arguments out of court—'Not in here, mate!', in his pithy phrase. On the contrary, the whole point of having a non-anthropologist in the debate was to get a different view, although in this case it was one that put its finger on the pulse of anthropology with uncanny accuracy.

The issue, as recognised by various of the speakers and also several contributors from the floor, is about authority. What is anthropology as a discipline and who defines its rules and methods? Who, or what, has the last say? Of course, nothing and no one actually has the last say. The subject is in process. The question is put in black and white terms, as a debating motion must be, but the issue is the direction anthropology is, or should be, taking.

Bill Watson and Michael Carrithers both rely tacitly on the old distinction that Weber made between *verstehen* and *erklären*. Both admit the force of images, moving or still; both admit that images can inspire emotion, empathy, rapport, intuitive grasp, commitment, motivation, a desire for more knowledge. This is *verstehen* or understanding, the sympathetic grasping of someone else's point of view, a comprehension that might lead one to explore further. But, in Michael's words, this is "not anthropology", or is at best only a first step in the right direction. Beyond lies *erklären*, or explanation. One might baulk today at Weber's notion of explanation, even if he did see it as rather different from explanation in the natural sciences, given sociology's reliance on ideal-type simplifications and statements of probability rather than solid prediction. But Michael at least insists on the need for context, depth and history which, in his view, the (still) image cannot give us—although he does not tackle the medium of film and video. Bill also insists on getting below 'the surface' to some deeper level of reality, for all the inevitable concessions to the contingency of this reality. Moreover, for him, reflexive self-criticism is crucial to anthropology (and

knowledge in general) and here, although images can be deconstructed in this way, their meanings are finite, limited, whereas text can be infinitely de- and re-constructed. (In the discussion, Pavel quibbled that if text is infinitely re-readable, it could never have 'the last say', but Bill's point is that it is in the infinity of textual re-reading that its authority lies.) Bill does not, however, present us with any real substantiation of the (counter-intuitive) idea that images have finite meanings. For both Bill and Michael, then, image and text have a place, but they have different and incommensurable functions in anthropology and the authority to constitute anthropology as a discipline which strives to explain human behaviour (or at least to do more than simply grasp it in an empathetic way, to make inference from observation) must lie with texts.

Pavel takes a line that penetrates to the heart of debates about the nature of anthropology. The discipline, he rightly points out, is ultimately constituted not by a bunch of academics sitting in universities, but in an interactive relationship between anthropologists and the people they study in a changing world. As that world changes, so the people, the academics and their relationship change and so too must the nature of the discipline. Quite right—witness the ponderings on the nature of anthropology that processes of globalisation have brought about, the endless retreading of the long-standing critiques of cultures as bounded units. Pavel contends that the history of images is full of quantum leaps in form, that the world is becoming more laden with images the form of which cannot be predicted, and that the people anthropology studies inevitably change their self-perception and self-representation accordingly. Anthropology must also change, unpredictably perhaps, but in ways that must make images more central to its project—without displacing words. An attractive argument, but one that loses some of its cutting edge when it gets close to the bone. Of course, people do change their self-perception with the ubiquitous presence of images in the world— Turner's work with the Kayapo is the mandatory reference here, but there are other examples.[1] But does that necessarily mean that anthropology should change to incorporate images in its own practice, rather than as a problem for investigation? Do we fight fire with fire?

Jakob says: yes, we do. This is partly because film has the power to popularise anthropology—and if this is to be done effectively and without the insights of the discipline being perverted by primitivism, then anthropologists must engage more seriously with images and learn to see, acquire 'visual literacy'. Just as important, film provides anthropologists with more of the self-critical

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[1] Terry Turner, "Representing, resisting, rethinking: historical transformations of Kayapo culture and anthropological consciousness", in *Colonial situations: essays on the contextualization of ethnographic knowledge,* (ed.) George Stocking, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1991; P.C. Alders and W.R. James, "Tourism and the changing photographic image of the Great Lakes Indians", *Annals of Tourism Research* 10: 123-148, 1983.

reflexivity that they so desire. He refers here not directly to the endless deconstruction of meaning that Bill talks about, but rather to revealing the positioned way knowledge is produced (which, of course, opens the way to such deconstruction). Film makes perspective more obvious. I am convinced by this point, but my pun on the word 'perspective' (depth of field, way of understanding) is intentional, because the implication is that the positioned way knowledge is produced becomes as obvious as the depth of field of a photographic image (once we have acquired visual literacy or perhaps simple scepticism). But does it? Jakob says we can learn to 'sense' what is happening behind the camera, but can we trust our senses? Bill and Michael might say: only up to a point. After that, we need context, depth, history—words. And it is clear that the positioned nature of knowledge can be brought into a text, even if, in the case of anthropology, it has been at the point of a poststructuralist gun. Equally it is clear that film allows endless possibilities for concealing perspective. (The same goes for Anne Rowbottom's point, made in the discussion, that film forces ethical issues—e.g., of confidentiality—into the open more than text. This is probably true—although it depends on whether the text is *The Sun* or a monograph—but this should not deceive us into thinking that they are therefore easier to solve.)

The debate after the speeches did not clarify things very much for me—you will have to make your own judgement. Some people criticised the urge to finish, complete, the will to closure. But this is hardly more specific to text than film. Others—including Bill who back-tracked on some of his original arguments—criticised the image/text distinction, pointing out that all texts provoke images and all images can be 'read', or that, as Bill put it, seeing and reading are different sets of conventions both of which can be applied to texts and images. This is true, but the basis of the debate is that in anthropology as a discipline the vast bulk of communication is done through text (or the spoken word) and not through visual representations.

So where does this leave us? Ultimately, it is a question of what kind of anthropology one wants to do. Anthropology as art or as science is perhaps too crude a division, but there is a strong sense in which it is pertinent. For me it must be both art and 'science' (understood in the loosest sense). To show that racism exists in Colombia, I need to analyse, say, employment and housing in textual ways—and this is vital to my project as a 'scientific' and above all political endeavour. To get across the experiences of black people in Colombia, I have also used text, but film would probably be more effective and more politically powerful. Woolly eclectism aside, however, it is clearly the case that anthropology has been dominated by 'scientific' text and that new directions should point more in the direction of 'art', be it in literary texts or in visual imagery. Certainly the audience, as usual in GDAT debates, opted for a future that might be different from the past and roundly defeated the motion.

To finish on absences. First, I was struck by the almost studious way words were equated with text in the debate. Neither orality nor aurality were mentioned, not even as part of films. Yet this must be a huge part of the impact of film and a distinctive absence in texts—especially those on music. Second, I thought those defending images missed a trick when it came to the current interest in embodiment in anthropology. Nothing conveys better than film the embodied nature of experience, the movement of a dancer, the athleticism of a sportsperson. People's engagement with the spaces around them, their sense of place, their involvement in the mundane processes of life that are imbued with tacit knowledge—all these things are of great interest to anthropology today and all of them offer unparalleled scope for films and images to outstrip written words.

PART 1—THE PRESENTATIONS

For the motion (1)

BILL WATSON

I yield to none in the pleasure I obtain from images: whether it be the image of the arresting photograph encountered when idly turning the pages of an old Victorian ethnography; whether it be the heart-stopping sequence of a fictionalised documentary, or the lyrical beauty of a panoramic scene depicting the eternal struggle of man against nature; or it may be the romantic evocation of the noble savage picturesquely interpreted in an eighteenth-century print, or even the curiously marked object in a glass case; or the wondrous design of a batik cloth suddenly caught in a passing glance, or, again, whether the image be the spectacle of the life-style of another culture dramatically enacted on a theatrical stage, or, finally, it may be the visual memory of all these, held in my mind's eye - and perhaps triggered, who knows, by a word, a gesture, a smell or even a taste - all these images elicit from me a passion and a commitment which hold me tight in their grip and thrill me with a sense of being in communion with my fellow human beings across space and across time. It is the image above all which persuades me, if ever I need persuasion, that *nil humani a me alienum est*: that I am inseparable from the other. With the aid of images my imagination soars, I am uplifted and feel myself to be living at a level of greater intensity. The emotional and indeed mystical power of the image is truly magnificent.

Having reached this point, however, in my rhapsody of the image, I pull myself up short. Magnificent? But as the man remarked seeing the hussars in their gaily coloured uniforms charging the tanks: *Magnifique, oui, mais ce n'est pas la guerre.* Or to transpose it: magnificent, yes, but it's not anthropology. Thrilling, exciting, with an immediacy which seems at rare times in its most heightened form to allow me to dissolve my subjectivity into the experience of others, but, ultimately, if not quite deception, then emphatically illusion, predicated upon an 'insistent dislocation of time and space' no different from the suspension of disbelief demanded of us by any fictions.[2] And anthropology, whether we take the hard line - a predictive science or nothing - or whether we

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[2] Elizabeth Edwards, *Anthropology and photography*, New Haven, Yale University Press in association with The Royal Anthropological Institute, 1992, p. 7.

take the more tolerant open view - a comparative study of what it means to be a member of a society - can never be satisfied with illusion, since, however much doomed to Sisyphean failure by the limited linguistic means at its disposal as postmodernists remind us, anthropology strives to penetrate beneath illusion to reality. And even in the face of those Berkleyean idealists who scorn such a pretension and deny that the two are separable,[3] anthropology, while it has a breath in its body and can defend itself against the encroachment of cultural studies, insists that in the understanding of human relationships there is more than meets the eye.

Here, it seems to me, is the nub of the issue. If I can persuade you of this - and I realise, speaking in the home of visual anthropology in Britain on the day following the presentation of films submitted out of a conviction that the intelligent eye allows the surest access to unmediated reality, that this may be something of an uphill task, not to mention an act of chutzpah in the circumstances - then my purpose will have been accomplished.[4]

As I see it, then, what I have to do is convince you that, however much the image engages us, however passionately it stirs, or however cleverly it pricks[5] us to reassess our ways of seeing and thinking, in the final analysis it cannot lead us to that type of knowledge which we conventionally label anthropology. Limitations of time prevent me from rehearsing all but two of the arguments which could be adduced to make my point, but these two are, I hope, sufficiently cogent to do the work for the rest. The first, to please the scientists among you, I take from Dan Sperber; the second, to appeal to those at the other end of the spectrum, I draw from the post-modernists.

Sperber's argument, very briefly, is that in the twentieth-century development of the discipline there has been a fudging of the distinction between anthropology and ethnography which he feels it is imperative that we restore.[6] The term ethnography should be confined to the painstaking and systematic description of a society's culture, the careful and meticulous recording of what is said and done. Of course Sperber is far too intelligent to be a naive empiricist and he recognises full well that all observation, all seeing and hearing, is theoretically informed, and indeed that any object which is observed has already previously been constructed by a theory which constitutes a datum as having meaning. That

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[3] I.C. Jarvie, "The problem of the ethnographic real", *Current Anthropology*, 24 (3), 1983, pp. 313-325.

[4] The debate followed a day of graduation screenings of films made by students completing the MA in Visual Anthropology, run by the Granada Centre of Visual Anthropology in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester.

[5] The idea is from Barthes' notion of the punctum. See Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida*, London, Flamingo, Fontana Paperbacks, 1984, p. 27.

[6] Dan Sperber, "Interpretive ethnography and theoretical anthropology" in *On anthropological knowledge*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 9-34.

objection need not, however, detain us, any more than it detains the astronomer when she decides to point her telescope at a specific object in the heavens whose trajectory she wishes to record. The observation and the reliability of her measurements are the sole concern, since it is only from these that we can make valid inferences.

And so it must be with the ethnographer: the observation and the measurement are all. The latter, of course, always poses a problem, since there are, unlike in astronomy, no universally recognised conventions of measuring. But at least we recognise the difficulties, of which the greatest is contextualisation since, differently from the astronomers, there are no big bang paradigms to assist us. At least we are moving in the right direction. And here of course image studies have helped us to take great strides along the path. Whether one is referring to blow-up or show-up effects of the kind referred to by Kirsten Hastrup - where an image brings to our attention phenomena which would otherwise have gone unnoticed - or whether one refers in more technical terms to proxemics and kinesics, there can be no doubt that our capacity to record has been immeasurably enhanced by the use of audio-visual technology which create the representations from which such measures can be made.[7]

This, however, is ethnography not anthropology and, however closely the two are related, they must be kept apart, observations and inference are two separate things. The spectacular images of the planetarium, carefully constructed from the observations of astronomers, are not themselves astronomy. Anthropology, to borrow again from Sperber and slightly adapt, is the search for human universals which regulate social and cultural behaviour, not necessarily in the old intellectualist fashion of structuralism, nor in the limited psychologistic domain of cognition, but in a broad search for those elements constitutive of social relationships which we share cross-culturally and which we are in danger of ignoring because the differences puzzle us so much. That hunt for universals, that elusive search for the patterns and regularities in how we all respond to each other is surely what inspires us all as anthropologists. It has certainly inspired me from that time when thirty-five years ago I first read in the Antigone that incomparable line of Sophocles: *polla ta deina k'ouden 'anqrvpou deinoteron*.[8]

It is at this point—that is, when we move from contemplating ethnography to constructing anthropology—that we find ourselves progressing from observation to inference, from the then-and-there to the now-and-forever, from description to analysis, from seeing to writing and, crucially, from image to text. Within a view of

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[7] Kirsten Hastrup, "Anthropological visions: some notes on visual and textual authority", in *Film as ethnography*, (eds) Peter Ian Crawford and David Turton, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992, pp. 3-25; John Collier, "Visual anthropology" in *Images of information*, (ed.) Jon Wagner, London, Sage Publications, 1979, p. 276.

[8] There are many wonderful things on earth, but none as wonderful as man. [Ed.]

anthropology such as this, the image—for all its merits in 'suggesting and implying' as David Macdougall puts it—can never make anthropological statements.[9]

The postmodernist critics, however, question the potential even of texts to make valid statements, and consequently they may appear at first sight to be unlikely allies to draw to my cause. It was after all they who, in such books as *Writing Culture*, demonstrated how irredeemably contaminated texts were, not just by subjectivity - which undermined any claims to transparent representation of the other - and by rhetoric - which inevitably enhanced the subjectivity of perception - but also, most damningly, by its very writerly or scripted character which imposed a specific form upon, and consequently reconstructed, experience and meaning, rather than let them speak and be seen for themselves. Postmodernist pleas for more dialogic and less textual ways of representation would seem *a priori* to be arguing for the primacy of the image over the text. All those experiments with dialogic anthropology, theatrical stagings, empowering the other through providing full access to audio-visual technology, multi-media presentations, arise explicitly from a profound dissatisfaction with text and and a concern with the rehearsal and celebration of the immediacy of directly communicated experience. The underlying assumption is that the universals of human experience - the pleasures and pains of the body in particular - do become cross-culturally transferable through textual or non-textual strategies which break up the epistemic assumptions of the conventional anthropological text.

All pretty damning and conclusive one might think, until one realises that the very arguments which are used to challenge the authority of the text can be turned against the image, and that critical theory has irrefutably demonstrated how the images we construct in the taking of a photograph or the making of a film or the design of a museum or the arrangement of an exhibition or the staging of a spectacle, however hard we may try for defamiliarising Brechtian effects, ineluctably take their form from the schemata and styles of particular not universal conventions. Precisely how damaging that criticism is for documentary and ethnographic film has been well argued by, among others, Bill Nichols and Brian Winston.[10] They show that the realisation of how Western conventions of narrative sequence can flaw films has led ethnographic film-makers to further experimentation and increasing frustration with the impossibility of moving to a perspective which might be transcendent and universal, and avoid the scopophilic

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[9] David Macdougall, as reported in Anna Grimshaw and Nikos Papastergiadis, *Conversations with anthropological filmmakers: David Macdougall*, Prickly Pear Pamphlet, No. 9, Cambridge, Prickly Pear Press, 1995, p. 39.

[10] Bill Nichols, "The ethnographer's tale", in *Blurred boundaries: questions of meaning in contemporary cinema*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 63-91; Brian Winston, *Claiming the real*, London, British Film Institute, 1995, pp. 170-196.

premises[11] which appear increasingly to be perceived as the unavoidable psychological concomitant of viewing.

And it is precisely here that we see, in conformity with the practices of the postmodernists but perhaps against their intentions, the superiority of the text. The text knows itself, the image does not. The image is innocent, the text is self-aware. The image is always reflective, only the text can be reflexive. To put it in terms which should make even the hard men of science stand up and applaud the accomplishments of postmodern discoveries: the text is falsifiable, the image, in its ontological security, its self-contained autonomy, defies sceptics to do their worst. Whatever they say, reality was as the image declares it to have been. This potential of the text to be open to constant challenge, to allow its rhetorical tropes to be exposed, its scriptorial conventions to be revealed and its subjective bias to be laid bare, and yet still to push our anthropological understanding further, is what in the last instance ensures that the text rather than the image will have the last say: despite his undermining of their authority even Derrida writes texts, and whatever Barthes may say about images it is, ultimately, the text from which he derives his *plaisir*.[12]

However, this rather easy, but perhaps jejune, contrasting of the text and the image, knockabout stuff that it is, may well strike you as vaguely amusing but rather shallow. As my colleague at Canterbury, Peter Parkes, remarked when I showed him an early draft of my speech: 'It's all bit dubious, isn't it, Bill, this dichotomising and the reduction of the debate to a spurious construction of ideal types?' (Peter is a master of the tactful understatement which plunges deep into the underbelly of a vulnerable argument.) And I would have to concede that in phrasing my ideas as I have done I was motivated as much by the desire for rhetorical effect as by the substantive charge of the argument. I know for example that if I were on the other side of the debate I could make out a case that the moving image can in the hands of great film-makers convey much of the subtlety and sophistication of the written word, and that modes of visual representation also allow for the same ambiguity, irony and relexivity I so prize in the text. This is after all what Winston and Nichols are saying, and their critiques exploring the conventions of film refer to the same tropes employed in the composition of the film as the literary critic discusses, when evaluating the power and force of a narrative text. Furthermore, it is undeniable that film-makers have been creatively responsive to the criticisms of the constructed nature of films in their self-conscious development of new techniques: from the early narrative documentary of Basil Wright, through the observational cinema of the

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[11] Christian Hansen, Catherine Needham and Bill Nichols, "Pornography, ethnography and the discourses of power", in *Representing reality: issues and concepts in documentary*, (ed.) Bill Nichols, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, pp. 201-228, 1991.
[12] Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1973.

Macdougalls to the interactive posssibilities of Asch and Chagnon's CD of *The Ax-Fight*. Great films, layered as they are with polyeidetic signficance - images both seen and implied - now repay numerous viewings.

This, then is the strong case for the image, but even as I put it forward, I am aware, as you must be, that ultimately the constructions and interpretations which can be placed upon the image - if one rules out, as one must, the purely idiosyncratic - are finite. The image or succession of images can only carry so much condensed meaning before it fragments into meaninglessness, as the viewer struggles to cope with too much simultaneity. The text on the other hand, in the hands of the master, is inexhaustible in its opennness to interpretation. Anthropologists (and postmodernists) have only recently become alive to the fecundity of the words on the page in this respect, but literary critics have for some time been demonstrating this property of texts. Think only of Empson's "Seven Types of Ambiguity", Leavis' elucidation of reality and sincerity in a poem by Hardy, Christopher Ricks' unravelling of a Dylan song, Frederic Jameson's account of a Gissing novel, Lévi-Strauss's analysis of a poem on cats by Baudelaire or, as Geertz reminds us, Leo Spitzer's explication of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" , to name just a few examples at random.

In our appreciation of anthropological texts we have only just begun to explore the possibilities of employing such a literary turn to disclose the manner in which we readers are encouraged to construct a meaning for ourselves in construing a discourse predicated on a contrast between ourselves and others. The critical analysis of anthropological texts by a Geertz, a Clifford, a Fabian or a John Davis - alerting us *inter alia* to crucial absences, like that of the dog barking in the night, as much as presences - have given us only the barest of hints of what the critical reading of anthropology might reveal to us. I confidently predict that one of the major developments in anthropological studies in the twenty-first century will be the close study of ethnographic texts. That is, in just the same way as students of literature, by and large, do not write novels and poems, but in their study of texts develop critical skills in the pursuit of ever finer discriminative evaluations, so in the years to come anthropology students will be encouraged to engage in that same common pursuit of judgement in their encounter of what some day will be defined as the anthropological canon, however contested a terrain that becomes.

Let me now, however, return to the arguments with which I began and make one last concession to the image before urging you to acknowledge that in anthropology we must privilege the text. The arguments of Sperber and the postmodernists, although in the end arriving at very different conclusions, both begin from the premise that if we intend to take anthropology seriously we must recognise that we are seeking for an object of knowledge which lies beneath superficial appearances, that there is more to understanding ourselves and others

than the images *per se*, however subtly refracted, allow us to perceive. Yet both arguments are also happy to concede the power of images in creating for us the possibility of what might be called intuitive knowledge. It is the image which can at its best create that immediate personal rapport of the viewer with the personhood of the other, that moment of instant identification, when, for example, in seeing him on the screen we respond to the grief of Amir, the Afghani rubab player. And there will be few of us who would deny that such communication is an anthropological achievement.

This major contribution which the image can make to the development of anthropology as a humanising discipline, important as it is, must not, however, be taken as in any way substituting for the text, or as accomplishing what we surely all regard as the primary aim of the discipline, namely that capacity to draw from the understanding of particular societies and personal events insights into the human condition in general. For this we must rely on the text, since it is only through words and the careful scrutiny of words that we can engage in that meta-discourse which allows the critical step of making inferences from observations. In other words the seeing of things, the apprehension of images, may well be the first step but it must always be the text which has the last word, and for that reason I ask you to support the motion.

Against the motion (1)

PAVEL BÜCHLER

I find myself today something of a reluctant trespasser, so I will be brief. I am not an anthropologist, I would even hesitate to call myself an academic. My interest in the human sciences is a polite one at best and, at a gathering of anthropologists, I feel more like an anthropological specimen whose habits and behaviour are up for scholarly scrutiny than someone who could make a viable contribution. But as an artist, I too am concerned with the '*anthropos*' and the '*logos*', albeit in quite a different way than those whose job it is to examine, describe and classify the human using the word as the instrument of reason.

You may say that I am likely to suffer from an uncritical bias towards the visual. After all, artists are commonly thought of as those who share with others their *vision*, their way of *seeing*, in the almost literal terms of ocular perception, who mediate between the visual and the visible by means of *showing*. But I am not here to argue for the primacy of the visual, nor to question the power of the verbal or the textual. I want to merely try and create some room for manoeuvre on the side of the image and help the image to improve its chances—painted so bleakly by today's motion—in the contest with the word as a tool for the methodical understanding of society and culture—which is, I guess, what human sciences are looking at.

The motion puts it bluntly and with the kind of disarming self-confidence which is very hard to argue with: 'In anthropology, the image can never have the last say'. But this short string of words has an interesting, if equally short history and, as I may be playing here something of a devil's advocate, and as the devil is always in the detail, I want to consider it with a bit of a pedantic attention. When I was asked this June to step in to defend the image, as it were, the proposed wording of the motion was 'images can never have the last word'. There was no mention of anthropology and the poetic ambiguity of the phrasing, which I liked, made the motion in a strict sense quite irrefutable. Indeed, images cannot *possess* the word, the last one or any other, simply because they operate within a different regime, or even discourse, of signification than that controlled by the rules of language. Images have conventions, visual idioms and certain established codes, but they do not possess a vocabulary, a lexicon of agreed, defined and generally understood terms, each complete with an etymology, context and usage. In short, images do not strictly have a language but they do have a *voice*. So I suggested that the last word of the proposed motion be rephrased to read 'images can never have the last *say*'. It is less elegant, but it seemed easier to dispute. There followed an exchange of correspondence exploring various alternative suggestions and by

the time I received the itinerary for the debate, the wording had changed again. The plural 'images' became the universal generic 'image', taking another bit of an already small rug from under my feet—for I can no longer so easily make use of the fact that images are members of a very broad family, so broad, in fact, that maps and diagrams bear no resemblance to, for instance, photographs, which in turn are very different from moving images such as film. And finally, the word 'anthropology' had been added to clarify or, as I thought, to confuse the matter. Does it mean, perhaps, that the image can potentially have the last say somewhere or even everywhere else? Is the anthropological argument *a priori* decided as it is constituted and dominated by language? And is it different in that respect from other fields of academic enquiry? Is the word 'anthropology' here a shorthand for science in general or is it simply the organiser's ploy aimed at reassuring the specialist audience that no concessions will be granted to ignorant pundits like myself, that we all have to play by the rules: 'Not in here, mate!'?

This tinkering with and subtle shifts in the wording of the motion demonstrate in themselves that the authority of language is wholly conditional upon semantic precision. And authority is precisely what we are arguing about. 'Having the last say' implies not necessarily a final victory by the force of a reasoned argument, but a conclusion or closure of an argument by the virtue of having the power to do so. This applies to anthropology just as it applies universally. The question that immediately arises, though, is one of the legitimacy of the power to make final statements. Where does it come from? What is it underwritten by? How is it arbitrated? Whatever the answers, the next question then must be: Is such a power held in perpetuity? Is it continuous and permanent?

The motion seems to claim as much. It says that the time will never come when any image could be authorised by the laws of the discipline to decide an argument. If I use the privileges of working with language and rephrase the statement as I have just done, the motion begins to appear less invincible. '*Never*'? How can we be so sure? Is it not rather the case that images can hardly have such decisive powers as the rules of the discipline stand at the moment and for as long as they stay the way they are now?

Or if I rephrase the motion again, it could be taken as saying that if an image is *ever* allowed to conclude an argument, the concluding statement will never conform to the rules of anthropology. Those rules may not be written down, but they are nevertheless hostage to language. They consist, so far as I can tell, of a number of necessary language operations that one must perform in order to set up, conduct and conclude an anthropological enquiry: observed phenomena must be not only recorded and reported (something that images are quite good at doing), but also classified and interpreted, brought into language as it were, and, granted, this cannot be easily achieved by visual means alone.

But anthropologists should know better than anyone that rules, habits and conventions are always volatile and that they change over time. Just as cultures develop or decline, so do disciplines and the means and powers by which they are constituted and ruled. I am sure that you will all agree that anthropology is a particularly dynamic discipline. (I am saying this not to make myself popular among this audience, but simply because I cannot imagine it could be otherwise.) Even though from the sidelines it often seems that your discipline is bent on studying cultures which display a much slower cultural metabolism than the fast-changing culture which finally validates the anthropological argument, the subject of anthropology also must be undergoing a continuous change. If I understand the business of anthropology correctly, it seems to me that there is some kind of a reciprocity or cultural exchange at work at the very heart of the process. The discipline does not develop in isolation from the cultures it studies but rather brings about its own transformation in response to the experience of those cultures. And these are in turn affected by being studied. As anthropology seems to strive to give the subject of its study its own voice, to translate it, if you will, in such a way that it can be understood on the culture's own terms and through its own context, anthropology's own means and terms must be inevitably changing in the process. And conversely, the concepts of anthropology must affect some change at least in the self-perception of the cultures studied by anthropologists. This seems to suggest, in effect, that anthropology, perhaps more than any other discipline, can never fully be the master of its own terminology and even its own destiny. The academic rules it is bound and constrained by, dominated as they are by the word, are only a part of what anthropology is or what it can become. The other part, its dynamic side, is the way in which it absorbs and makes a use of the terminological exchange between the discipline and the subject of its study and opens itself to the import of the means of understanding, expression and ways of thinking which do not necessarily derive their authority from the language-driven academic canon and practice.

In a world which almost literally lives by the revolution of *image-language* (by which I do not simply mean audio-visual technology) and where all human existence and experience are in so many ways affected by the proliferation and omnipresence of images, it seems inevitable that anthropology will increasingly study cultures in which the most dramatic change is that induced or effected by the regime of the image and that the discipline will equally inevitably be changed by it.

You can perhaps put it differently. The recent and current changes in what we think of as 'language' are far more profoundly carried by the momentum of the conceptual and technological developments of the image than by the developments of those technologies through which 'the word' alone affects the operations of society and culture and maintains its authority. Look at the

respective technological histories. The revolution began with the separation of language from image some 6000 years ago when the Sumerians developed the first system of writing using clay tablets. From then, language technology moved in giant leaps. About five hundred years after the Sumerians, the Egyptians came up with the papyrus. Then, about 900 BC, the Greeks invented the alphabet. With Gutenberg, in a certain sense the revolution ended half-way through the fifteenth century. Nothing much happened until the language machine underwent yet another dramatic change and speech caught up with the written word with Edison's phonograph and Bell's telephone in the 1870s and with the introduction of telegraphy and the wireless. True, there was the first automated printing press in 1811, the invention of the Linotype in 1884 or the first phototypesetting machine in 1946, but these were merely refinements of an already established technological apparatus. Even the typewriter and its recent sibling the word processor, have changed little the authoritative and authoritarian position of 'the word' which it has held for millennia. While extremely important in a great many respects, not least by facilitating literacy, for the purposes of my argument, all the modern language technologies merely repeatedly confirmed the dominant role of 'the word' among the means by which we express and collectively negotiate our understanding of the world we live in.

Meanwhile, for 6000 years 'the image' had to take very much a back seat. True, there was the Renaissance invention of perspective or the introduction of the chiaroscuro in fifteenth-century Flemish painting and, through various manual graphic techniques such as the woodcut and engraving, the image did share in some of the bonuses gained by language through print. But the great revolution had to wait until the 1830s and 40s when the invention of photography brought into being a completely new type of image and forever changed our perceptions and self-perceptions. Since then the revolution has never stopped. Each new major development—the reduction of exposure times from minutes to fractions of seconds which enabled the development of film, colour photography, television, video, and most importantly digital images—brought about something conceptually quite unlike anything that had been seen before; and each time the relationship between the word and the image had to be renegotiated.

For a very long time, images in western cultures had been to an exceptional degree dependent on texts. But with the shock of photography and the subsequent developments of the moving and the digital image, images gained an enormous degree of emancipation. This is so much so that not only can images now rejoin words on equal terms, but also it is no longer by any means certain that the language of words can exist on its own. What is quite certain however, is that the image's rise to power in our experience as in the terms of the image-language technology does not stop here.

I am not arguing that the language of images (if that is not an oxymoron) could be fully substituted within any discipline for that of words. Rather, I urge you to consider the shifting relative power that words and images can exert within their interdependency through the momentum of technological and cultural change.

The question is not, finally, whether anthropology is an exception, exempt from the massive change that is so radically affecting human experience, cultural processes and social relations, but whether and for how long it can afford to deny the image its growing authority without losing its own dynamism.

For the motion (2)

MICHAEL CARRITHERS[13]

There is a simple and affecting black and white photograph on the front cover of
a recent issue of *Horch und Guck*, a German magazine published in East Berlin
for a small, largely East German readership. I will describe it to you in the only
way description works, namely in words, since the booklet on anthropological
theory in which this essay is published cannot easily reproduce photographs. Very
significant. In the picture, the camera has focused closely on a weathered sign
saying '*Achtung! Kindergarten*'. The sign is set upon a metal fence wreathed with
barbed wire. The background is so out of focus that nothing can be clearly
discerned.

  There is little else in the photograph itself, though more could be made of
the slightly skewed orientation of the sign, the sense of decay the photograph
suggests, and the play of shadowy soft masses in the background against the
sharpness of the image, and of the barbed wire, in the foreground. Art criticism,
however, is not my purpose. I want to ask, rather, whether this photograph *is*
anthropology…, and since it is manifestly not yet anthropology, is not even
intelligible as more than a threatening or ironic image, I want to ask what it would
take to make it anthropology. When I am through, I think you will agree that only
words can make the photograph into anthropology, that only words can have the
last word… in anthropology at least. And of course I have already shown that
words can do the work of a photograph.

  Let me phrase the question this way: how can we insert the photograph
into the archive of anthropology? Thus phrased, the question brings out a feature,
not only of anthropology, but of all the empirical learned disciplines, *die
Wissenschaften.* All disciplines place into a record, an archive, the basic empirical
material upon which they work: the scanning electron micrographs, the skull
casts, the botanical drawings, the censuses, the texts, the audio recordings, the
woven baskets, the field notes and of course the photographs. As varied and
differently elaborated as they are, all these archiving practices require that a series
of social acts be worked upon the material.

  For clarity's sake, let me refer to such material as 'exhibits'. The first, most
elementary act is just the bestowal of a tag which locates the exhibit: something
like, say, date and place of origin, people involved in its production, perhaps the
actual physical location of the archive if that is relevant, maybe the collector of the
item, and so forth. In this case, one part of the tag is actually printed on the

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[13] Michael Carrithers could not be present at debate, due a last-minute emergency. His paper
was read out by Mark Harris.

photograph itself: *1985 Berlin-Pankow.* So the picture was actually taken in East Germany while the German Democratic Republic still existed. And the tag should go on: *published in the Spring of 1997 on the front of Horch und Guck, the 'literary-historical' magazine of the Citizen's Committee of the 15th of January, the citizen's committee that took charge of Stasi headquarters in East Berlin on that date in 1990. The magazine is distributed to a readership of several hundred, comprising mostly members of the Committee and former dissidents of the GDR, as well as similar organisations, libraries and archives concerned with the former GDR.* Now we begin to have a sense of place, and with it a sense of the flow of local society. Now we can imagine the photograph being usefully squirreled away in some ethnographer's files, ready to be slipped out and used in some argument or other.

The photograph is not yet in the collective archive, but it has now fulfilled the basic entry requirement. John Ziman, whose ideas I have used here,[14] made one simple and straightforward observation about tags and the exhibits they are attached to: the tags are propositions, and can therefore be true or false, but the exhibits, on the other hand, do not necessarily possess a truth value. A photograph may be well or badly framed and developed, a text can be well or poorly transcribed, faithfully or unfaithfully translated, and a drawing of a pot can be more or less accurate, but these cannot in themselves be true or false. You could put it this way: all these practices, including the creation of tags to go with exhibits, are subject to continual monitoring and evaluation, and only the practice of tag-making is evaluated by truth or falsehood. I say this because I do not want the truthfulness which I claim for successful tags to be taken as some transcendent, all-devouring value. Let's keep truth-making in proportion, as one human activity among others. As Ian Hacking has remarked, it is often only the most trivial things that are simply true.

Nevertheless this humble ball-bearing of the scholarly world, the truthful descriptive tag, achieves something that no picture could achieve: it refers in detail to a social world. It is indexical of both the seen and the unseen. It certifies that the exhibits of scholarship are *about* the world of shared experience in all its breadth, and does so with quite astonishing penetration, universality and economy. We, hearing this talk in Manchester or reading it in Cedar Rapids, can suddenly find our attention riveted upon a collection of persons in East Germany about whom we already know details that no image—unless it were the image of a printed page—could convey to us. We, possessing perhaps only the vaguest and most general knowledge of East Germany and its past, suddenly find opening before us complex organisations and complex happenings which only narrative

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[14] J. Ziman, *Reliable knowledge: an exploration of the grounds for belief in science*; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978; see also my *Why humans have cultures: explaining anthropology and social diversity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992.

and verbal statements can convey. What is the Citizen's Committee of the 15ᵗʰ of January? Just what was the Stasi headquarters which they occupied? If we want to know more of these persons, organisations and happenings, then we must look only to well-chosen words to provide that knowledge. Only words can weave the wide cloth of understanding to cover our ignorance. A photograph may show us a face, but never a person in the plot of their life. A photograph may show us a group of people, but never their relations. A photograph may suggest, but only words confirm.

The exhibit—the barbed wire and kindergarten photo—is now nearing the threshold of becoming anthropology. To move it forward, I need first to answer the most obvious question: why this photograph on the cover of this magazine at this time? Answer: *because not long before the publication of this issue of Horch und Guck, the prosecution of GDR kindergarten teachers for using cruel 'Stalinist' methods on children had been widely publicised.* So here is the picture in a flow of social action, doing what pictures do best, working by mute suggestion. And here, on the other hand, are the events—the prosecution of kindergarten teachers as part of a more general process of dealing with the GDR past—which can only be effectively conveyed in a narrative. And here, too, is an anthropologist, using words to make clear what the photograph only hints at, using words to make explicit for some what is taken for granted by others.

The exhibit is now at the very point of becoming anthropology. To nudge it over the threshold, it needs to be used to make a case for an interpretation, clarification or explanation, some larger picture which shows how things are for some collectivity, *unseen*—I stress the word—but richly described and narrated, imagined and felt: a society with its culture or a scene within a society. Any exhibit might be used for many different purposes, but let me use this one, the 'Kindergarten' photo, as an exhibit to clarify East German education.

This must be an ethnography of rapid change, so let me just give a brief exhibit to hint at the 'before' of this 'before and after' story. The exhibit is a short précis of part of a life story told me by a man in his late thirties, a dissident who managed to get out of the GDR just before the Wall fell and who now works in government in Berlin. Since it is a précis, I set it out in the third person, with his (translated) words in quotation marks:

He managed to find work as an educational assistant. His first assignment was in a school for disturbed children, who were very excitable. He discovered that the prescribed treatment of the children was severe regimentation. A good part of his job was making the children stand in a line before they did anything: washing, sport, eating, etc. He found this '*irre*', 'insane'. With further experience in a home for deaf children, he learned that this authoritarianism ran through the whole educational system, and that

children who were in some way abnormal were marginalised. He formed the opinion that the 'educational system was a criminal one, whose object was to break the backbone of the person'. Subsequently, when his children reached school age, he quit work and educated the children at home while his wife went out to work.

Now to set this exhibit in a proper ethnographic interpretation a number of social acts must be undertaken, and I mark them in italics. First, the organisation of education in the former **GDR** must be *described*, and in particular the extraordinary politicisation which ran throughout education, bringing every aspect of teaching and learning, from kindergarten to university, under close control and surveillance by the Party and the Stasi. Then the changes of 1990 and afterwards must be *narrated*, including the removal of many Stasi informers and Party members from the educational establishment, but including as well the retention of well over half the existing teaching staff throughout the East. Finally, a series of issues must be *evaluated*: does the 'hidden curriculum', for example the implicit teaching to children of authoritarian attitudes by continuing authoritarian practices, still affect education severely? Do teaching staff fail to give children a realistic picture of the GDR past, as many dissidents now argue? Or has education reached a normality, much like the normality of other European countries, and indeed like the normality in East Germany before the upheavals of 1989, as many present apologists of the old order argue? Above all, the ethnographer would have to extend this evaluation to the opinions offered in the exhibits themselves, the characterisations of the educational system as insane, sadistic, and criminal. In so doing the ethnographer would have to balance the contrasting interests and claims of the apologists and the dissidents, at least partly by again *describing* the nature of those groups.

Narrating, evaluating, describing: these are all social activities which can only be achieved, only made interpersonal and social, by the extensive discursive practices, the wordy work, of our common academic world. These are the ways in which anthropologists go on the record in speech or print to stand by their views before a public … just as the dissidents go on the record with their judgements. On the one hand, this salience of the spoken and written is obvious, though only a debate such as this could allow us to set out this situation so clearly. As with the tags to the exhibits, these comparisons and interpretations lead us into the detail of the East German world, its history and flow across wide swathes of society, and only verbal performance has the facility to let us so swiftly draw so many matters so clearly together in one intellectual space. On the other hand, there is certainly something deeply mysterious and magical about this facility of discourse to weave, as in a fairy-tale, a web of understanding which, as it grows beyond the single ethnography to take in the whole cloth of the ethnographic enterprise in general,

gathers in our whole complex world. It is as if a handful of words were worth a whole gallery of pictures.

Nevertheless the 'Kindergarten' photo as published in *Horch und Guck* can still achieve something powerful, though its achievement is not within anthropology or the human sciences. And indeed it can achieve this just because it is *not* verbal in character, not explicit, but suggestive. For the effect of such a photo, precisely because it is visual and minimally commented, is to force the viewer to search and find the known reasons, to bring to mind the here unspoken world in which it would be sensible for *this* mute photo to stand at *this* time on the cover of *this* publication. More than that, the sheer muteness of the photo brings to the alert viewer not just this world and this placement within it, but the knowledge that, since the photograph is mute, then only those who share the viewer's knowledge and opinion of this world can appreciate the photo. So the photo calls up for the viewer not only the understanding, but the warmth of a fellowship with other understanders of the photo's silence, others who know its open secret. It creates a public, an imagined community. It's not anthropology, but it's pretty amazing all the same.

Against the motion (2)

JAKOB HØGEL

In this debate Pavel and I have the lucky position of defending the underdog, in our case the use of images in anthropology. As the motion is worded, the burden of proof is on the images. It is my feeling that this debate is less about the specific qualities of images vis-a-vis words than whether textual conventions should define what counts as anthropology. Images do have the last say when we overcome the unquestioned, monolithic reliance on text in anthropology. The marginal position of images in anthropology makes a vote against the motion an act of resistance. A 'no' vote is to open up the possibility that anthropology can come in more than three shapes—those of the paper, the article and the monograph.

The shape of anthropology I want to look at is documentary film. I will use two films as cases for my argument and I am afraid that my words will not do the films justice, but that should only strengthen my case. The three points I am going to make could equally well be made for photography, graphics or other forms of visual representation.

First, I want to give a very brief history of the uses of visual media in anthropology. I will remind you of the sophisticated work already available. Visual monographs are not only an empirical asset for our discipline. They also contribute to theoretical and methodological clarification. Second, I provide an example of how badly things can go when we approach visual media without clarifying a visual methodology. David Maybury-Lewis's work with the Millennium series is my case. Third, I offer Robert Gardner's film *Forest of Bliss* as an uplifting example of how well anthropology and film-making can mix. I show the methodological and analytical gains of working with sound and image.

My overall argument is that anthropologists are up-to-date in our knowledge of the world, but are still stuck in last-century conventions of how to convey those insights. Ethnographic writing has been under scrutiny. Its roots in nineteenth-century realist writing have been uncovered and anthropologists are more conscious than ever about the generical and rhetorical potentials of writing.[15] Nevertheless, nineteenth-century realism still dominates our understanding of photographic images. On one hand, photography and film are revered as the most precise and undistorted method of collecting data.[16] On the other hand,

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[15] G. Marcus and D. Cushman, "Ethnographies as texts", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11: 25-69, 1982; P.T. Clough, *The end(s) of ethnography: from realism to social criticism*, London, Sage, 1992, pp. 19ff.

[16] J. Collier, Jr., "Visual anthropology and the future of ethnographic film", in *Anthropological filmmaking*, (ed.) J. Rollwagen, New York, Harwood, 1988.

these modern technologies are construed to be simple mirrors with no analytical potential.[17] In this view, cameras enable us to gather objective data, but every organisation and interpretation of the data corrupts the value of them.

This outdated mix of technological reverence and intellectual scorn for visual media has to be substituted for a contemporary, critical working attitude that employs film and photography as pliable tools, and not as thermometers or mirrors onto reality.

Anthropology and visual media have had a turbulent coexistence in this century. Both photography and moving images have been employed by anthropologists throughout the history of the discipline.[18] Ours was one of the first academic disciplines to use film, for example during the Torres Strait Expedition before the turn of the century. I am sure that the first thing that comes to many of your minds when classic monographs are mentioned is the still photographs. Bateson and Mead made the most comprehensive visual study in anthropology in the thirties. They used photography and filming for collecting data in Bali and, furthermore, they presented their findings in visual forms.[19]

At the same time anthropology consolidated itself as a discipline with a distinct methodology, participant observation. Although vision was the primary sense of fieldwork, anthropologists such as Malinowski were more concerned with how fieldwork experience could be turned into authoritative textual accounts than with questioning the idea of 'observation'.[20] The social sciences have from their inception relied more heavily on an unquestioned relation between seeing and knowing than other sciences.[21] The consolidation of anthropology as an academic discipline in the first third of this century meant a decrease in openness and experimentation with methods.[22] Mead and Bateson were unique. Visual technologies were generally not employed as an integral part of research and presentation. By far the most common usage of images was to illustrate textual

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[17] A. Balikci, "Anthropologists and ethnographic filmmaking", in *Anthropological filmmaking*, (ed.) J. Rollwagen, New York, Harwood, 1988, p. 33; I.C. Jarvie, "The problem of the ethnographic real", in his *Thinking about society: theory and practice,* Dortrecht, D. Reidel, 1986, p. 225.

[18] E. Edwards, *Photography and anthropology,* New Haven, Yale University Press in association with The Royal Anthropological Institute, 1992.

[19] G. Bateson and M. Mead, *Balinese character: a photographic analysis,* New York, New York Academy of Sciences, 1942; Bateson and Mead, *Trance and dance in Bali,* 20 min, B/W, Bali/ USA, 1951; Bateson and Mead, *Childhood rivalry in Bali and New Guinea*, 20 min, B/W, Bali, New Guinea/USA, 1953.

[20] J. Clifford, *The predicament of culture*, Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 29ff.

[21] C. Jenks, "The centrality of the eye in Western culture: an introduction", in *Visual culture*, (ed.) C. Jenks, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 4.

[22] A. Grimshaw and K. Hart, *Anthropology and the crisis of the intellectuals*, Cambridge, Prickly Pear Press, 1993, pp. 20ff.

points.[23] Although field photos were often of a high standard and added to or contradicted the written account, they were not used for or as analysis. While documentary filmmakers and photographers explored the potentials of treating reality creatively through photography and cinema, anthropologists stuck to a limited textual tool box. The professional anthropologist became defined and confined as a note-taker and writer.[24]

After World War II a few lonely anthropologist-filmmakers, such as Jean Rouch, started using film for more than illustrative purposes. Rouch took vast amounts of visual notes with his camera. Most important, he and others saw the necessity of editing those notes, of making sense of empirical material by structuring it. As with textual notes, footage needed to be analysed, taken apart and, like writing, reassembled. In the 50s and 60s Rouch created a number visual monographs, especially of West African cultures. He experimented with modes of anthropological representation, such as reflexivity and use of indigenous narratives, that only came to the attention of textual anthropology two decades later.[25]

Rouch and others were solitary anthropologists with cameras. Using visual media for more than illustration is not yet mainstream anthropological practice. Where artists, philosophers and even natural scientists have spent much effort in this century criticising the scientific gaze and have tried to find new ways of seeing,[26] anthropology has bypassed discussing the role of vision by suppressing the seeing 'I' in writing and by avoiding camera technologies because they render the process of observation visible.[27] I think anthropology's inability to rid images of positivist connotations is much of the reason we are debating this motion today. If the films and photographs produced by Rouch and others had been seriously critiqued and not just viewed as collections of raw data, images would have their place alongside text today in anthropology.[28]

Our first task is to leave behind the belief in a mechanical, value-free connection between seeing and knowing. Vision and by extension our uses of

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[23] T. Wright, "The fieldwork photographs of Jenness and Malinowski and the beginnings of modern anthropology", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 22 (1), 1991, p. 53; E. de Brigard, "The history of ethnographic film", in *Principles of visual anthropology*, (ed.) P. Hockings, The Hague, Mouton, 1975, p. 26.

[24] C. Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures*, New York, Basic Books, 1973, p. 19.

[25] Jean Rouch, *Jaguar*, 60 min, colour, Ghana/France, 1967; Jean Rouch and E. Morin, *Chronique d'un eté*, 87 min, B/W, France, 1961.

[26] See, e.g., D.M. Levin, *Modernity and the hegemony of vision*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993; R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979.

[27] Clough, *The end(s) of ethnography*, op. cit.

[28] G. Marcus, "The modernist sensibility in recent ethnographic writing and the cinematic metaphor of montage", in *Visualizing theory: selected essays from Visual Anthropology Review, 1990-1994*, (ed.) L. Taylor, London, Routledge, 1994.

cameras are culturally and personally embedded practices. This means that filming is as conventionalised as note taking; there is no unmediated access to reality.[29] Furthermore, this means that the limit to what can be conveyed through images is not set by the appearance of things in the world, but by the conventions and techniques with which we imbue our seeing and filming. Film footage comprises strips of interaction and performance that should be treated like all other data, i.e. analysed and contextualised, which in film-making equals editing.[30]

What we still need is a critical approach to how ways of seeing, hearing and feeling become anthropological knowledge. In spite of many achievements, the literary turn of the eighties perpetuated the myth that writing is what constitutes anthropology. Even fieldwork is sometimes presented as primarily a textual endeavour.[31] As I see it, textualisation is only one of many techniques available to anthropology and not all methodological issues can be tackled as problems of writing. A point in case is reflexivity. It is often discussed to what degree the seeing I/eye should be present in ethnographic text.[32] How is the perspective that a fieldworker adopts accounted for in writing? Which comments about fieldworker/informant interaction are important and should they be part of the main argument or put in an introduction or in footnotes? When writing, one has to chose either to include or to suppress traces of the I in the text.

Audiovisual fieldwork and note-taking offer a more complex representation of fieldwork situations. When watching fieldwork footage we, the viewers, can always see from what perspective events are observed. With a bit of practice, we sense what is happening behind the camera. We can assess how informants react to the presence and questions of the fieldworker. We are not just presented with transcribed interviews, but with speech, body language, ambience and language translations. Use of camcorders promises us insights into fieldwork, anthropology-in-the-making as it were, that textual anthropology could not offer. If we were more familiar with filming in anthropology, we would not continue debating whether the anthropologists are part of the picture—they obviously are. By watching field footage we could refine our understanding of interaction and mutual observation in the field. Thus, methodological clarity and a measure of reflexivity are built into the use of moving images.[33]

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[29] J. Ruby, "Ethnography as *trompe l'oeil*: film and anthropology", in *A crack in the mirror: reflexive perspectives in anthropology*, (ed.) J. Ruby, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.

[30] R. Schechner, "Collective reflexivity: restoration of behavior", in *A crack in the mirror: reflexive perspectives in anthropology*, (ed.) J. Ruby, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.

[31] C. Geertz, *Works and lives*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988; J. Clifford, *The predicament of culture*, op. cit., pp. 25, 110.

[32] Clough, *The end(s) of ethnography*, op. cit.

[33] R. Schechner, "Collective reflexivity: restoration of behavior", op. cit., p. 40.

My second theme is that we often chose to use audiovisual media for the wrong reasons. A few years ago David Maybury-Lewis, the distinguished anthropologist from Harvard, agreed to participate in the making of a series called "Millennium: Tribal wisdom and the modern world", a series of ten hour-long programmes. An expensive and ambitious project. I am sure that those of you who saw it will agree that it was awful.[34]

I have heard Maybury-Lewis explain what role he saw for himself in Millennium. He had suggested a division of labour: 'I do what I am good at, namely word-anthropology and I let the film people do what they are good at, namely making a film'.[35] In the programmes, Maybury-Lewis is filmed in various locations, commenting and summing up how we are to understand the tribal cases with which we are presented. Watching the Millennium series one realises how little say there is for word-anthropology in a world of images. Maybury-Lewis' authority is drowned in romantic narratives and his anthropological points are contradicted by Body Shop imagery and the primitivising dubbing of voices into English.

This would lead some to argue that we should keep away altogether from communication that is not merely textual. I would argue that there is a whole world ahead of us experimenting with and refining audiovisual media for anthropology. The only prerequisite is that we work seriously with the media and in all phases. Just as we would not ask a PR writer to write the monograph to go with our field photos, so we cannot sprinkle a bit of textual wisdom on films and pretend it is anthropology. The problem with Millennium was not that Maybury-Lewis got involved. The problem was that he was not involved enough.

For anthropology, the major lure of film has been its ability to attract mass audiences. I think popularisation has a role to play in our discipline, both in text and in film. However, unlike in cases of popular writing, there is a tendency to blame the medium when tele-anthropology goes terribly wrong. Critics characterise cinema and television as superficial and stultifying.[36] Instead, I believe many anthropologists fail because their engagement with media other than text is half- hearted. More than anything, it is the discipline's deep-rooted textual bias that hinders us from getting the last say in mass media. There is no doubt that the media of communication both in scholarly and public debates are

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[34] David Maybury-Lewis (author), *Millennium—A series on the importance to western society of the value of traditional tribal peoples*, 10 parts of 60 min each, colour, USA, 1993.
[35] My notes from a paper given by Maybury-Lewis at the University of Copenhagen, September 1993.
[36] J. Weiner, "Televisualist anthropology", *Current Anthropology* 38(2): 197-235, 1997; A. Moore, "The limitations of imagist documentary", *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter* 4 (2): 1-3, 1988.

becoming increasingly visual.[37] Sociologists, cultural studies scholars and others have engaged seriously with film and photograph in debates closely connected to our discipline. These are debates about race, gender relations and man's relation to Nature. We need to endorse and stand behind similar work in anthropology and not disown it.

This brings me to my third theme. Unlike Millennium, *Forest of Bliss* is a film that does have the anthropological qualities we should be looking for.[38] This film was made a decade ago by Robert Gardner and concerns the rituals surrounding death along the Ganges River in Benares, India. The film has no translated dialogue, no interviews and no commentary. It is anthropology without a textual bias.[39] The images give plenty of detail to the rituals and everyday life of death. We get a rounded account of how bodies, flowers and burials are part and parcel of city life. Actions taking place miles from each other are shown to be connected by overlapping rhythms. Images of death and decay are pitted against images of renewal. The tensions and continuities between images and between sounds and images bring the single observations in the film to a higher level of abstraction.

One Indian sociologist noted that, 'In the absence of a commentary, the visuals leave it to us to realise that the "inaugural" and the "end" partake of a shared meaning where death is clearly not an end but an inaugural into another journey. Such juxtapositioning brings us closer to an understanding of the river itself which provides both the physical and metaphorical passage for the passage into another "state" of being'.[40] This reviewer makes it clear that the film does not only present observations of Benares but it also makes an analysis of these observations by editing them. Images carry more than the forms of what they depict. They carry ideas, here central Hindu ideas about creation and destruction, life and death. By analysing the content of images carefully and juxtaposing them systematically, the ideas and connotations of the images are put to work. In *Forest of Bliss*, this is done without using words.

Unlike many ethnographic films with limited descriptive aims, *Forest of Bliss* is an example of film-making that takes the medium seriously and carries through all stages of anthropological enquiry in that medium. Instead of letting the images illustrate a textual exegesis, Gardner chose to explore and add new dimensions to the analytic potential of film-making. He did a whole and wholesome anthropological study on film.

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[37] B.M. Stafford, *Good looking: essays on the virtue of images*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996.
[38] Robert Gardner, *Forest of Bliss*, 85 min, colour, India/ USA, 1985.
[39] T. Ingold, "Introduction to Culture", in *Companion encyclopedia of anthropology: humanity, culture and social life*, (ed.) T. Ingold, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 331.
[40] R. Chopra, "Robert Gardner's *Forest of Bliss*—a review", *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter* 5(1): 2-3, 1989.

Forest of Bliss became a centre of controversy.[41] Was the film anthropology? One unimpressed reviewer wrote 'the film is labelled an anthropological documentary. As such it is deficient because it relies on only one perceptual mode, vision, to convey information'.[42] What if one turned this criticism against written anthropology for only using one medium? This reviewer called for commentary, intertitles, and interviews for it to be anthropology. Others have criticised films for the lack of footnotes, references, etc.[43]

Is it really petty textual conventions that should decide what is anthropology and what is not? To me the debate surrounding *Forest of Bliss* makes it clear that some anthropologists do not have a clue about how to look for anthropology in a film, because their conception of anthropological knowledge is tied in with textual conventions, such as the use of literary references and footnotes. Just as reading another language takes more than knowing the words, understanding anthropology in film form takes some practice to see. I sense an unwillingness to want to see. After all, efforts such as Gardner's have to be rewarded by audiences in order to count. As Michael Carrithers has said in a different context 'all knowledge is relative to a community of knowers'.[44] You are a community of knowers that could make a difference.

I urge all of you to think about one significant word in the motion: 'never'. If you have not yet seen photographic essays, graphic displays or documentary films that you have found authoritative or conclusive, with what I have said in mind, can you really exclude the possibility that images could ever do that? Is it really the medium, images, photography, film-making, that set the limit? Is it not how we employ these techniques? And the level of visual literacy among our audiences?

I want you to turn on your inner cinema and check whether you have seen documentary films that have questioned preconceptions that you held. Whether there is a film that has rearranged ideas and understandings in your head, that has given shape to an anthropological point, or that has made you want to do and continue doing anthropology. I am sure you have. Film and

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[41] J. Parry, "Comment on Robert Gardner's *Forest of Bliss*", *Society for Visual Anthropology Newsletter* 4(2): 1-3, 1988; A. Moore, "The limitations of imagist documentary", *SVAN* 4(2): 1-3, 1988; A. Ostor, "Is that what *Forest of Bliss* is all about? A response", *SVAN* 5(1): 4-8, 1989.

[42] Moore, op. cit., p. 1.

[43] J. Collier, Jr., "Visual anthropology and the future of ethnographic film"; A. Balikci, "Anthropologists and ethnographic filmmaking", both in *Anthropological filmmaking*, (ed.) J. Rollwagen, New York, Harwood, 1988; K. Hastrup, "Some notes on visual and textual authority", in *Film as ethnography*, (eds) P. Crawford and D. Turton, Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp. 8-25, 1992; K. Heider, *Ethnographic film*, Austin, Texas University Press, 1976.

[44] M. Carrithers, "Is Anthropology Art or Science?", *Current Anthropology* 31(3), 1990, p. 265.

photography are being used for research, for analysis and to convey insights in anthropology. It is up to you to give it the final stamp of approval.

I have argued on three fronts that images and sound are intrinsic to a practice of anthropology. First, use of audiovisual media improves our understanding of all the non-textual aspects of fieldwork. Second, using images will bring us up to date with twentieth-century media usage. If we were only communicating among ourselves, we could choose whatever medium we find convenient, but anthropology only lives in so far as it is engaged in debates with the subjects of our studies, with other scholars, artists, planners, etc. Audiovisual communication is essential in this respect. Third, film and photo give us the opportunity to experiment with new forms of representation and open our eyes and ears to cultural facts that cannot be described or explored in writing.

PART 2—THE DEBATE⁴⁵

Peter Wade: The people we've heard arguing the positions for the motion obviously rely quite strongly on the idea that somehow there is a depth behind the surface that anthropologists have to penetrate too, and this penetration can only be done through words. And however much they put truth in inverted commas, there's still some very strong notion that this truth is invisible to the naked eye and needs to be arrived at through more subtle textual techniques, despite the evocative power of the image which both Bill and Michael obviously concede. Michael Carrithers' reliance on a critique of the photo to make this sort of argument raises certain problems because he ignores film which could arguably be said to do a lot of the things that he says the photo can't do, like demonstrate relationships, and to be a lot less 'mute' than the photo is. But ultimately the argument depends on the idea that images can never, ultimately, give the level of explicit reasoning and contextual depth that text can.

The arguments against the motion say 'well, maybe, *but* the image can give us other things', such as enhancing the role of the senses, the role of vision, and perhaps more importantly, although this needs to be debated I think, the power to make an appeal to people outside of the narrow ranks of anthropology. Jakob here uses some fairly demagogic and rabble-rousing arguments that say if you don't vote for him you're a boring old stick-in-the-mud who only wants to read books and footnotes. Maybe I'm putting things a little too radically, but there's certainly a lot of power in that argument, and in the one that Pavel made very effectively: that anthropology is part of the societies that it studies, and those societies are increasingly involved with images, moving images and representations, not just as ways of communicating, but as ways of constituting relationships with other people and of perceiving themselves. The more that that occurs, the more anthropology will have to engage with images itself in order to study those processes. So that's a very strong argument about reflexivity, about anthropology having to move with the world that it's studying. But there still remains the problem of whether there is some level of explicitness and context that only text can get at.

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⁴⁵ In editing oral contributions transcribed from tape, I have cut superfluous statements and repetition in the interests of coherence—not always successfully. The overall meaning has not, I hope, been significantly affected. [Ed.]

Sarah Green (University of Manchester): My question is directed mostly to the defenders of the text. There seems to be an implication made both by Michael and Bill Watson of a kind of a nature/culture argument, that because of our ways of understanding the world, the image can only achieve certain forms of understanding. It can evoke almost bodily emotional responses, but it can't get to more cultural, intellectual understandings about the world and the people in it. Is that what you were intending to suggest—a kind of nature/culture dichotomy in the way we respond to these different media?

Jeanette Edwards (University of Keele): I came here with a bias towards the view that ocourse the image cannot have the last word, but now I think that saying that the image cannot have the last word suggests that something else can. I think that the proposers of the motion have shot themselves in the foot by arguing their case on the split between text and image. The distinction between text and image doesn't quite have the force that is required, and it reminded me of three images that stick in my mind from this week. They're nothing to do with anthropology, but they have vast implications for the kind of current concerns of anthropology.

The first is, I'm a big fan of *ER*.[46] There's an intriguing episode coming up in the new year apparently, which has been filmed live. In order to get around the problems of catching camera-persons in the film, the episode is going to take place on day when, in fiction, the casualty department is being filmed in a documentary. So I'm intrigued by this film of actors being filmed. The second image that sticks in my mind is of Afghanistan and the implications for women and health care under the Taliban regime. The image is of a group of women clothed from head to foot in nylon, with only a grating for their eyes. The third image is of the Turner [art] prize. I can't remember who the winner was, but unlike this panel [of speakers], the shortlist was four women. The winner of the prize is a video artist who has made amazing images of, for example, a group of police persons who are shown sitting for over an hour for a photograph, rubbing their noses and scratching their necks. Another image is of a mother and daughter; no text, no words, but it's a very very powerful image suggesting that the line between love/hate or cruelty/care is a very fine one.

Now those three images have been incredibly powerful to me and they portray things that I think are right in the current concerns of anthropology. So although I came thinking that the image could *not* have the last say, I'm having to reconsider and to ask whether in fact it's the quality of the image or the text that is at issue here.

Peter Wade: I should say in self-defence that I did invite a lot of women [to speak], but none of them could come.

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[46] A soap opera, set in the Emergency Room (ER) of a Chicago hospital.

Jeanette Edwards: I don't want to hear.... [general laughter]

John Gledhill (University of Manchester): I'm not convinced that our problem here isn't just that we've painted ourselves into a corner by adding in 'anthropology' to the motion. I tend to agree with Pavel and Jakob that the fact that the image plays a particular role in our culture is important. We're assuming that anthropology is about the production of a truth—or at any rate, not a lie—and it seems to me that part of our problem as anthropologists is that certain types of images do, as Jeanette's just said, stick in the mind and then as anthropologists we strive, usually unsuccessfully to deconstruct them. But we've also made this dichotomy between the text and the image which seems to me to be unsatisfactory at a cognitive level. Jakob hinted at that when he was talking about how we read the Nuer—how on earth do we read a text without also having images present in our consciousness as we do it? The irony of this totally verbal, media-free occasion is of course that it's tended to make us reflect on that. We haven't actually been seeing images at all, but images have been flashing through my head for the last half hour, so that may be a problem that we need to think about as well.

Sean Landers (University of Oxford): Apropos of Jeanette's comment on the *ER* episode—there are actually two of them. One was live on the East coast, the other was live on the West coast, and it raises interesting questions about which is the live performance, and which image is the real live image. This was of course to satisfy NBC's desire to advertise it as live on both coasts of the United States.

I noticed during the debate that the term 'image' was never defined and no distinction was made between, 'image' and say, photographs, films, paintings, drawings. I wonder whether the idea of 'image' is distinguishable from those other categories of visual representations, in that the moment that something becomes an image is when we as viewers or interpreters have a relationship with something seen. What came to mind was Magritte's painting 'This is not a pipe'. Of course it's not a pipe, it's an image of a pipe. One could very well put on the cover of *The Nuer* or *Argonauts of the Western Pacific,* 'This is not a culture, it's a representation of a culture'. So I wonder whether or not in our glossing over the distinction between image and photo, film, picture, painting, drawing, we're not also glossing over the extent to which anthropology is image-making and that the image both has and does not have the last say because anthropology itself is an image.

Tony Simpson (University of Manchester): I think that the problem that both of these arguments face is the problem of authority. Although we've discussed

authority in anthropology and we're supposed to be getting around it, it seems to me that both in text and in visual media, we still want to have the last word and produce something perfect. The person who writes the text wants to finish the argument in some way, and the person who makes the film often wants to produce this beautiful product. The problem for me with Millennium project was that the pictures were *so* beautiful, and I could see there was a desire to produce this perfection. Perhaps because we can't acknowledge that anthropology is an ongoing debate and an ongoing argument, we want to make products which have some finality about them.

Anne Rowbottom (Manchester Metropolitan University): I'm in the position of not being a film-maker but having made two films with a film-maker, Paul Henley from the Granada Centre. The films we made were about Royal-watchers, about people who follow the Royal family around Britain. What I was concerned with is that a film has to be more interesting than a book, certainly if it's a film that's going to go out on television. If you are going to film people, and I'm talking about working in this country, doing anthropology at home, then you've got to film people who are not only willing to perform to camera, but are able to perform to camera. In the work that I was doing, this cut out a lot of people who I thought were most interesting but who didn't express themselves pithily and who weren't very extrovert characters. So what we got in the films were the extroverts performing to camera and a whole host of much more 'ordinary' or normal people were edited out. Now those are people that I can write about, whom I can correct that when I write. So there's a difference between visual image and written text. Also—and again I'm talking about doing ethnography at home—if we're going to make a film about people and write about people, then people lose their anonymity. So that anybody who's seen the films that Paul and I have made about the Royalists, if they then read things that I have written, they can find these people quite identifiable. It's very hard to disguise people, if I want to keep the colour and the dynamism of the events and the things they do. So I think there are a lot of ethical issues that arise in film.

John Hutnyk (University of Heidelberg): First of all I'll ask why are we recording this? Isn't the last say already determined by the fact that this will later be published as a text? But I also want—hearing someone mention anthropology at home—to do an anthropology of what's happening here; a bit of 'pop-anthropology', if you like. The last say today will be a vote. In Bill [Watson]'s comment, he gave the image of the next century's anthropology students all reading their texts and deciding matters of criticism and so forth. This brought up for me the issue of judgment. I want to argue, along with the implications of what Jeanette said, that when we come to make a judgment, we should refuse both

choices here, because both choices imply for me a kind of escatology, a Christian escatology if you like, that sets up the anthropologist as the person who will make a judgment in a debate. Within anthropology, we will decide what is what. This is problematic, because when I think about some of the images we've talked about just recently—the *Argonauts* was mentioned, and the *Nuer*—I thought immediately about Michael Young's commentary on what contemporary Trobrianders think about Malinowski's work. They feel that Malinowski has stolen their heritage. Now whatever the photographs of Malinowski and his tent and so on evoke for us, this is an issue that matters in the political realm as well, not just in anthropology. So I think we should discuss this point of judgment. That's the issue. *Who* is it that judges? *How* do we judge? And when we're coming to make a vote, how do we recognise that the two choices are somehow a trick of democracy? We put this little image—an x or a tick—in a box and decide and that's the end of the matter. I think there is more at stake than just that.

Carmen Martin (University of Salamanca): For me, both things—text and image—are very important, but I think that it depends on the aim of our research and of course it depends on our audience. If we want to explain and to show a description of a culture, for me it's very important to show through film, through image, because when we read a book with an ethnographic description of a culture we can spend many hours reading pages of simple description of a culture. If we see a film, we can see all the things together, we can have the sensation of the image too. So for me the value of the image for a description of the culture is most important, more than many pages of text.

Judith Oakley (University of Hull): There are two points I want to make. First, just on a financial basis, in negotiation with publishers, I don't think you can blame anthropologists. Sometimes it's extremely difficult to get your publisher to agree to put in any photographic material. You have to beg, borrow and steal, and you usually have to pay out (if you get any advance, anyway) to get reproduction printed. In a recent book I produced, I had a photograph, taken by a professional photographer for a newspaper, of the landscape of a Gypsy camp, showing lorries and scrap metal. It was in beautiful focus, and it did all the work which the hostile outsider would it to do. I juxtaposed it with a photograph which a Gypsy made me take. He led me to the edge of the camp, stood me with my camera and said 'Take a few of that' and in the foreground was his horse and its foal. The publishers refused to publish the latter because they said it didn't say anything and it was out of focus—it wasn't perfect focus, I'm not a professional photographer. So in the end I said, 'Well, you've saved yourself money, because you're not going to have the other photo either, by the professional'. So that affected our text.

Second, I was slightly worried about the argument—I've never quite unravelled it—which said that the image that anthropologists use in books is *only* for illustration. If you read the text, the image is apparently intellectually only for illustration, but there may be a whole lot of semi-conscious, unconscious ways in which the anthropologist has wanted that image to appear and the readers themselves may not interpret it just as illustration. So we should take into account how people respond to images beyond the intention—the conscious intellectual, reasoned, verbal intention—of the anthropologist.

Nikos Papastergiadis (University of Manchester): I'd like to tell a little story, if that's alright. It's about a general in Greece after the war of independence, when Greece was emerging as a nation-state in Europe. The general's name was Makriyanis and after the war he noticed that there were a lot of conflicting stories about the birth and the formation of the Greek nation, and the new histories that were being constructed to glorify and edify that state. This dismayed him a great deal and he decided that some correction was necessary. So he commissioned a painter to represent the history of Greece from the perspective of the battles that he had witnessed and fought in. He thought a painter's view of that history would be necessary because the vast majority of peasant-based Greece was illiterate and would never be able to share the written histories that were being circulated at that time in Greece. So he found himself one of the greatest painters in Europe at that time, a French classicist Romantic painter, who arrived in Greece and for six months was escorted by Makriyanis around the various sites where the battles with the Ottoman Empire were conducted. After that 'fieldwork', the painter was then sent to his studio to complete the paintings. Once two or three of the paintings were completed, they were presented to the general. He looked at them, paid the artist, and told him to go back to Paris. He was totally dismayed. He felt no resonance between these formal, romantic representations and his actual experiences. He felt that these images could not be read by the people he was hoping to communicate with.

But he heard of a young artist who had fought alongside him, who was by now married and had children. This artist was untrained but gifted and he was from Sparta. He commissioned this man to do the same paintings, and they went around the same battlefields. Zografos, the young painter, by now much older, said, 'Don't worry, my general, I remember the scenes as vividly as you do' and he also said, 'and some of my sons have heard the stories many times and together we will make you a series of paintings'. So Zografos went back to his village near Sparta, and after the equivalent period of time, he produced a series of twelve drawings—some of which are actually now kept at Windsor Castle—and presented them to the general. These drawings included the iconography of the Byzantine saints, the Renaissance perspective and the Ottoman miniaturist

perspectives as well. There was a totally hybrid representation in pictorial form of the battle scenes; perspectives were colliding and there was a juxtaposition of scenes; there was a variety of histories being superimposed upon each other. And once this melange was presented to the general, he turned around and said to the painter: 'Thank you very much. You have constructed before me the true history and the unwritten history of our nation'.

Bill Watson: I want to deal with some of the points that have been raised, and perhaps it's best to sort of do it in reverse order. To start with, I was very interested in Nikos's story, because of course it reminds us that in fact artists have painted and represented history, and we know about Picasso and *Guernica* and the way in which that presents another version of what was happening at the time. I want to use Nikos's story as a peg to talk about Greece in the Classical period of Plato and Socrates, and that takes me directly on to John's point, about whether bringing anthropology into the motion of the debate is a red herring, and whether we should be thinking about more cognitive aspects of how we use language, and whether language is pictorial or not. Now, this is a particular issue addressed by Plato in the Cratylus. The image and the text are contrasted and the suggestion is made that the text can never be as good as the image because we imagine, we conceive in terms of pictures. This is what is known as the picture theory of language and Leonardo da Vinci, convinced by the picture theory of language, said that what he was painting was of far more value than words. Now, the picture theory of language has subsequently been discredited by philosophers who have argued that in fact words don't actually summon up pictures in the way in which they are alleged to.

This leads on to a whole tradition within Western philosophical debates about this dichotomy between image and text, and of course that dichotomy is at the base of our debate this afternoon. It has led sometimes to this posing of 'nature' as the image and 'culture' as the text; it has led to other types of dichotomous explanation using those terms. But one of the more recent attempts to philosophically discuss this dichotomy is by Nelson Goodman, in a book called *Languages of Art*. I mustn't claim originality in having identified this particular book as a key text. As usual when one is doing reading for a paper, as soon as one has finished writing the paper, one discovers the key text that one should have used. I recommend to you all an excellent work which summarises the debates—a book by W.J. Mitchell entitled *Iconology* in which he talks about Goodman's theories of how we look at the image and the text.

What Goodman does, developing ideas subsequent to the semiotic approach, is to say that image and text are two different systems of representation and that therefore neither one can be valued over the other. It's not a question of moral evaluation. He gives this wonderful analogy of a graduated and

ungraduated thermometer. If you've got a graduated thermometer with the marks indicating the particular temperature which the thermometer reads, then you can read off from the thermometer what particular temperature has been reached. But if you have an ungraduated thermometer, then you don't know—you just have some information, but it's not clear what. He uses that analogy to explain the difference between a text and an image. He says that an image has density and lack of differentiation. When you look at an image, you look at parts of it in relation to other parts, and because of the lack of differentiation, because of the density, there is a superfluity of information that you derive from the image.

This is slightly different from the point I was making in my talk, when I suggested that the reading of pictures is finite. Goodman suggests that it's not finite, it's infinite because of this density and lack of differentiation, whereas the text has differentiation and is less dense. He says if you use these categories, then you can talk about all sorts of representations. It doesn't matter if you haven't defined (in relation to Sean's particular problem) what an image is, because when you decode or read the particular thing that you're looking you decode it in terms of its differentiation and its density. So you can look at a script and read it as a text with certain conventions. (I think it was Jakob who talked about conventions imbuing our seeing and our observing.) When you look at a text, you can read it as a text, with certain conventions to do with differentiation, or you can see it as an image, in which case you look at typography, spatial arrangements, and so on. You use a different set of conventions which derive from the conventions of viewing a painting which is undifferentiated and dense. So Goodman neatly resolves this sort of dichotomous approach to text and image in terms of conventions of viewing—none having priority over the other.

Now the difficulty about that particular approach is that, although æsthetically and philosophically it is very satisfactory in terms of solving the problem, when it comes to a discipline like anthropology or æsthetics, you want to impose all sorts of other considerations in terms of the way in which you evaluate the result of applying those conventions. So to go back to the point of whether we should judge or not, I think it is very important that we should judge as anthropologists, and to abstain from the motion, as I think was being implied there, to abstain from deciding on either the text or the image, would be a rejection of that kind of anthropological responsibility that we have. That anthropological responsibility depends on making fine discriminative judgments and, to go back to what I was saying in my talk, those fine discriminative judgments, although they can be named in relation to film—because films are composed, as Jakob said, in terms of narrative convention—nonetheless, when it comes to reading and the types of analytical approach leading to the evaluation which is contained within textual criticism, it must be the text that provides the methodological tools for us to arrive at that kind of critical, anthropological

judgement that we need in order to evaluate a Malinowski or a Radcliffe-Brown author or a text on the Nuer, all those classics of anthropology that we're so familiar with. So I would argue that despite what has been said and despite my concessions that the image is of course very important—both Michael and I conceded that—when it comes to making those fine discriminatory judgements, then yes, it is a question of 'never'. In anthropology the image can never have the last say because those fine discriminative judgments which we need to employ in anthropology are only the product of text and evaluation. Thank you.

Pavel Büchler: I think there are two angles to the debate that I want to respond to. The first one can be summed up under the heading, "It is not Anthropology". Now I might argue that only an anthropologist can know the answer, but knowing the answer implies—in this I would agree with Bill—that discriminative judgments need to be made. Now I think that discrimination, for the purposes of our argument, should not really take place between text and image because there really are not such simple entities as 'the text' or 'the word' and 'the image' and as you, Sean, rightly pointed out, distinctions between various types of images have never been clearly made. I tried to suggest that a distinction like that should be made, but the wording of the motion, which ended up with the generic term 'the image', took away the possibility of playing the game that way. I feel very strongly that if there is such a thing as 'the image' and such a thing as 'the word' at all, then the question as to which of those should have the upper hand in deciding anthropological arguments is always going to be a moot point. What I object to is the idea that no image under any circumstances could ever decide an argument in anthropology that retains its legitimacy as an anthropological argument. I don't think that's a reasonable way of looking at it.

 The second thing I want to look at is the idea that the reading of pictures (if that is not actually a contradiction in terms)—or looking at pictures and the information that pictures can provide—is finite, whereas text can be infinitely developed and words offer themselves to that kind of infinite reading. I think this weakens the argument if not contradicts it, because precisely if the flexibility of text is such that it can be subject to infinite readings, how can it ever have the last word? It is not fair really to attack here the position of Michael Carrithers—you don't go after people in absentia, assassination in absentia—but what I was particularly taken by was the idea that the photographic image is mute. How can anyone possibly have that impression? His paper leads him to insist that if it speaks anything, it speaks a silence. What he really indicates, I think, is that—to use a more appropriate adjective—the image is blind, that it cannot see. That is, that it cannot express an understanding beyond the narrow range of suggestion and beyond the unspoken, which is an elusive foothold at best, and of course that it cannot do so especially when it comes to anthropology. I think that on this

ground alone the motion is already defeated. It is not simply a matter of 'never say never', and it is not simply a matter of saying anthropology cannot be unique and that different from everything else. It is simply to challenge the idea that the image should be disqualified *a priori* from making potentially decisive statements in a situation which is so rapidly changing and in which we have to admit that, at this moment, when we say 'the image', we don't actually know what we are talking about.

Jakob Høgel: A few points. First of all to Ann Rowbottom and the question of whether film-making is limited because you have to go for issues that are more popular and for people who are more interesting and outspoken than other people. The kind of visual anthropology I was envisaging in my talk was one where this would not matter. I think that in film, one should be able to make anything interesting, and if we don't do that, that's because we fail in our engagement with the film. I've seen numerous films about very mundane and not particularly exciting people (in the standard television sense), but which have explored little issues and so been very interesting. That's part of the answer. The other part is that I think that some of the ethical issues that you raise, the question of anonymity, are not particular to film-making. I think, and I tried to indicate that in my talk, that film-making highlights a lot of methodological and ethical issues that prevail throughout anthropology and that's what I tried to say with the question of reflexivity and methodological clarity. I think that visual anthropology can resolve or at least debate some issues that have been swept under the carpet in textual anthropology, because people are so visibly not anonymous in films, people are visibly being prompted to say certain things, people are so visibly this, that or the other. So I wouldn't say that it's not a difference of character, it's a difference of visibility between textual and visual anthropology.

My second point is to do with Judith Oakley's comment about images for illustration. In this debate of course we try to dichotomise things, to put the text on one side, the image on the other side, but this raised in my mind the question of the interface between text and images; the way they feed into each other in ways that are not necessarily explicit. So when I said that images were used for illustration purposes only, I was thinking that there's always a caption underneath saying, 'this is what you're supposed to look at' But of course that's not an extensive reading of the image, we put all kinds of things into them, and that's why images last so long. That's why I said that when you pick up a monograph, you do remember the images. That interface between text and image I think is equally important in film-making, in that film-making is not an image practice, it's a multimedia practice. Words have a large role to play, both the spoken word and in the form of captions, subtitles and so on. And in some cases rather than looking at this clear dichotomy of images and text, it might be more interesting to

see the interface of the two, how they produce knowledge together or against each other.

This brings me to the last point which is the direction our attention should go in discussing what tools to use for anthropology. I see one way as going towards smaller and smaller units of analysis, which is maybe part of what Bill was trying to do: the semiotic approach where we try to find the minimal discrete units of either text or image and compare them and see what values are they laden with and so on. There was a whole French semiology in the sixties that tried to do that with film, tried to find the smallest discrete unit, perhaps like the syllable in words. What would it be in film? Is it the single image? No, because the single image contains lots of different elements.[47] It was very difficult to define the minimal unit. I think that we should look at the interface of text and image and think about the technical approach we need to see that what they do is not as completely discrete units. I think the only way we can approach text and image is in connection with the readings of them. We shouldn't see ourselves as engaging with text in an isolated sense, we should see it as an act of communication, that we are communicating with the subjects of our studies, we are communicating with other scholars, and there are historical changes to the way the media are used. It's more at that level we should be looking: how well the receivers of whatever we produce read particular images, particular texts, and in particular the interface between the two.

Peter Wade: Thank you very much. When we come to voting, as with all these debates, we end up with a dichotomy; that's the way that debating works.... Do you want to say something, sorry?

John Hutnyk (University of Heidelberg): Just a clarification to say: fine distinctions, yes, but final judgments, no. Not that we should abstain, but I'd like to make a plea for abstaining on *this* vote, that we should discuss judgments and in this judgment refuse the options that have been given us, because it sets up a kind of God-like decisiveness. So can people put an image of a Smiley face in both ballot boxes?

Peter Wade: The nature of the debate is obviously that we have a dichotomy. People have tried to show that the dichotomy doesn't work—it never does—that we need some sort of middle road, that words can create images and images involve words—and ultimately nowadays words and images are all digitised information anyway, so they can all go across the internet and end up being the same. *But* I think the important points are: what does the debate imply about the way anthropology should develop, how we teach it, how we practise it, and there

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[47] The tape ended here and some words have been lost, but I think the meaning is clear [Ed.]

it *does* make a difference whether you choose to use words or images in your actual practice as an anthropologist. They involve very different technologies, they involve very different ways of relating to your students, being a student, being a teacher, being an anthropologist and so on. So I think there are some real issues here which can't be just dissolved in philosophical equivocations. Anyway, now we come to the voting, and the crucial point is that haven't got any voting slips, which is quite ironic....

Voting slips were eventually produced and produced the following results:
For the motion: 9
Against the motion: 38
Abstained (or Smiley faces): 8