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LOCALIST COSMOPOLITANISM:
ALEVISM AS A ROOTED, UNIVERSAL DISCOURSE

CRISTINA CUSENZA¹

Introduction

The present study is based on Turkish Alevis living in cities. In light of the dispersal of the communal ties of the village in the urban context, my interest is in investigating how urban Alevis relate themselves to their notion of an imagined Alevi community, as well as how the cultural and religious structure of Alevilik (a term coined under the Republic to denote their religion) has been transformed and adapted to a radically different environment. Moreover, given the fact that Alevis are a religious minority in Turkey, the implications of their encounter with the Sunni majority for their claims to identity will be considered. This article draws most of its content from an analysis of nine in-depth interviews of Alevi individuals, which I carried out in the Ankara area. Another section is dedicated to the other part of my fieldwork in Turkey, my visit to the town of Hacıbektaş, where the shrine of Hacı Bektaş Veli, the legendary founder of the order whose ideas gave rise to the Bektashi-Alevi spiritual philosophy, is situated. My observations in the field demonstrate how both the saint's teachings and Bektashi-Alevi traditions, rituals and myths are still highly valued today by Alevis. Throughout the discussion, it will be seen that, while the flexibility and anti-dogmatism at the basis of Alevism allow multiple understandings of it by its members, as well as their openness and adaptability to new conditions, at the same time 'certain sets of traditions, rules and symbols shape the collective space of Alevi communities' (Koçan and Öncü 2004: 273).

The analytical framework developed in this paper identifies parallels between the Bektashi-Alevi philosophy of humanity, which is based on the spiritual freedom of each member (Doja 2003: 353) and inspired by principles of universal love, tolerance and equality (Schwartz 2008: 51), and cosmopolitanism understood as an anthropological project

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promoting individual freedom, but also acknowledging the importance of difference (Rapport 2012). It will then be argued that, in maintaining their distinctive cultural and religious identity, as well as an open and tolerant attitude towards the Other, urban Alevi engage in a localist cosmopolitanism.

The term 'Alevi'

For the purposes of this study, it is necessary first to define the meanings of the terms 'Alevi' and 'Bektashi' and describe who is included in these two categories. In the Turkish context, 'Alevi' is understood as 'the person who loves and respects Ali and is faithful to him' (Özmen 2011: 73). The centrality of the figure of Ali can be connected to the great influence of Shiism on Alevism (Shankland 2003: 79; Erol 2010: 375). Alevi beliefs, institutions and practices are organised around the love of God-Muhammed-Ali, as well as of Ehlibeyt (the 'Prophet's family') and the Twelve Imams (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 80).

Bektashis, who follow the Sufi Saint Hacı Bektaş Veli, laid the spiritual and philosophical foundations of Alevism (Melikoff 1998b: 6). Membership of the Bektashi order is voluntary and has a more intellectual-philosophical dimension, while traditionally membership of Alevism is determined by descent understood more in ethnic and cultural terms (Gokalp 1980: 753). Despite their historically divergent paths and some differences in practices between the two groups, the beliefs of the Bektashis and Alevi are identical (Steward 2007: 52). For these reasons, in academic writings as well as everyday conversations, the idea of a single Alevi-Bektashi identity has been adopted, and this term is frequently used (Wilson 2015: 77). In this article, the terms 'Alevi' and 'Bektashi' will be used interchangeably, while bearing in mind their appropriate usage according to different contexts.

Clarification is also needed regarding the widespread denomination of the Alevi and Sunni traditions as heterodox and orthodox Islam respectively. As Karolewski suggests (2008: 437), this classification reflects the power constellations within Turkish society, positing Sunnis as the legitimate majority at the centre and Alevi as the deviant minority on the periphery. Nonetheless, Alevi subjects seem to be aware of the power structure that sustains such a hierarchical schema and appropriate it intentionally in order to confront it (ibid.: 456). It is in accordance with this perspective that these terms will be employed.

No official statistics are available on the number of Alevi living in Turkey (Vorhoff 1998: 228). Although most Alevi are ethnically and linguistically Turkish, in Turkey there are small Alevi minorities of Kurdish and Zaza ethnicity (Kehl-Bodrogi 1997a: xi). It is

estimated that Alevi represent the second largest religious community after Sunni, comprising around 25% of the Turkish population (Zeidan 1999: 74). There is also a considerably numerous group of Alevi-Bektashi living in the Balkans (Shindeldecker 1998). This study is based on Anatolian Alevi.

Historical background

In order to understand the status of Alevi today, it is crucial to contextualize it (Ocak 1997: 196). The very origin of Alevism is to be traced back to the succession crisis after the death of Muhammed. Alevi see Ali as the first Caliph after the Prophet (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 34). The details of the historical circumstances that gave rise to the divide between Sunni and Shiites cannot be discussed here for lack of space. Worth mentioning nonetheless is the Kerbala event – the murder of Husayn and his family, the descendants of the Prophet (ibid.: 36) – which still survives in Alevi's memories² and plays an important role in Alevi liturgy (Gokalp 1980: 752). Since then, Shiism and Alevism have developed throughout Anatolia, Iran, Iraq and East and Central Asia (Shindeldecker 1998). From the twelfth century, new heterodox and syncretic sects started emerging (Sufism) characterized by a shamanistic and spiritual philosophy and producing an understanding of Islam that challenged Sunni orthodoxy (Black 2011). The Turkmen tribes, who started penetrating central and eastern Anatolia at the end of the eleventh century, combined their traditional Sufi elements with Islamic concepts (Fletcher 1986: 42; Kasapoğlu and Ecevit 2004: 156; Aktas 2014: 148). Alevism is indeed associated with the phenomenon of folk Islam (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 16). Moreover, it absorbed elements of other ancient religions and currents of thought circulating throughout Anatolia (Bilsel 2007: 13), namely pre-Islamic and non-Islamic beliefs, Buddhism and Manicheism Christianity, and it was later influenced by neo-Platonist and Nestorian elements (Ocak 1997: 197). The Bektashi fathers (*dedes*) – Hacı Bektaş Veli and his followers – played a critical role in spreading Sufi ideas and in socially organizing the peoples of Anatolia and later of the Balkans (Harmansah et al. 2014: 340). In fact, they have transmitted traditional Bektashi knowledge orally for centuries (Tee 2013: 2). These religious leaders, the *Çelebis*, are especially respected by Alevi since they claim descent from Mohammed through one of the Twelve Imams (Çamuroğlu 1998: 82).

Under Ottoman rule, the Bektashi were transformed into an organized order appointed to guide the Janissaries, the elite unit for the personal defence of the Sultan (Doja 2006: 430). In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the ideas spread by the dervishes were gradually

embraced by the Kızılbaş Turkmens living in Anatolia (Vorhoff 1998: 230), and Kızılbaş, Bektashi and Alevi milieus merged (Dressler 2008: 284). The Kızılbaş, later known as ‘Alevi’, (Melikoff 1998b: 4), were great supporters of Shah Ismail, the leading figure of the Shiite Safavid Iranian state. Since all varieties of Shiism were forbidden under the Ottomans, the Kızılbaş were seen as a potential threat to the stability of the Ottoman Empire (Erol 2010: 375). Being ‘highly vulnerable to persecution’ (Stewart 2007: 51), the excluded Alevi had to keep their traditions and beliefs secret, and they organized themselves in their own social and religious institutions in rural areas away from major centres (Shankland 2003: 8).

The Janissaries were abolished in 1826 and Bektashism was prohibited (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 41). Until then the Bektashis had benefited from the imperial protection of the Ottoman rulers, while the Alevi were isolated in rural villages (Steward 2007: 52). At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the Bektashi order experienced renewed popularity and ‘came to play the role of an enlightened intelligentsia, open to progressive ideas’ (Doja 2006: 444; also Melikoff 1998b: 7). Bektashi leaders were consulted by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the father of the Turkish Republic, who won great Alevi support for the war of independence following the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Elwert 1997: 67). With the secularization of Turkish society and the establishment of the Republic in 1923, the new term ‘Alevilik’ became increasingly prominent to denote Alevi religious practice (Dressler 2008: 284), since the new discourse of Turkish nationalism positioned Alevi as the ‘true bearers of ancient Turkish Anatolian language and culture’ (Zeidan 1999: 76).

However, Atatürk’s secularist project involved the exclusion of religion and various cultural identities from politics (Koçan and Öncü, 2004: 484; Salman 2005: 42). With the closure of all religious orders (*tarikât*) and dervish lodges (*tekkes*) in 1925, Alevi had to reorganize themselves without the support of the state (Doja 2003: 351). The ban also included the *dedelik*, central Alevi social and religious institutions, which entered a further period of decline from the 1950s, following intense urban migration (Tambar 2010: 654). As a result of close contact with the Sunni majority in the cities, the sense of difference on the part of Alevi increased (Güneş-Ayata 2004: 110; Göner 2005: 114; Tol 2009: 151), and the traditional bonds with the communal life of the village were increasingly weakened (Ballantyne 2012: 3). Importantly, the rural exodus signalled the end of Alevi’s spatial and social marginality (Kehl-Bodrogi 1997b: 119) and a redefinition of the communal boundaries

² Alevi fast during the month of Muharrem in memory of this event (Kehl-Bodrogi 2000).

between the Alevi and Sunni communities. Living in cities also led to encounters with other Alevi communities, 'rendering the imagination of an Alevi society possible' (Es 2013: 31). In the 1960s and 1970s, the divide between Sunnis and Alevi became mainly ideological and political: Alevi started relying less on traditional knowledge and practices, and supported leftist ideas with the aim of achieving equal treatment with Sunnis under the rule of law (Köse 2012: 587).

After the military coup in 1980, the Turkish Prime Minister at that time promoted a 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis' which fused Islamic symbols with nationalism and aimed at unifying the Turkish state (Rabasa and Larrabee 2008: 37-8). The role of religion was strengthened, especially in the educational realm: the Directorate for Religious Affairs (DRA), which controls the teaching of compulsory (Sunni-centred) religious education in schools, is criticized by most Alevi for trying to assimilate them into mainstream Sunni Islam (Çamuroğlu 1998: 80). A new wave of discrimination against Alevi from ultra-right-wing organizations characterizes this period: the Maras Pogrom in 1978 and the [Çorum Pogrom](#) in 1980 caused hundreds of deaths and left a tragic mark in the memories of Turkish citizens (Yaman Erdemir 2006: 47).

In most of the literature, the 1990s are considered to represent the beginning of the so-called 'Alevi revival', characterized by a reawakened interest in Alevi traditions (Erdemir 2005: 940; Tee 2013: 10). Alevi started enjoying much more popular and state support. Furthermore, new forms of sociality and institutions, replacing the rural ones, were established with urbanization, such as Alevi foundations, village clubs, associations of mutual support and journals (Ballantyne 2012: 7; Borovali and Boyraz 2014: 481). The construction of urban *cem* houses (*cemevis*, or houses where *cem* rituals are held) was an important step towards obtaining legal recognition and the restructuring of Alevism as a public religion (Es 2013: 33; Sahin 2001: 3). Another development was the transition from a locally transmitted religion to a more formalized doctrine with written sources (Koçan and Öncü 2004: 478). However, these years were also marked by the devastating attack carried out in July 1993 by fundamentalist groups in the city of Sivas, where thirty-seven people were murdered (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 49).

Over the past twenty years, there have been positive changes in attitudes and state policy towards Alevi (Poyraz 2005: 515). Nonetheless, Alevilik still has no official recognition as a religion (Hamrin-Dahl 2014: 116).

Bektashi³ humanity: cosmopolitanism as a discourse of tolerance

It is widely assumed that to be a ‘cosmopolitan’ is an ethical process that requires rootlessness: ‘to create the self, to re-socialise the self as a way of broadening non-tribal contact, one has to undo the spirit of seriousness that attaches to one’s sociocultural inheritance’ (Hill 2011: 3). By adopting an anthropological perspective, this paper will instead argue that to reach the cosmopolitan ideal does not preclude belonging to a specific community (religion, ethnic identity, national consciousness), nor imply the annihilation or transcendence of local ties, nor openness to cultural difference (Werbner 2006: 6).

Cosmopolitanism as a human and anthropological project, then, is based on the very awareness and appreciation of differences both between and within human communities (Rapport 2012: 75). However, to claim a certain local loyalty does not imply the rejection of a human one (Appiah 2010: xv). Kant’s notion of the cosmopolitan as a citizen of two worlds – the local community and the worldwide community of humankind (Rapport 2006: 23) – will be taken as a point of reference. However, the Eurocentric perspective adopted by Kant, reflected in the idea of the ‘functional necessity of difference’ for the creation of inequalities, hegemonies and antagonism between communities in human history (Hedrick 2008: 265; Papasthephanou 2002: 32), will be rejected here, and a reconceptualization of such conception of difference will be suggested instead. Nigel Rapport’s argument for a Kantian anthropology of humanity is critical in this regard: while acknowledging the fact that ‘the human exists as a complex singularity over and above proximal categorisations and identifications of nation, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, locale etc.’ (2006: 24), he insists on the significance of the recognition of difference, with an emphasis on its individual and personal aspects (2012: 158).

The Alevis case is emblematic of this eclectic approach, which sustains the compatibility of cosmopolitanism with specific local identities. It is through this theoretical framework that the Bektashi spiritual philosophy will be analysed.

The cosmopolitan subject: Anyone and the perfect man

Anyone is the ‘human-individual actor devoid of socio-cultural attachments’, who is ‘the basis for the social-scientific appreciation of the human condition and for the ethical securing of the rights of a human life’ (Rapport 2010:85). In Rapport’s view, the construction of such a figure is fundamental to the establishment of a ‘morality of *anyone*’ (my emphasis) – that is, to recognize anyone everywhere as the *same* but also as the *other* (Argyrou 2002). In other

³ As explained, Alevis refer to the Bektashi spiritual philosophy of humanity, outlined in detail in this section.

words, the individual is to be seen as a manifestation of the singularity of humanity (Rapport 2012: 22). The idea that cosmopolitanism does not belong only to the domain of abstract philosophy, but also to that of everyday life, is interestingly also seen in Bektashi spiritual thought.

The Bektashi notions of the Spiritual Man and Perfect Man, the highest levels of the chain of emanation (after God/Truth and God/Universe), will be described here. The former refers to the fact that ‘every human being on earth is an emanation of an astral, shining, or spiritual self’ (Cornell 2006: 16). The belief that God is already present within all human beings (Wakamatsu 2015: 784) is connected to the idea that the individual is a ‘perfect embodiment’ of the human whole (Rapport 2012: 5). The Perfect Man (*İnsan-ı kamil*) is the ideal person, a mature human being who has managed to acquire spiritual access to the hidden and universal Truth – the higher degree of knowledge, the *Hakikat* (Cornell 2006: 19).

The concept of ‘Four Doors, Forty Levels’ (*dört kapı, kırk makam*) is central to Alevi mysticism. This is the process through which an individual goes through all the necessary stages – *şariat* (religious law), *tarikât* (spiritual path), *marifet* (spiritual knowledge) and *hakikat* (spiritual truth) – that characterize the path of inner, deeper spiritual insight (Gokalp 1980: 755). In the practical terms of everyday life, Alevis believe that a Perfect Human directs his or her heart towards humanity (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 69): this requires the full moral control of one’s desires and treating everyone equally, with kindness, honesty and sincerity (Shindeldecker 1998). Salvation is reached through the emulation of perfect models such as Ali, Hacı Bektaş Veli and other saints.

In a similar and comparable way, then, Anyone is the cosmopolitan subject who has transcended his or her cultural specificities and has achieved a universal morality. This universal morality in both Bektashim and cosmopolitanism is an act of toleration, and importantly it is embodied by those figures – Anyone and the Perfect Man – who represent sources of moral and spiritual guidance respectively for the rest of humanity.

Rooted, vernacular and localist cosmopolitanisms

Pnina Werbner challenges the idea that cosmopolitanism is not rooted in any culturally committed loyalty to a particular place (2006, 2008). Cultural or religious belonging, she argues, ‘does not negate a sense of moral responsibility beyond the local and the relative’ (2006: 7). ‘Vernacular cosmopolitanism’ is ‘an oxymoron that seems to join contradictory notions of local specificity and universal enlightenment’ (2008: 14), which is nonetheless more practically feasible than the elitist version of cosmopolitanism that assumes the

superiority of European liberal thought (Werbner 2006; Hannerz 1990). In fact, ‘no local loyalty can ever justify forgetting that each human being has responsibilities to every other’ (Appiah 2010: xiv). The ‘rooted’ and ‘patriotic’ cosmopolitanism described by Appiah is that of a subject who is attached to his or her own home and local particularities, while at the same time celebrating cultural variety and being loyal to humankind in general (1997: 618, 622). At the root of this perspective lies the idea that ‘it is possible to treat others decently, humanely, *through* our differences’ (ibid.: 638).

The Bektashi spiritual philosophy has at its core the notion of ‘Love thy neighbour’ (Cornell 2006: 17). The idea that love is the root and cause of all existence – that all human beings are created in God’s image and that in them God manifests himself, regardless of race, language, religion or nation (Zeidan 1999: 82; Vorhoff 1998: 242) – is ideally to be translated into a tolerant, empathetic attitude towards one’s fellow human beings (Bilici 2005: 53). Since what we see in ourselves is the very reflection of God, we are able to find ‘the satisfying sense of Oneness’, the very same human essence that all human beings share and that renders them equal (Hoxha 2007: 25). From here derives ‘the social obligation to strive for the general well-being and welfare of humankind’ (Cornell 2006: 18). This moral and social obligation is therefore cosmopolitan in that it involves the appreciation of the intrinsic sameness and difference of humanity, and it is supposedly translated into Alevis’ claimed capacity to adapt to different contexts. At the same time, specific local loyalties are central to Alevis. I am therefore arguing for the possibility of a localist cosmopolitanism, which will be shown to be a viable human project. The reasons for adopting this approach are both analytical, as already discussed, and methodological, since this study cannot focus on the entire Alevi community, only on a selected group.

A syncretic and anti-dogmatic identity

‘Alevi’ and ‘Bektashi’ are not clearly defined categories of identity, and there is no homogenous or agreed definition of these terms even within the Alevi community itself (Karaosmanoğlu 2013: 582; Dressler 2013: 273): is Alevism a religion separate from or within Islam, a cultural identity, a lifestyle, a philosophy of life? This vagueness, ambiguity and plurality of interpretations is to be connected to the fact that Alevism is seen as a syncretic and non-dogmatic religious movement (Cornell 2006: 3; Tol 2009: 80) – that is, inclusive of several elements and groups, and not formally organized. The great theological variety displayed by Turkish Alevism (Bilici 2005: 51) has given rise to multiple, competing discourses within the movement itself, as well as outside it. Contemporary Alevism, then,

appears to be very heterogenous, since each member relates his- or herself differently to their imagined notion of Aleviness (Köse 2012: 582). Connected to its composite nature is the exaltation of ethics over formalism (Trowbridge 1921: 266): the lack of a formal organization reflects the belief that dogmas and rituals are worthless, since they are thought to lead ultimately to the establishment of hierarchies within the community and set boundaries to individual freedom (Cornell 2006: 17). Thus Alevi traditionally do not perform the five daily prayers, make the pilgrimage to Mecca, or fast during the month of Ramadan (Wilson 2015: 76).

Alevi practices

Traditionally, however, Alevi still follow certain other practices. Turkish rather than Arabic is the primary ritual language (Gokalp 1980: 761). The main Alevi and Bektashi practice is the *cem* ritual, a collective religious ceremony officiated over by the spiritual authority of the *dede*, in which both women and men participate (Hurd 2015: 91). *Cem* means ‘to gather’, and its function is to reinforce social solidarity within the context of the village through the teaching of Bektashi doctrines (Hamrin- Dahl 2014: 122): in fact, everyone must be at peace and all disputes must have been resolved through the mediation of the *dede* for the *cem* ritual to be held (Shankland 2003: 112; Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 83). Through collective worship, Alevi believe they can see into each other’s hearts and so become part of God (Wakamatsu 2015: 386). As I show below, with urbanization such practices, being tied to the village dimension, are radically changing (Erol 2010: 382; Kose 2012: 576), but this reconciliatory approach, the ‘*tarikati* way’, still guides Alevi’s behaviour in the wider society (Shankland 2003: 112).

Engaging with the dominant Sunni discourse

Karaosmanoğlu describes Alevi’s avoidance of political, cultural and religious orthodoxies as evidence of the multifaced process of identity-formation and anti-essentialist transformation that is taking place in Turkey (2013: 580). Through a discussion of the interviews, it will be shown how, despite their different conceptions of identity, Alevi in Turkey are seen as a single though heterogenous group which is forced to confront the ‘orthodox’ dominant Sunni ideology (Doja 2003: 363).

As already mentioned, Sunni Islam has been central to the construction of the Turkish nationalist ideology since the last decades of the twentieth century (Dressler 2013: 272). The definition of ‘Alevilik’ by the Sunni majority has shifted from ‘Alevism as a deviance from

Islam' (Ottoman Empire) to 'entity of groups that represent the Turkish folk tradition' (period of the Republic) (Karolewski 2008: 449). According to Dressler (2008: 294, cited in Atasoy 2011: 108), the 'grammar of Turkish laicism' employs a religious approach in locating Alevilik within society – drawing on notions of Turkishness, as well as a secular interpretation of Islam – but not as distinct in its own right.

It is crucial to explore the dynamics of power involved in the construction of such discourses. Conceiving Alevism within Islam is part of an anti-syncretic discourse based on the construction of authenticity and the defence of religious boundaries (Shaw and Steward 1994: 7; Göner 2005: 125; Massicard 2001: 12). Syncretism does not concern the religious realm alone (Colpe 1997: 46): 'religious phenomena at a given point in time may be later reinterpreted as merely cultural phenomena' (Stewart and Shaw 1994: 192). The definition of what is 'authentic' (orthodox) tends to be made by the dominant group (Sunnis), a process defined as 'syncretism from above' by Shaw and Steward (*ibid.*: 21). Such religious synthesis may become uncontested and be reproduced unconsciously (*ibid.*: 18). Koçan and Öncü (2004: 476) employ Nietzsche's concept of 'slave morality' in describing how Alevi reinterpret their moral codes and values in relation to their perceived other, Sunni Islam.

As discussed, the ways in which Alevi subjects engage with Sunnism (the practice of *taqiyya* or 'dissimulation') have been dictated by their geographical marginalization, as well as the denial by others of their distinct religious identity (Cornell 2006: 2). Crucially, the appearance of conformity with Sunni ideology is accompanied by an active rejection of its dogmatism and formalism. Rapport describes this phenomenon – 'the ability to ironise identities and to lead tumultuous lives beyond the conventional' – as 'passing' (2010: 90). Appiah's notion of a 'common culture' – the standard values that are universally recognized in a certain nation (1997: 626) – is also useful in this context. He argues that even those who do not share the common culture (the Sunni ideology) know what it would mean to act in conformity with it, and they probably do this anyway much of the time (*ibid.*). Also, Doja points out that, whenever there is opposition between conventional (Sunnism) and innovative forms of religious life (Alevism), the latter are likely to have to accept compromises with the outside world (2003: 378). Finally, the covert and anti-conformist engagement of Alevi with the Sunni discourse can be compared to Scott's use of the term 'hidden transcripts' to describe the ensemble of all the non-hegemonic, dissident and subversive discourses (Scott 1990: 25) of those who have to find alternative ways of constructing their relationship to the dominant discourse (the 'public transcript'). A much more openly confrontational approach is taken by those who posit Alevism as the authentic form of Turkish Islam, one based on the

proper interpretation of the Quran (Öztoprak 1990, as discussed in Wilson 2015). This discourse directly engages with the hegemonic Sunni narrative and adopts its terminology in order to challenge it (Tol 2009: 21).

Thus, as will be demonstrated from the analyses of my informants' accounts, individual Alevis do exercise agency in that they actively engage in the appropriation, reproduction and reinvention of Alevi belief and practice (Werbner 1994: 212) through a selective use of history and traditions (Massicard 2000). Stewart and Shaw define this process as 'syncretism from below' (1994: 2). Given the extent to which different Alevis claim different self-definitions, there seems to be no single Alevi community except in the eyes of Sunnis (Sahin 2001: 3; Massicard 2001: 20). Following the methodological position adopted by White and Jongerden (2003: 14), this paper engages in a careful analysis of the complex social genealogy of Alevis' perceptions of their own identity that goes beyond mere dichotomies. It will be shown how the ongoing struggle to establish firm principles (Kenanoğlu 2014: 350) within the diverse modern urban environment is reflected in Alevis' everyday experiences (Köse 2012: 576; Erdemir 2005: 948).

Fieldwork in Hacibektaş⁴

My fieldwork started with my visit to the Hacibektaş district, situated in the province of Nevşehir (central Anatolia), where there is a shrine to the founding saint of the Bektashi order, Hacı Bektaş Veli (Schwartz 2008: 94; Wakamatsu 2015: 773). The main *tekke* or Dervish lodge of Hacibektaş has been the belief centre for the Alevi community for centuries (Salman 2005: 34). Like all Sufi orders, the dervish lodge, the headquarters of the Bektashi order, was closed in 1925 and reopened as a museum in 1964 (Massicard 2000), and every year it attracts hundreds of pilgrims. During my brief stay, I visited the Hacı Bektaş Veli complex, where the shrine is situated, and the Çilehane, where, according to *Vilayetname*, the

⁴ During my four weeks in Turkey, I first travelled to the central Anatolian town of Hacibektaş. Even though I was not able to interact with the local people directly, I observed the general settings and the attitudes of people, especially in their places of worship. The main reason why I was not given access is connected with the sensitivity of Alevis' status in Turkey at the moment, due to the lack of recognition of their religious tradition at the national level. For the following three weeks of my stay in Turkey, I was hosted by my friends in the area of Ankara, where I carried out all the nine in-depth interviews. Throughout my fieldwork experience, questions recurred such as how to position myself when interviewing my informants, what terminology to use (mainly with regard to the religious sphere: *heterodoxy/orthodoxy*), to what extent it is legitimate to insist on some possibly sensitive topics (their relationship with the Sunni majority, their political inclinations), etc. (Jay 1969). I have also promised my informants confidentiality and, therefore, I guarantee their anonymity. I have replaced their real names with: Ahmet and Ece (first married couple), Deniz (their son), Gamze and Hasan (second married couple), Gül and Onur (their two sons), Sıla (family friend) and Barış (university student).

Cusenza, Alevi

hagiography of Hacı Bektaş Veli (Melikoff 1998a: 58), Hacı Bektaş Veli went into retreat (Salman 2005: 38). I was accompanied and guided by my friends during these visits. All the photographs below were taken by myself.

The Hacı Bektaş Veli complex

Before entering the museum, my attention was caught by a long and disordered queue of people, some of them carrying basins to collect the sacred water from the fountains situated inside.



Fig. 1. A big statue of Hacı Bektaş Veli in the square before the entrance to the complex.



Figure 2. 'İncinsen de İncitme': 'Even if you are hurt, do not hurt'.

In the first courtyard of the complex, originally there were a number of service structures for the use of the Bektashi community (Castellum Publicus 2014). On top of the Ucler Fountain is a star with six points called Muhr-u Suleyman or 'Seal of Solomon' (Salman 2005: 35). I observed visitors drinking its water, washing themselves with it and collecting it:



Figure 3. Ucler Fountain

The second courtyard is called *Dergah avlusu*, the place where Bektashi dervishes and *babas* lived and performed their religious duties (ibid.: 35). There is a pool directly opposite the entrance that contains no water. On the right-hand side there is another fountain, the *Aslanlı çeşme*, or ‘fountain with a lion’. As my friend pointed out, its water is believed to be exceptionally ‘good’ and sacred in that it has a purifying function.



Figure 4. The pool



Figure 5. Aslanlı çeşme



Figure 6. The second courtyard.

From here we entered the surrounding buildings: the quarters of the head of the refectory, a refectory and a mosque, built in 1825 by Mahmut II upon the abolition of the order, which is still in force today, a source of discomfort for many Alevi (Salman 2005: 35). The mosque was probably built in order to make the *dergah* and what it stood for more acceptable in the eyes of Sunnis (Faroqhi 1976: 188). Each room of the complex was very crowded: the hot weather did not prevent a great number of visitors from paying homage to the *türbe* or tomb of the saint (Schwartz 2008: 94). In general, people's attitudes were very respectful and devotional in the places of worship, whose sacredness they clearly felt. They kissed the jamb of each gateway before entering and carefully avoided stepping on the thresholds, as they are considered holy. Sometimes I could also hear them murmur prayers.



Figure 7. Visitors kissing the gateway's jamb.

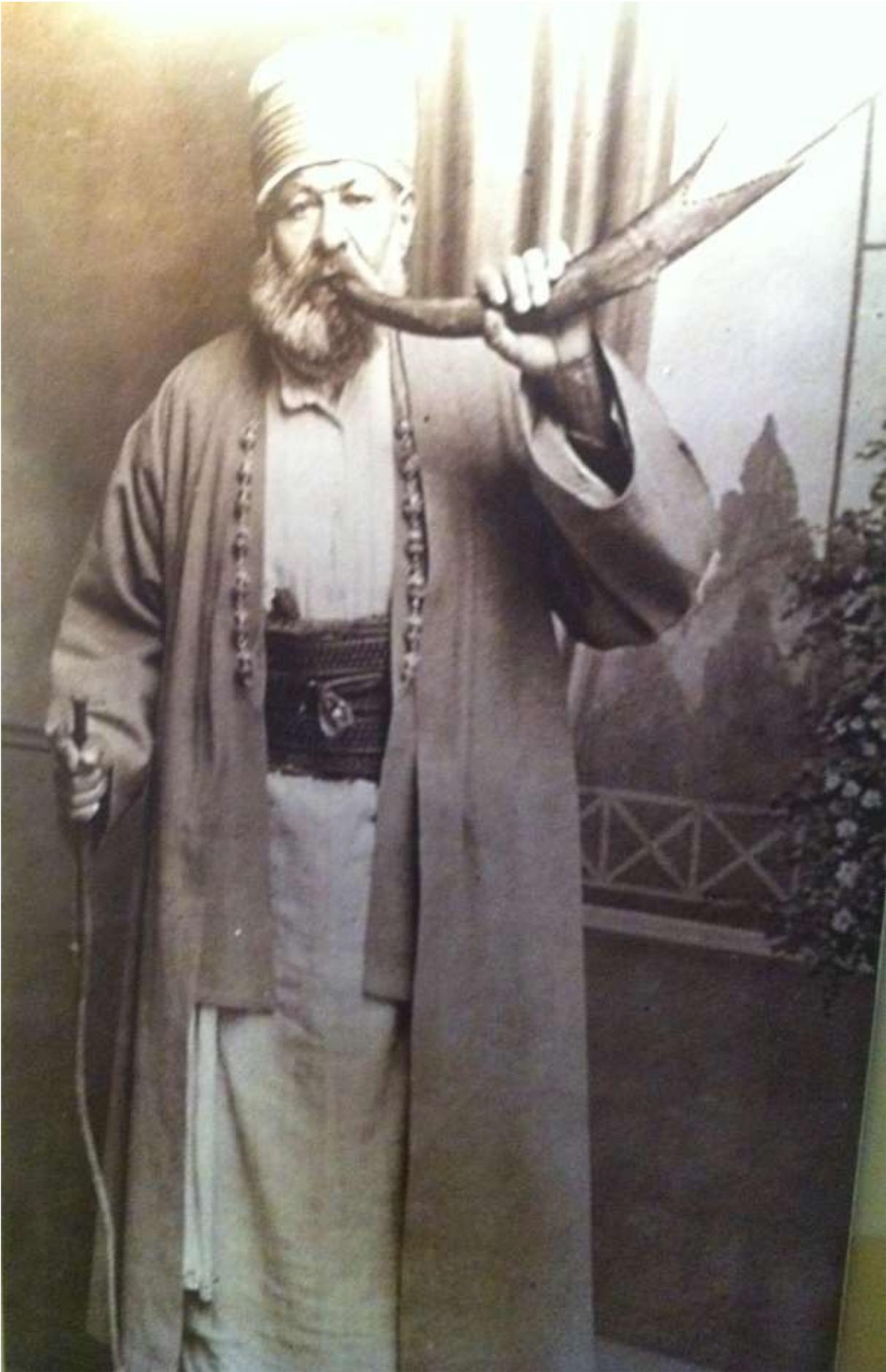


Figure 8. Visitors kneel down to kiss the gateway's jamb.

First, we visited the Maidan (*cem*) room. It is here that initiation, admission, concession and *cem* ritual ceremonies were performed. The portraits of Hacı Bektaş Veli and of other

important Bektashi leaders hang on the walls of the *cem*, and twelve posts with icons of the Twelve Imams are displayed on the wooden divans encircling the room, as are the dervishes' clothing, photographs of *dedes*, musical instruments and various objects:







Figures 9, 10 and 11.

When we reached the Hazret courtyard, I visited the small museum commemorating Atatürk's visit. On 19 December 1919, Mustafa Kemal travelled to Hacibektaş in order to consult Bektashi leaders and receive their support for the foundation of the Turkish Republic (Melikoff 1998a: 275). In the buildings that belong to the third courtyard are also situated the graves of *babas* and *dedes*, as well as the tombs of Hacı Bektas Veli (Pir Evi) and of Balım Sultan, who is referred to as the Second Founder of the order. This is considered the most sacred part of the complex for Alevi-Bektashi practitioners (Harmansah et al. 2014: 354).



Figure 12. The third courtyard

In the premises containing the graves, especially the Saint's tomb, most people knelt down in front of them and mourned their deaths. Many also kissed the tomb and touched the textiles covering it, while walking in a clockwise direction around it. While in the other parts of the complex I could see people engaging in conversations and displaying a relaxed attitude (many were commenting on the ethnographic objects shown there and telling each other stories), there was a quite different and more reserved atmosphere in this context, as if visitors were trying to enter into close, personal contact with the holy figures:



Figures 13 & 14

The Çilehane

My friends also drove me to the Çilehane, called the ‘Arafat Mountain’, on the east side of Hacıbektaş. First we visited the renowned cemetery where Alevi and Bektashi members are buried, located at the bottom of the hill. We then walked through the path and reached the top of the hill, where the Delikli Taş is located. This is a hollow among large rocks where it is believed that Hacı Bektaş Veli went into retreat in order to meditate (Salman 2005: 38).

People were queueing in order to enter the hollow and trying to pass through the hole. It is believed that those who are not able to pass through it are sinful, while those who manage to reach the other side are without sin.



Figure 15. People standing in front of the cave, applauding and praising those who managed to pass through the hole.

Further reflections

The fact that great majority of the Alevis who visit the *tekke* are those living in cities shows how much importance they accord to the saint and Alevi-Bektashi traditions. As Massicard points out (2000: 29), it is mostly city-dwellers who feel the need to ‘re-activate’ local rituals and pilgrimages: the pilgrimage to Hacıbektaş then seems to represent ‘a return to the origins, to tradition’, for urban Alevis. From my observations of people’s attitudes, it is possible to see how visiting these places seems to derive from Alevis’ need to reinforce their own sense of identity, as well as to empower their sense of ‘us’ (Tol 2009: 36). Moreover, in treating the complex as an important and emotionally charged pilgrimage site, visitors are challenging the state’s efforts to run this site as a secular institution (Harmansah et al. 2014: 347).

Results and discussion

‘It’s about humanity’

The focus now shifts to the second part of my fieldwork, carried out in the area of Ankara. As mentioned above, in the urban context the Alevi community is necessarily much more *dispersed* than in rural areas (Shankland 2004: 46). My interest is therefore in exploring the ways in which Alevis relate themselves to their own notion of Aleviness. When asking them to define Alevism and what it means to them, all my informants seemed to share a coherent view:

It is about humanity. Alevilik is more a philosophy rather than a religion. It becomes a way of life, of changing your dispositions towards others. (Ahmet)

Alevism is the way we live. The first thing that comes to my mind is a tolerant, open and positive attitude towards life and other human beings. (Barış)

This emphasis on humanity, on the realm of actual experience and on everyday relationships is central to their understanding of Alevism. Ahmet significantly pointed out that the three principles of Bektashism (‘be master of your hands, tongue and loins’) – the very basis of Hacı Bektaş Veli’s teachings (Shindeldecker 1998) – ‘are about being human and respect [for] other human beings rather than religious obligations’. Sıla insisted on the centrality of universal and unconditional love as the moral guiding force for Alevis when interacting with others:

I call this disposition empathy. To always answer with unconditional love, whatever people’s attitude is.

This refers to the Saint's maxims: 'Don't hurt anyone, even though you've been hurt', and 'Don't forget that even your enemy is human' (Castellum Publicus 2014). Tolerance, openness and respect for others are seen as the very basis of any human relationship. The *Edeb*, the moral code of Bektashism, is in fact based on the purity of heart, self-knowledge, piety measured by life-style, love and forgiveness (Zeidan 1999: 79; Koçan and Öncü 2004: 475). When I was at their house, Gamze and Hasan showed me a very famous image of Hacı Bektaş Veli holding a deer and a lion in his hands in order to make me understand the importance of the message of tolerance and equality at the core of Bektashism: 'Even a deer and a lion can coexist!' (Gamze).



Figure 16. Hacı Bektaş Veli's image in Gamze and Hasan's flat.

Regardless of their age, my informants simply described 'being Alevi' as being *human*, as having the most instinctive and natural disposition towards other human beings. They also insisted on the fact that such a disposition should be inherent to every person:

I respect everyone, that's how every human being should be anyway. Being part of Alevism, I do have that: equality, kindness, honesty, friendship. I do really value these principles. (Ece)

Alevi consider themselves to be honest, correct, straightforward and loyal (Güneş-Ayata 1992: 113). Given such a broad definition of Alevism, portrayed as ‘appropriate behaviour in society’ (Shankland 2003: 8), I then wanted to understand whether my informants feel the need to be part of the Alevi community, to be unified by a ‘common imagination’ (Erol 2010: 377) and to share their experiences with other Alevi. Interestingly, again, their responses expressed a similar view:

I do not feel the need to be part of something. I am happy to say that I do not belong to anything in particular, but to myself. I do not need any specific label.
(Gül)

It was at this point that I started to realize how different is the perception of Alevi identity in the urban milieu, the extent to which the communal ties of the village are considerably loosened (Tol 2009: 182) and how the individual and personal dimension becomes much more central in the definition of one’s identity (Es 2013: 40):

In cities Alevi are separate and independent individuals, although they still remain within the community. (Onur)

Urban Alevi rely much less on those persons and practices that characterise life in the village. (Deniz)

The ‘customary cultural states’ (Rapport 2010: 89) associated with village life are therefore transcended, and Alevi members lead much more independent lives. The urban Alevi community can be described as an example of Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ (2004), where members share the consciousness of being Alevi, while at the same time having an individualistic lifestyle (Vorhoff 1998: 251). Nonetheless, the idea that it is good to behave well towards others in the community does not disappear (Shankland 2004: 43). Gül and Onur’s observations are critical in that they relate to Rapport’s notion of ‘provisional community’: ‘no categorical placement is absolute, and rights inhere in the individual, in Anyone, not in any particular affiliation’ (2012: 8). As already discussed, the Bektashi spiritual philosophy celebrates the person (*insan*), as well as humanity (*insanlık*) (Tee 2013: 4). Not only are humans the very reflection of God, they have become same as God and finally himself: Man therefore becomes the centre of the universe (Melikoff 1998a: 256). It follows that human beings have great responsibilities towards each other (Schwartz 2008: 52). Harmony in the collectivity – in the urban context, ‘the community of human beings’ – can be reached only if such spiritual and moral stability and autonomy have been achieved by each

individual within themselves. In fact, the spiritual experience of God is deeply personal, and the inner focus of worship is highly valued by Alevis (Soileau 2014: 439):

The relationship with God is between the person and God, it is private and intimate. This is pure energy, pure sentiment of love, without the need to be helped by others. It is within oneself that God can be found. (Sıla)

Sıla and Gamze, who keep up ties with their villages because their families live there, insisted on the religious aspect of Alevism, and on the importance of the personal, spiritual path to achieve the highest degree of morality – that is, to become a Perfect Human: *'yol cümleden uludur'*, 'the path is the most exalted of all' (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 69), but it differs considerably for each human being: *'yol bir sürek binbir'*, 'the path is one, journeys a thousand and one' (Gokalp 1980: 750). Human personality is therefore at the forefront of devotion (Schwartz 2008: 51), and individuals 'should act on the basis of what feels most true to them' (Rapport 2012: 129):

We have a saying, *'İnsanı insan yapan kendisidir'*. It means 'What makes one a human is oneself'. (Onur)

Referring to the same expression, Deniz commented:

'You build your own individuality as a human being' – I used to hear this a lot from my grandfather. Alevis use it to say that any free human being is not conditioned by anything.

While they equally acknowledge the importance of self-knowledge as the key to a 'universal, cosmopolitan morality', Ahmet, Ece, Deniz, Hasan, Barış, Onur and Gül de-emphasize the religious connotations of Alevilik. They consider it more as a cultural and philosophical framework, one that emphasises the universality of Alevi culture, the humanity of the person and the way in which it provides an appropriate way to live in the modern world (Shankland 2003: 135) and on which they draw in their everyday lives, using it to assert their identity. Gül and Barış respectively observed:

I do not consider myself a religious person at all, but I call myself 'Alevi'. It means being open, helpful and respectful towards my family, friends... everyone really.

Hacı Bektas Veli said: 'I face humanity'. This is the core root of our Aleviness: humanity and human beings, our kindness towards each other.

The saint's expression, 'My ka'bah is the human being' (*Benim kâbem insandır*), signifies that Alevi pray towards the human person rather than towards a physical structure (Schwartz 2008: 50). All of my informants emphasised their openness as inherent in Alevi philosophy:

Alevi people do not aim at being the dominant discourse in society, they keep their identity respecting others. They are always themselves and loyal to themselves. They do not behave according to specific situations, they are true. (Hasan)

Alevi are very open to exchange and to learn more, they fit easily in any environment because of their very own philosophy and open way of thinking. They keep their ideas, but do not want to impose them on others. (Gamze)

In order to validate her point, Gamze told me about her sister's Austrian husband, who expressed a desire to become Alevi and was welcomed and accepted into the community. She pointed out that there is no pressure from Alevi to make others convert, but there is great openness and acceptance of anyone who wants to come closer to Alevilik.

For Alevi, then, the acceptance and embracing of differences does not imply the annihilation of one's identity or imposing Alevism on others (Werbner 2008: 14). Crucially, this overture to universality is only possible through its legitimization by a local tradition (White and Jorherden 2003: 7): Alevism is therefore thought of as a 'local incarnation of a teleological universal message' (ibid.). Kant's theory of discursivity holds that this drive toward both specificity and universality allows the formulation of a unifying narrative (Godlove 2010: 1043). It is the 'cosmopolitan' attitude that arises from such legitimization that has guided and guides Alevi's behaviour in Turkey, as well as abroad. Most of my informants have travelled extensively, and some of them have lived in foreign countries for several years. I discussed with Ahmet and Ece their experience studying for master's degrees in the US, where they both built very strong friendships with people of different nationalities:

Certainly our open-mindedness goes beyond the national border. Our different background and identity meant nothing to me. (Ahmet)

Moreover, Sila pointed out that:

Alevi are very open towards people of other nationalities. I have many international friends because I do not see them as different but as part of the whole.

These ideas are directly connected to Hacı Bektaş Veli's thought: 'Good people are good people regardless of their language, religion, race' (Yaman and Erdemir 2006: 29; Tol 2009:

51). Despite the changing historical conditions, Alevi refer to the saint's maxims and apply these ethical principles in their everyday lives. 'To be part of the whole', that is, of 'humanity', of 'human society', involves the positioning of all human beings on the same level, regardless of their differences:

We are curious, we believe that there is much to learn from our differences. We have this willingness to accept everyone everywhere in the world. (Ece)

I now turn to exploring whether this tolerant and flexible disposition characterizes Alevi's relations with the Sunni majority, and what dynamics arise from the encounter with 'difference' for the definition of Alevi identity.

The encounter with the Sunni majority

All my informants showed great awareness of the events, discourses and power relations that have been brought to the perceived Sunni-Alevi divide. I came to realize how, in White and Jongerden's words (2003: 13), 'an actor that does not conceive him-/herself as a link of an historical chain cannot elaborate a discourse of legitimisation or a theological vision that gives sense to his/her actions'. For example:

The very historical path of Alevism shows how they have always been and are still perceived as different, as distant by the dominant ideologies (Sunnism, Ottoman Empire). (Hasan)

There are valid historical reasons for which Alevi do not practice *namaz*. For example, since Ali has been killed in a mosque, Alevi do not go to the mosque. (Gamze)

It started with Sultan Mahmud, who wanted to get rid of the Bektashi army and declared that Alevi were not part of Islam. Then rumours started spreading around; people were saying 'Alevi do not pray, they burn candles'. Since then, people's attitude towards Alevi has been the same. (Barış)

My informants often referred to rumours as 'indicators of hostility' that arise 'when moral panic breaks out' (Hamrin-Dahl 2014: 112). My aim was to understand the motivations behind this moral panic, which can be connected to the competing discourses about religious syncretism in Turkey: 'Sunnism and Alevism are commonly defined as "orthodox" Islam and "heterodox" religious group respectively. How do you relate to these categories?'

There is this big debate between Alevi and Sunni about religious practices. Some Sunni people practice only for the form and appearance. But then, in their everyday lives, they feel justified to behave in an inappropriate way. (Ece)

I find religious practices hypocritical. According to Sunnis, you have to do only five things, and once you have done them you become good and God will forgive you. It is not how it works, it is much harder than this: you have to be aware of your actions and feel responsible for them. Being good to other human beings is a hard task, and God cannot forgive that easily. (Ahmet)

It seems that orthodox people need to be constantly reminded that they have to do things to prove their faith to others. But Alevi people say that behaviour, rather than prayer, is important. The way we live, the way we treat people. (Gül)

This criticism of Sunni orthodoxy was expressed by all my informants, especially those belonging to the older generation, who pointed out the need for the Alevi community to strive for the recognition of their religion as distinct from Sunnism:

The imposition of the dominant Sunni ideology in Turkey works effectively through mainstream education: there is no critical thinking left to the young generations attending schools. The educational system must be changed. (Ahmet)

I went to a state school. I was only taught about Sunni Islam in my religious classes. No wonder why Alevi are not accepted, it is because their beliefs are not known and understood. (Deniz)

Since Alevi have ‘great religious tolerance and a non-confessional attitude’ (Melikoff 1998a: 274), the demand for equal representation within the bureaucratic structure of the Directorate (Koçan and Öncü 2004: 479; Göner 2005: 130), and therefore for a pluralist and laic society (Hamrin-Dahl 2014: 114; Massicard 2001: 7), is urgent to them. Atasoy importantly argues that Alevi’s notion of citizenship is inclusive in that it recognizes the existence of multiple and competing public discourses within society (2011: 120). To pursue such an objective requires a ‘collective, coordinated and synchronised switching’ (Elwert 1997: 72), that is, the agreement of all Alevi members on the very definition of Alevilik, including in relation to Sunnism.

The older generation of my informants emphasized the oppositional nature of the relationship with Sunnis, which is to be traced back to the events they experienced at the end of the twentieth century:

Alevi have been discriminated [against] for a long time because of their ideas. The reason for this is that there is a lot of ignorance about Alevism among Sunnis. Alevi are aware of being a minority. (Gamze)

Alevi had to keep their identity secret in order to protect themselves. But in theory, of course, there is no need to hide your identity from the rest. (Sıla)

The ‘us/them’ dichotomy was expressed negatively by Ahmet, Ece, Gamze, Hasan and Sıla. They represented the intolerant and closed attitude of Sunnis towards Alevi as contrasting with the tolerant and open disposition of Alevi towards all human beings (Es 2013: 30). As Martens suggests (2009: 59), it is through this appeal to ‘humanity’ – that is, the use of terms such as ‘human’, ‘modern’, ‘secular’ and ‘tolerant’ – that Alevi distance themselves from Sunnis. As Ahmet, points out, this tendency derives from the discourse that emphasises the discrimination, marginalization and exclusion of Alevi throughout history (cited in Martens *ibid.*: 62; also Karolewski 2008: 455). At the same time, according to Shankland (2003: 169, cited in Poyraz 2005: 505), ‘the emergence of Alevi as a secular community’ is also to be understood as part of their process of integration into the modern nation. It is ‘the very fact of learning to live with a dominant tradition [that] has resulted in the combination of a mystical philosophy and a doctrine of peace and equality’ (*ibid.*: 515; also Tee 2013: 6).

The younger group of my informants expressed a much more embracing attitude towards Sunnis:

To me, Alevism is modernity, modern cultural identity that can suit in every situation. Alevi can shape the future, a perfect modern world, where harmony between Alevi and Sunnis can really be established. (Barış)

Alevi and Sunnis are part of the same thing: the Turkish nation. Myself, just like Atatürk, I believe in the unity of the Turkish society, where differences coexist peacefully. (Onur)

Since the foundation of the Republic, many Alevi like Onur have felt able to identify strongly with the aims of modern Turkey and the secularist position (Shankland 2004: 33; Borovalı and Boyraz 2014: 480). Most of my informants referred to secularism as a fundamental principle of democracy, freedom and equality in society, as well as to the important role of Atatürk as the father of the Turkish Republic (Tol 2009: 196), and of Hacı Bektaş Veli as the leader who ‘turkified’ Asia Minor (Sahin 2001: 182).

The idea that Alevism is progressive and compatible with modernity and that it stands for secularism is prominent among its members (Zeidan 1999: 81): it is the historicity of Alevi’s ‘universal values’ that makes Alevilik ‘modern’ and more progressive than Sunnism (Martens

2009: 70; Vorhoff 1998: 234). The position expressed by Barış, Onur and Gül reflects the ‘patriotic blend’ described by Köse (2012: 585), that is, a discourse that emphasises Alevism’s universal value and validity, as well as praising its authenticity and local significance for the nationalist and secularist Turkish state. It can therefore be said that Barış, Gül and Onur are ‘cosmopolitan patriots’ in that they accept their responsibility as citizens for nurturing the culture of their homes and are mutually committed to the organization of the state (Appiah 1997: 619), while at the same time they maintain their own identity and a *cosmopolitan vision* that translates into a tolerant attitude towards diversity. In fact, Alevis, especially the younger generations, as can be inferred from their accounts, aim at both inclusion into and recognition from society (Atasoy 2011: 120):

There is this thought that the Turkish nation wants to assimilate Alevis in Sunni Islam. But I believe that it is about belonging to the same nation, and sharing the same essence: Turkishness. (Deniz)

Deniz’s perspective is shared by a considerable number of Alevis in Turkey, including the Cem Foundation (Hurd 2015: 92; Wilson 2015: 94). It is based on the idea that Alevilik is a modern (*çağdaş*) synthesis of Islam, Central Asian Turkish traditions and the local culture of Anatolia (Martens 2009: 67; Erdemir 2005: 939). As mentioned above, this interpretation is in line with that of the Turkish government (Atasoy 2011: 108): that is, to characterize Alevis as maintainers of true Turkish culture and folklore (Massicard 2001: 16). Thus Alevis are recognized, but their recognition is limited since it concerns the cultural realm only (Salman 2005: 43), thus assisting in ‘the folklorisation of an autochthonous culture to the service of a nationalist ideology of the state’ (Gokalp 1980: 762). Nonetheless, Alevis seem to embrace this ideology of folklore strategically in order to legitimize Alevism as derived from the nation and therefore to consolidate it as a public religion (Tambar 2010: 675). According to Küçük (2002: 903, cited in Salman 2005: 43), ‘Alevis’ adoption of nationalism and emphasis on the authentically Turkish roots of Alevilik represents a conscious attempt to bring Alevi existence to the fore’. This ‘patriotic turn’ might in turn have been influenced and facilitated by the global discourse about identity politics (Göner 2005: 124; Tol 2009: 12).

Thus, as I could tell from my informants’ different accounts, several factors have to be taken into account in understanding the complexities of Alevis’ processes of identity-negotiation and categorical positioning:

I do not feel the same division from Sunnis like most Alevis. I managed to bring that away in 2014. I lived abroad for seven years without coming back to Turkey, and I

had what my parents taught me. At a certain age, everyone manages to break those chains that they have from their parents. Now, I am at the centre between Alevis and Sunnis. (Barış)

Barış's observation seems to be connected with the notion of the 'multilayered citizen' developed by Yuval-Davis (2003: 309, cited in Atasoy 2011: 109), which refers to the possibility of membership in multiple coexisting social categories. Elwert describes the phenomenon of belonging to different reference groups simultaneously as 'individual situational switching', or *polytaxis* (1997: 71). As Shankland notes, it is not always possible to be clear where Aleviness stops and Sunni Islam begins, since everyday boundaries are unclear (1998: 21).

Gül and Onur emphasised more the role of their personal histories in the 'discovery' of their own identities (Poyraz 2005: 514), rather than their relations with Sunnis:

I can say that I am Alevi, I am Turkish, I am also culturally European as well as Middle Eastern. But ultimately, I am a human being. (Gül)

I lived in different countries, got to know different people and ways of thinking. My Aleviness allowed me to take what I felt closer to myself, and to reject what I do not identify with. (Onur)

Important differences between my informants' perspectives about the meaning of Alevi identity became more visible in the interpretations of their own life experiences, as well as in social conversations (Köse 2012: 577). In fact, it was in the context of collective discussions that their divergent discourses took shape. Shankland's sociological argument (1998: 21, cited in Poyraz 2005: 504) is critical in this respect in that it holds that it is the very fact that individual believers can take up different positions within the Alevi faith ('the way is one, paths are thousand and one'; Tol 2009: 89) that allows their flexibility and dynamism.

Erosion or revival of Alevi traditions? The transition from köy to şehir⁵

Having considered the effects of the encounter with Sunnis on Alevis' conceptualization of their own identity, I will now explore how, in practical terms, Alevi traditions associated with village life have been adapted to the urban context, which inevitably imposes new forms of expression on Alevilik (Poyraz 2005: 505; Tambar 2010: 672).

⁵ In Turkish, *köy* is 'village' and *şehir* is 'city'.

In contrast to the religious obligations that fall upon Sunnis, my informants highlighted the existence of important cultural and religious practices among Alevis:

Alevis have their own Ramadan during the month of Muharran, which lasts around 12-15 days. (Gamze)

The *cem* ritual is very important in Alevi culture. It is a reunion where people come together into these rooms, where they gather and spend time together, they experience community life. It is an atmosphere of tolerance and generosity; there is no selfishness. (Sıla)

Alevi practices are very spontaneous. Every Thursday there is a *cem*, people play instruments and dance. *Cem* does not only mean a hundred people sitting inside together, but it also means having more than one family of Alevis gathering, having tea, sharing the same food, the same story. (Barış)

As already discussed, the *cem* ritual, as well as the institution of *dedelik*, traditionally have the function of enhancing social solidarity and fostering a sense of unity (*birlik*) and love (*muhabbet*) among community members (Koçan and Öncü 2004: 475). Informants belonging to the older generation remembered life in the village as, in Es's words (2013: 32), 'the locus of a pure, authentic, original, and real Alevism'. These institutions are specifically suited to the rural context, as Ece maintained:

I think that the Alevi mode of life – which is a shared community, where everyone is equal, and everyone helps who needs assistance – is applicable only at the village level.

Others of my informants instead sustained the feasibility, as well as the necessity, for Alevi communities to create conditions for the maintenance of their identity in cities. However, they also acknowledged the difficulties encountered in trying to do so:

External pressures have prevented Alevis from being able to participate in community life in cities, and sometimes they have to keep it hidden. (Sıla)

Both Sıla and Gamze displayed great awareness of the limitations of the urban context, since in cities it is no longer possible to recreate the exclusivity and social intimacy that characterize village life (Erdemir 2005: 945; Tee 2013: 9). Nonetheless, as already mentioned, the urban context provided opportunities for the emergence of new Alevi networks that represent novel spaces for identity and community formation, as well as a platform for expression in the dominant public sphere (Sahin 2001: 6; Göner 2005: 119).

These transformations should not be seen as a ‘decline of tradition’ or as the ‘erosion of Alevilik’, but rather as its very rethinking and further revival (Karaosmanoğlu 2013: 584; Bozkunt 2005):

Do we feel part of the community in cities? Yes, we do. Even only within our families we always feel Alevi. Alevi usually live with their grandparents: I used to live with my grandmother, and to hear her stories every day. (Deniz)

There is community life in cities. For example, my brother organizes events, reunions, meetings at his house for a few people. They are very spontaneous and driven by a sentiment of humanity and love. (Sıla)

In villages, *cem* ceremonies are held in the houses of the *dede* or of one of the community members (Es 2013: 28). Sıla’s brother initiative therefore seems to represent an attempt to adapt a village custom to the urban milieu. It can be seen how high intra-community solidarity is in cities (Günes-Ayata 1992: 113; Borovalı and Boyraz 2014: 480). Ahmet and Hasan’s suggestions refer to facilitating Alevi settlement:

I believe that in the urban areas the only way to recreate the *köy*-like community is in the form of a *mahalle* [neighbourhood], as in the case of Gazi, in Istanbul. This smaller dimension facilitates exchanges between people, and allows them to be more cooperative towards each other. (Hasan)

Alevi cultural organizations and religious centres can be built in a way that allows people to sit in a circle instead of looking at each other’s back, so that you can see everyone and have a more intimate relationship with them. (Ahmet)

Indeed, as Hasan notes, there are associative forms in cities that have as their setting the neighbourhood and cafés as places of socialization and community life (cf. Gokalp 1980: 759). Moreover, to sit in a circle and to pray face to face, emphasised by Ahmet, is traditionally an integral part of the *cem* ceremony (cf. Wakamatsu 2015: 785). This illustrates how past practices are reimagined in accordance with contemporary transformations (Es 2013: 34). From my informants’ accounts, it can be concluded that, through the rural exodus, a radical change has occurred in the way in which Aleviness is experienced by its members, as Alevi institutions, knowledge and rituals have assumed a symbolic value for urban Alevi (Sahin 2001: 112). The loss of the ‘mystical function’ of the *cem* can be seen as part of the process of the culturalization of Alevism. In general, young Alevi seem to be largely

independent of the communal values and institutions that structured life in the rural areas (Ballantyne 2012: 3; Tol 2009: 162):

Until she was twenty, my mother lived between village and city, and I have grown up in the city. My peers tend not to keep strong ties with their villages. (Onur)

This lack of familiarity with traditional Alevi customs does not necessarily translate into an abandonment of Alevi identity, which is instead strongly reclaimed as their own ‘culture’ by urban Alevi. The new educated Alevi elite is in fact intensely involved in the Alevi revival (Çamuroğlu 1998: 94; Stewart 2007: 50), and it engages in continuous efforts to formulate a strong set of cultural references and to recreate Alevism with the aim of strengthening it (Subaşı 2010: 174). At the same time, Alevi revivalism is also ‘religious’ in that it is characterized by the reconstruction of community structures, beliefs and rituals (Kehl-Bodrogi 2000; Tambar 2010: 672; Dressler 2008: 281). The challenge for Alevi today within the contemporary urban context is thus to establish a coherent collective identity between the different inter- and intra-generational understandings of Alevism (Köse 2012: 576). Such agreement on a unified position within the community is critical to tackling the ‘sustainability crisis’ in Alevilik (Tol 2009: 239) and to formulating concrete demands to the Turkish government (Borovalı and Boyraz 2014: 487; Özmen 2011: 86).

Concluding remarks

Through my research, I was able to understand why social actors respond to calls for cultural reassertiveness and to explore the mechanisms they use to do so (Sahin 2001: 265). While in the village context Alevi communal and collective identity is embodied in everyday relationships and exchanges, in the urban environment it turns into an acquisition of their own by gaining self-awareness as a group (Göner 2005: 123).

On the one hand, it has been seen how urban migration has given rise to a process of individualization and diversification of the constructions of Alevism (Massicard 2000). This development should be connected to the open, tolerant, flexible and anti-essentialist disposition inherent in the Bektashi philosophy of humanity (Karaosmanoğlu 2013: 583), which Alevi attempt to translate into practice in their everyday lives in the city. This is demonstrated by the fact that my informants interpret the essence of Alevism as an outlook on life rather than a religion (Bilici 2005: 52), as well as emphasizing the individual path as crucial in achieving moral maturity and freedom from any specific tie. At the basis of this

‘cosmopolitan disposition’ lies the idea that what ultimately defines individuality is one’s humanity (Rapport 2012: 5).

It is in this light that the accommodation of traditional roles and practices to the urban environment has been analysed: it derives from Alevi’s tenet that ‘in the human community, as well as in the national community, it is necessary to develop habits of coexistence’ (Appiah 2010: xvii). Reflected in my informants’ accounts is a great curiosity and openness to new exchanges and ideas. In this sense, then, it can be argued that urban Alevi are rethinking their local, cultural and religious traditions for the sake of embracing *otherness*.

On the other hand, this cosmopolitan attitude is still vernacular (Werbner 2006: 496), rooted (Appiah 1997: 618) and localist in that it does not involve a rejection of Alevi identity. The encounter with the Sunni majority and the conflicting modern discourses about the very definition of Alevilik threaten the integrity of the community and make the quest for identity a necessity for Alevi (Hamrin-Dahl 2014: 118). In this article, it has been discussed how, in their urban struggles, members of the imagined Alevi community engage in complex processes of category-negotiation (Erdemir 2005: 945) and make use of common symbols in order to reassert their identity (Massicard 2000). Following Elwert (1997: 81), it is possible to say that Alevi engage in the very adoption of ‘ours’, in the nostrification of their own identity. As illustrated by my observations in the field, pilgrimage to the Hacibektas *tekke* can itself be interpreted as a ritual act for urban Alevi (Harmansah et al. 2014: 355).

All my informants showed they were fully aware of the division between Alevi and Sunnis that characterizes urban life. However, the ways in which each informant engages with the dominant Sunni discourse vary considerably especially in terms of the generation to which they belong. By analysing their accounts, I was able to determine that they converge around both the religious-traditional interpretation (emphasising the Turkish-Anatolian as well as Islamic roots of Alevism) and the cultural-ideological interpretation (based on the syncretic Bektashi philosophy of humanity which gives priority to the individual) (Köse 2012; Tol 2009: 83).

This discussion has also shown how these two conceptualizations of Alevi identity are compatible in that they emphasize both the locality and universality of Alevism as its defining features. In fact, Alevilik is understood by its members as a local resource that allows access to universality (White and Jongerden 2003: 7). To root Alevi’s present claims of identity and recognition in their local specificity and history, as well as in the Bektashi spiritual philosophy based on universal love and individual freedom, allows its legitimization as a distinct cultural and religious structure and as a ‘universally valid and modern form of faith’

(Kehl-Bodrogi 2000). For this very reason, this article has argued that this embracing of Alevilik by its members and its embodiment in the realm of actual experience represent the very basis for the realization of the cosmopolitan project in that it is ‘an aspirational outlook, as well as a mode of practice’ (Werbner 2008: 2).

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A PRELIMINARY OUTLINE OF ANTIKIRRINYA BIRD CLASSIFICATION:
A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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1. Introduction

The main aim of this article is to document the ecological bird classification of the Antikirrinya, an Indigenous Australian population of South Australia. More specifically, I describe the classification provided by Ingkama Bobby Brown or *Wirrkima*, Antikirrinya elder and *ngurraritja* or ‘custodian’ of Ingkama, that is, the area of Ingomar Station, where Bobby was born ‘out bush’ around 1940. The station lies about seventy kilometres south of Coober Pedy, South Australia, and is where Bobby grew up and was taught Antikirrinya ways by his mother’s family, especially his uncle and grandfather.

The Antikirrinya are one of the smallest Yankunytjatjara-speaking groups of the south-eastern parts of the ‘Western Desert’ speech chain (for a discussion of the name Antikirrinya, see Brown and Næssan 2012). Yankunytjatjara² is an endangered cluster of First Nations communilects spoken by approximately 300-400 people, mainly in South Australia (Goddard 1985, Goddard and Kalotas 2002, Næssan 2008).

Ingkama or ‘Ingomar’ has been a South Australian *walypala* or ‘whitefella’ pastoral station (or a pastoral area under other stations) since the late 1870s (Munro 1997: 363). On the eastern boundary of the Great Victoria Desert, the sparsely vegetated *Ingkama* area is a mixture of *tali* (sandhills), *tjintjira* (swampland, marsh), *tjarta* (scrubland) and *karru* (creek-bed) formations. Bobby distinguishes it from areas further north by means of the expression *ngurra talitjarra* or ‘country with sandhill(s)’.

During a 1991-2001 biological survey of the Pitjantjatjara-Yankunytjatjara Lands, which cover 102,650 km² in the north-west corner of South Australia, a total of 140 different Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara names for 107 different species were recorded. Overall, ‘at least 153 native bird species’ have been recorded in the area (Copley et al. 2003: 251-2).

Goddard (1996a: 7) recorded ‘eighty-odd’ bird names from Yankunytjatjara at Mimili, South

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² The names ‘Yankunytjatjara’ and ‘Pitjantjatjara’ are spelled in accordance with standard South Australian orthography, in which single rhotics signify taps and all postalveolars are underlined. Standard South Australian orthography is also used when quoting works using this spelling. Otherwise the orthography employed here is as follows: bilabials p, m, w; alveolars t, n, rr (tap), l; postalveolars rt, rn, r, rl; palatals tj, ny, y, ly; and velars k, ng.

Australia. Finally, the research reported in this article revealed at least 75 species known to Bobby (with 61 specific names for individual species or for groups of birds not further differentiated taxonomically). Not all of them are permanent residents of the Ingkama area, as some come from the coast when food is available, predominantly after rainfall.

The most immediately relevant sources for this paper are Goddard's (1996a) outline of Yankunytjatjara bird names (mainly from Mimili, South Australia), and Copley et al. (2003). Moreover, Goddard's (1996b) lexicographic work includes many Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara bird names. Although the above studies are from north of the Ingkama area, they are highly relevant to the extent that they incorporate bird names and knowledge of Yankunytjatjara-speaking communities. However, prior to Brown and Næssan (2014), very little if any research, and no reasonably detailed study, has been conducted on how Antikirrinya or other Arnangu ('Western Desert people') actually *classify* birds within taxa beyond that of individual names. 'Bird names' henceforth refer to terminal taxa; the smallest units recognized, without any terminological subdivisions (see Bulmer 1967: 6, 22).

2. Methods

This work results from an Indigenous Language Support (ILS) research project (*Tjurlpu tjurta ngurraritja: Antikirrinya/Yankunytjatjara traditional linguistic and ecological knowledge of native birds*), which mainly took place from November 2012 to June 2013. The project, initially suggested to me by Antikirrinya elder Ingkama Bobby Brown, was made possible through a grant from the Australian Commonwealth Office for the Arts, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and administered by the University of Adelaide.³ Field trips were conducted in December 2012 and April 2013. In late July 2013 a week was spent working together in Adelaide, and Bobby provided clarifications and input during several in-depth telephone conversations from February to June 2014. Yankunytjatjara-Antikirrinya was the default language throughout, although Bobby sometimes wanted to explain things in English.

³ I wish to thank the Ngurraritja Aboriginal Corporation and the Brown family, especially Ingkama Bobby and Sammy Brown, to Wallace McKittrick and Davina Egege (then at the Office for the Arts, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet), and to the Project Coordinator, Professor Emeritus Peter Mühlhäusler, and Finance Officer, Dagmar Theil, both of the University of Adelaide. The help, support and encouragement of Greg Wilson has been invaluable throughout. Many thanks are also due to Ulrike Maria at Port Pirie TAFE and to Peter Mickan, Professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann, Rob Amery, Corey Theatre and Catherine Amis of the University of Adelaide.

The best results were obtained when we were out bush, when Bobby would comment on the behaviour of the birds he had seen. Apart from trips out bush, the other main type of investigation took place in various motel rooms, in the office at the University and at my home in Adelaide. These intensive workshops involved Bobby commenting on coloured pictures of various birds and on names I read out from previous work on Arnangu ('Western Desert') knowledge of birds (Goddard 1996a, 1996b, Copley et al. 2003). During workshops, Bobby made drawings of various birds while telling stories and supplying a running commentary on the behaviour, appearance and location of the birds in question, often interspersed with singing, the mimicking of birdcalls and occasional joking.

The use of images as an aid in the identification of bird species is far from unproblematic, as Agnihotri and Si (2012) point out. 'Static, two-dimensional images' (ibid.: 189) may in effect be atypical, under- or over-representing features that are less or more clearly visible when perceiving birds in their habitat. This constraint may have been at work here.

Bobby has frequently told me that he does not know as much as the 'old folks', Antikirrinya people who have now passed away. *Tjirlpi tjurta wiyarringu*, 'the old people are gone', he remarked, and on a couple of occasions he said that he only remembered the names to some extent: *ngayulu ini half-way kulini*, 'I understand/remember the name only half-way'. In one sense (memory strain notwithstanding), he positions himself in between the *ninti purlka* or 'very knowledgeable/experienced' people of the past and the *yangupala tjurta ngurrpa*, 'the young ignorant/inexperienced people' of today. In another sense, his comments clearly show deference to the elders, a characteristic and highly valued traditional way of explicitly devaluing one's own significance. Additionally, Bobby may not have wanted to talk at length about some birds, for example, if some birds and their names were seen as having a special relationship with the *ngurraritja tjurta*, the 'custodians' from other areas. Throughout this process, of course, all the decisions on what and how much to include have been entirely under Ingkama Bobby's control.

3. Classification and nomenclature

The most commonly accepted system of scientific classification is essentially that devised by the Swedish botanist and zoologist Carl von Linné (1707-1778; alternatively Carolus Linnaeus). Influenced by Aristotelian logic and terminology (Cain 1958), de Tournefort's botanical classification (Larson 1967) and John Ray's work (Schiebinger 1993), Linné's voluminous tenth edition of his *Systema Naturae* systematically applied a generic-specific (binomial) terminology to almost 4,400 animal species (ibid.). From Linné's initially

botanical system of class, order, genus, species, and variety (Larson 1967: 1751), the scientific classification of living creatures is now commonly arranged into the main levels of kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus and species, corresponding broadly to Linné's understanding of species as 'in general, the lowest systematic unit' (Mayr 1940: 251), although 'to Linnaeus the species was a unit that could be defined on a morphological basis' (ibid.).

The broader realms of classification among the Antikirrinya and other Yankunytjatjara-speaking people are as follows. Non-edible plants and other foods do not seem to have a generic cover term, whereas edible plants and game are divided into *mai* 'vegetable food' (also 'food' in general) and *kuka* 'game, meat'. *Karlka* 'seed(s)' is one of the important subdivisions of *mai*. 'Additional categories are *maku* edible larvae, *wama*, *tjuritja* nectars and other sweet substances, and *tjau* edible gums produced by some plants' (Goddard and Kalotas 2002: 6). As will be seen below, seeds and nectar are examples of Antikirrinya classification of birds according to their food preferences.

Kuka and *mai* are frequently used as generic markers of class membership – for example, *kuka marlu* 'kangaroo' and *mai karlka* 'seeds' (as 'food'). A more specific term for 'fleshy substance' or 'fleshy parts' is *ilytjan*. This property is shared by all phenomena classified as *kuka*. Although *tjurlpu tjurta* 'birds' are not within the *kuka* taxon as such, they are *ilytjantjarra*, i.e. 'having meaty, fleshy substance', whereas *ngukurn tjurta* 'eggs' are classified as *kuka*.

Essentially an attempt to arrive at an approximate translation of underlying patterns of logic employed in Antikirrinya bird classification, this report draws on comparative data from bird classifications worldwide and employs scientific binomial taxonomy throughout. This last mentioned aspect is commonly encountered in the literature on ethnobiological classification. Seemingly innocuous and motivated by practical concerns, it nevertheless has its dangers. Antikirrinya bird names may inadvertently be read as fundamentally explicable by means of English and scientific terminology in the sense that, say, *nyii-nyii* really means 'zebra finch', which really means *Taeniopygia guttata*. It is important to clarify here that the use of English and scientific terminology is certainly not about juxtaposing them with Antikirrinya terminology and classification in such a way that *walypala* ('whitefella') science provides the unquestioned yardstick or frame of reference. In other words, the meanings, the significance of *nyii-nyii* are neither covered by, nor defined by the 'zebra finch' or 'Taeniopygia guttata'. The meaning of *nyii-nyii* has to do with, among other things, its

relationship to human beings, its skills in building nests (from which Antikirrinya people in the old days learnt how to make huts) and the fact that it shows people the way to water.

4. Desiderata and terminology: classifying *tjurlpu*

What is the distinctive property (or set of properties) of *tjurlpu*? Apart from actual bird names, there seems to be very little specific terminology pertaining to *tjurlpu tjurta* or ‘birds’ in Antikirrinya-Yankunytjatjara. The intransitive verb *paarr-pakarni* (‘flying, taking off’) is generally used for birds, but may now be extended to any airborne phenomenon, aeroplanes as much as eagles). Another intransitive verb, *ngunmananyi* (‘humming, cooing’), typically refers to the sounds made by a *marnpi* (‘pigeon’). Lastly, *tjurnku* (‘down’) refers to the soft body feathers of *tjurlpu tjurta*. Other terms relating to birds seem to be based on a triad of form, function and, last but not least, relative location. What these polysemous or generic terms signify specifically is readily understandable within a communicative context, but the terms in question do not pertain exclusively to birds.

Thus *mulya* is used for ‘beak’, but is also any kind of ‘nose’, ‘snout’, or even ‘face’. The core feature appears to be the ‘front part’ or ‘tip’ of something, and the meaning can be easily extended to a whole range of phenomena (for example, the front part of a car is usually referred to as *mulya*). *Karłpi* is ‘wing’ as well as ‘feather’ and ‘broad leaf’. Broadly speaking, the main distinguishing feature of *karłpi* appears to be something along the lines of elongated, pointed and more or less oval shapes that are parts of larger units. *Pirri* refers to any kind of (bird and animal) ‘claw’, but also a human ‘fingernail’, whereas *wipu* is any kind of ‘tail’, be it that of an animal or a bird.⁴ *Mina* (or *pinytjun*) are terms used for ‘nest’, and *mina* generally refers to any rodent’s or bird’s nest, although birds that are classified as *minatjarra* (‘having a nest’) are clearly distinguished from those who lay their eggs *purnu yurltungka*, ‘inside hollow logs’. Both lizard’s and bird’s eggs are covered by the term *ngukurn*, which also means ‘brain’. These phenomena have in common the fact that they all are roundish in shape and enclosed organic substances.

The *karłaya* (emu, *Dromaius novaehollandiae*) is not a *tjurlpu*, though it does fall within the ‘game, meat’ *kuka* category. As Bobby says, the *karłaya* is ‘too big, and he can’t fly’. Emus lay eggs like *tjurlpu*, but so do lizards. ‘Beaks’ are perceptively distinctive, but in terms of nomenclature the emu has a ‘tip’ or ‘front’ *mulya* like everything and everybody else.

⁴ This generic term is similar to such terms as *kata* ‘head’, *kuru* ‘eyes’, *tjarłiny* ‘tongue’, *tjuni* ‘stomach’, *pilintji* ‘intestines’, *tjuni pilintji* ‘main part of intestines’, *tjarna* ‘back’ and *marna* ‘bottom’. These terms are applicable to people, animals and birds alike.

Gauthier and de Querioz (2001: 21) say that ‘in terms of “key” or “essential” avian characters, feathers have been central to traditional notions of “Aves,” because in the extant biota, at least, all 10,000 species of birds, and only birds, possess feathers...’. To the Antikirrinya, *karlpi* meaning ‘feathers’ is not represented as constituting a distinctive property, while *karlpi* in the sense of ‘wings’ is conceptualised allometrically – that is, the size of *karlpi* relative to the rest of the emu’s body. Thus, *karlaya karlpi wiya*, ‘the emu has no wings’, or, more specifically, it does not have wings of any importance compared to the size of its body.

Thus far, a *tjurlpu* has to be capable of flight and smaller than an adult emu. The next question one may ask is: how distinctive are capacity for flight and morphology (shape and size) as criteria for inclusion in the *tjurlpu* category?

5. Of bats and (other) birds: flight and morphology

Pinytjantjara is listed in Goddard (1996b: 136) as ‘bat’. More specifically, for the Arnangu that Copley et al. (2003: 205) worked with on the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, ‘*pinytjantjara* is used for all microbat species’. The species captured during the above-mentioned survey and identified by Arnangu as *pinytjantjara* (ibid.: 204) were the Chocolate Wattled Bat (*Chalinolobus morio*), Gould’s Wattled Bat (*Chalinolobus gouldii*), Gould’s Long-eared Bat (*Nyctophilus gouldi*), the Lesser Long-eared Bat (*Nyctophilus geoffroyi*), the Southern Freetail-bats (*Mormopterus* spp.) and the White-striped Freetail-bat (*Tadarida australis*).⁵ Ingkama Bobby also uses *pinytjantjarra* for ‘bat’ in general.

Pinytjantjarra has likely developed from the old term *pinytjun* ‘nest’ and the comitative or relator suffix *-tjarra* ‘with, having, using’. These bats are generally said to breed in hollow logs, but *pinytjantjarra* as ‘with, having, using nest’ makes sense given that all of the above species have been found to use the nests of Fairy Martins (*Hirundo ariel*). *Partupirri* (Fairy Martins) build nests out of mud on cave ceilings or other suitably enclosed places, and Schulz (1997: 70) shows that these nests may be used as roosting sites (although it should be said here that the source data did not come from South Australia). The name *partupirri* is used for bats, presumably microbats, in some areas (Goddard 1996b: 129), but I am not aware of any Arnangu using *partupirri* to designate both microbats and the Fairy Martin.

⁵ The other extant species of insectivorous microbats (Copley et al. 2003: 201) in the north-west corner of South Australia are Finlayson’s Cave Bat (*Vespadelus finlaysoni*), the Inland Forest Bat (*Vespadelus baverstocki*), the Inland Broad-nosed Bat (*Scotorepens balstoni*), and the Little Broad-nosed Bat (*Scotorepens greyii*). *Ulpurpurru*, the Ghost Bat (*Macroderma gigas*, now probably extinct), has been excluded from the discussion here for the sake of clarity and brevity.

Several cultures do group ‘birds’ (Aves) together with ‘bats’. Among the Wopkaimin, hunters and horticulturalists at the Fly and Sepik headwaters of central New Guinea, *awon* includes ‘birds, bats and sugar glider’ (Hyndman 1984: 294). The horticulturalist Karam of the Schrader Mountains of New Guinea employ the taxon *yakt*, which encompasses about 180 kinds of recognized and named airborne birds, as well as bats (Bulmer 1967: 5). For the Nage, hunters and livestock breeders on the island of Flores, eastern Indonesia, bats and birds belong together in the category of *ana wa ta'a co*, ‘flying animals’, because in the final analysis ‘bats – like birds (Aves) – possess wings and move in the same way as do birds’ (Forth 2004: 433). The hunter-gatherer Efe of the Ituri forest in northeastern Zaire and their neighbours, the horticulturalist Balese, group birds and bats together under the term *osa* (Efe) and *bali* (Balese), and at least the Efe pointed out that bats were *osa* because they had wings (Arioti 1985: 25-6).

The Northern Paiute of the Great Basin use the taxon *huzíba* for ‘birds’ and ‘bats’. Bats, robins and hawks occur with other *paʔágweiti* (‘high fliers’) in the ‘not used’ category (Fowler and Leland 1967: 386). As seen below, *huzíba* is one of the subsets of *yozi dí* ‘things that fly’ or ‘flying things’.

In some instances, a perceived morphological similarity between bats and non-flying creatures is reflected in naming practices. The name *dshonné* ‘flying mouse’ is recorded among the Chipewyan people of the Lake Athabasca region in Canada (Höhn 1973: 165), whereas *flittermouse* occurs in at least sixteen dialects of English (Skeat 2011 [1911]: 4). In German, *Fledermaus* (‘flying mouse’) is the term for a microbat, and the *Flughund* (‘flying dog’) is a megabat. Similarly, in Norwegian *flaggermus* (‘flying mouse’) denotes a microbat and *flyvende hund* (‘flying dog’) a megabat, whereas in English the latter is commonly referred to as a ‘flying fox’. It seems reasonably clear from this that bats were at some stage considered (or at least represented) as mouse-like, dog-like and fox-like (presumably because of their facial features) in some classificatory schemes.

From the examples above, there appear to be two different patterns of classification in the data, namely the grouping together of bats and birds on the grounds of behaviour, morphology, or both (bats fly and have wings), versus relating bats to the most similar-looking non-flying creature while at the same time designating the capacity for flight in the name (which in effect simultaneously distinguishes a part of the morphology from behaviour and juxtaposes the two).

Classificatory ambiguity seems evident in the last mentioned trajectory. An interesting similar example is seen in Tuladhar-Douglas's comment (2008: 77) that 'the classificatory difficulties posed by bats recur in any number of tropical Asian societies. The problem is made overt in a folk tale cited by Karma Phuntsho from Bhutan (2000, p. 96) in which a bat claims to be either a bird (by showing its wings) or a beast (by showing its fur), depending on the situation'.

Classificatory ambiguity is also evident in the following example. The extent to which the Great Basin Southern Paiute include bats within the taxon *wičici* (commonly used for 'little birds') seems a matter of individual preference. Thus, 'some informants say that they must be birds, because they fly, while others say that they must be related to mice because of their physical appearance' (Fowler 1971: 151). Thus, morphology (body shape and size) and the behaviour of a being may lead to different conclusions within the same community.

Having considered some of the ways in which bats are classified in relation to taxa that more or less inclusive of (and more or less equivalent to) 'birds', it is time to approach the question of whether *pinytjantjarra* (microbats) are considered to be, or to be related to, *tjurlpu*.

Bats are not eaten by Antikirrinya: in fact, Bobby says *pinytjantjarra* are poisonous to eat. Apart from that, I have never heard Antikirrinya give bats anything approaching special symbolic significance. According to Bobby, *pinytjantjarra karlpitjarra munu paarr-pakanytja*, that is, 'bats have wings and they fly'. In this instance, both the morphological property and the associated behaviour are made explicit, whereas the capacity to be airborne is usually implied through the reference to 'wings'. As noted previously, the term *karlpi* covers a fairly broad domain. *Karlpi* meaning 'feathers' is obviously not what is being referred to here; in fact, no Antikirrinya ever drew my attention to the ostensibly distinctive fact that *pinytjantjarra tjurta* have fur. Nor did Bobby mention other morphological properties of bats or their similarity with other (non-airborne) creatures, perhaps indicating that they are considered irrelevant. A distinction based on laying eggs has never been mentioned either, and the only clear reference to behaviour relates to flight. *Pinytjantjarra mungangka paarr-pakanytja* ('bats fly around at night'), and in that sense their airborne behaviour takes place in a temporal sphere similar to that of *piiwi* (Tawny Frogmouth, *Podargus strigoides*), *tjurrki* (Australian Owlet-nightjar, *Aegotheles cristatus*), *wiratju* (Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*), and *wiilu* (Bush Stone-curlew, *Burhinus grallarius*). However, in contrast to the above, *pinytjantjarra kuru pati* ('the bat is blind').

Opinions concerning the classification of bats differ among Arnangu. Greg Wilson (personal communication, April-May 2014) asked two Pitjantjatjara-speaking women in their late forties about this, and one of them, who was working with Greg at the time, said *pinytjantjarra* are *tjurlpu*⁶ but that they are ‘bad’ birds, essentially due to their movements being the temporal reverse of ‘the norm’ regarding sleep and activity. The other, communicating via iPhone, drew attention to the morphological dissimilarities between birds and bats, stating that *paluru pina purlka munu kartirti iri*, ‘it [the bat] has big ears and sharp teeth’, that *tjana* (Arnangu *tjurtangku*) *alatji kulini: mamu palatja*, ‘they (Arnangu [pl + ERG] think like this: it’s evil, that one’. She also remarked *pinytjantjarra mauntalpa nyinapai, walytja tjurta kutju*, ‘bats stay by themselves, only with their own’. In sum, she held that bats are not birds, although they fly.

In early May 2014, Greg met three female Pitjantjatjara speakers at the Central Market in Adelaide. When asked about bats, they did link them with birds, since they both fly.

From the above, it is reasonably clear that behaviour points in two directions: *pinytjantjarra tjurta* stick to themselves, which, together with morphology, is seen as making them separate from birds. On the other hand they do fly, and this, in so far as it is considered a significant desideratum in and of itself, leads to them being *tjurlpu*.

When asked if *pinytjantjarra* are *tjurlpu*, Bobby was consistently non-committal. Sometimes he replied, *tjinguru*, ‘might be’ or *ngayulu ngurrpa*, ‘I don’t know’. That bats have wings, that they fly and that they consequently share two prototypical properties with those in the *tjurlpu* category is unproblematic. However, in contrast to the situation outlined by Forth concerning Nage classification of bats as ethnotaxonomically and symbolically peripheral members of a taxon consisting of airborne creatures (Forth 2009: 143), *pinytjantjarra* were neither clearly classified as, nor overtly distinguished from, *tjurlpu* by Bobby, who did not say that *pinytjantjarra* are (not) *tjurlpu*.

6. Flight and morphology: the case of ‘insects’

Across different cultures, it seems fairly obvious that the scope of taxa including birds (*Aves*) may have a broader or narrower scope than the scientific taxon *Aves*. Says Hunn (1982: 838), ‘often the life form we gloss as “bird” is, in fact, only “quasi-bird,” a monothetic taxon defined in terms of the capacity for flight or a preference for an aerial habitat’. The Cheyenne of the American Plains ‘consider dragonflies and butterflies to be birds, both hatched from

⁶ Note that the spelling of the iPhone message mentioned below has been modified in accordance with the main spelling of this work.

nymphs, and they consider many other birds to be likewise developed from particular nymphic or larval forms, forms which Anglos call snakes' (Moore 1986: 178). The Sahaptin of the Columbia River Basin have a category 'egg-makers', which include 'birds, reptiles, fish, and insects', one of the subcategories of this group being the polylexemic *wayna-waynaʔá*, 'flyers such as birds and insects' (Randall and Hunn 1984: 343).

The Sinama-speaking Samal of Basilan Strait in the southern Philippines have the category *manuk-manuk*, which in its broadest sense 'includes all creatures larger than flies that are adapted to flying' (ibid.: 339). Mosquitoes are excluded, but moths and dragonflies fall within this category. A different example is provided by the Great Basin Northern Paiute, for whom *yozi' di* ('things that fly') consists of two subcategories, namely *huziba* ('birds and bats') and *muibigwaʔniʔyu* ('fly-like things'), which includes butterflies, locusts, moths and flies, all of which are also within the 'not used' category (Fowler and Leland 1967: 386, 392). That the taxon *huziba* ('birds' and 'bats') is distinguished from other flying creatures based on size seems clear from the alternative term for 'fly-like things': *titi' giciʔyu yozi' di*, or 'tiny flyers'.

The above examples, in which some flying insects are either seen as a type of birds or as part of a 'birdlike' group of flyers, seem different from the situation among the Antikirrinya. There is no Antikirrinya generic term corresponding to 'insect'. Instead, a number of flying insects are represented in terminal taxa, for example, *kiwinyiwinyi* 'mosquito', *punpun* 'fly', *piiny-piiny* 'moth', *pinta-pinta*, brightly coloured butterflies associated with men and boys, *ngurtu-ngurtu*, the paler or yellowish butterflies associated with girls, and *karluwartawara* 'dragonfly'. However, despite their wings and capacity for flight, they are not grouped together with or otherwise seen as somehow related to *tjurlpu*.

A *tjurlpu* must be airborne, but not all airborne creatures are *tjurlpu*. Flight, then, is a necessary but insufficient criterion modified in varying degrees with reference to morphology (shape, size, appearance) and behaviour other than flight.

7. Sounds and onomatopoeia in terminal taxa and beyond

Arnangu typically see bird names and the sounds birds make as related. Emphasising the importance of sounds in meaning and the old and everlasting properties of the names, Bobby remarked, 'ini *tjurlpu tjurta irritatinguru*. *Tjirlpi tjurtangku kulira ini tjunu*. The name goes on forever. All the bird names are from the past. After hearing (the birds), the old people named (the birds)'.

Bobby readily distinguished between on the one hand swallow calls about raptors and warnings about approaching predators on the ground, and on the other calls warning that other non-raptors are coming into their territory. Acute sensitivity to bird calls is quite typical of senior Antikirrinya. For them, matter-of-factly distinguishing between a crow coming back to the area where it was hatched and a crow coming from a different area (based on their sounds) is a fairly obvious thing to do.

In a discussion of Pitjantjatjara and ‘Andagarinja’ classifications of sounds, particularly focusing on musical terminology, Ellis et al. (1978: 78) held that both musical and environmental sound is ‘one of the most critical elements in classification by Aboriginal people, probably throughout Australia’. Goddard’s (1996a: 6-7) brief but insightful treatment of onomatopoeia in Yankunytjatjara bird names shows that ‘if the bird has a commonly heard call (or calls), the name is almost invariably an onomatopoeic rendering of the call (or one of the calls). The bird is said to “call its name itself” *walytjangku ini wangkanyi*’ (ibid.: 6). The imitation to which attention is drawn is the mimicking of a call by ‘uttering the name with the appropriate changes to pitch and volume and with repetition if appropriate’, whereas the names themselves, ‘when cited as names, are pronounced without any special effects’ (ibid.: 6-7).

Another mode of imitation is exemplified by Bobby’s rendering of two types of crow sounds. He uses *kaaa... kaaa...* with a deep, low voice to indicate *kaarnka tjurta urlparirranguru*, ‘crows from the east’, also called ‘from Arabana country’ (typically from around Anna Creek), whilst crows from Ingkama and Mabel Creek have calls (*kaaa... kaaa...*) with a comparatively higher pitch and an overall softer quality. The actual imitation of the sounds is different from the name, as applies to several other birds, for example, Bobby’s imitation of the call of *piyarr-piyarr* (Galah, *Cacatua roseicapilla*). It would appear that name-based imitations (imitations with lexemic foci), the names ‘cited as names’ (see above) and imitations in the sense of non-verbal vocalizations should be distinguished from one another.

The name *ararlaparlaparl* (Crested Pigeon, *Ocyphaps lophotes*) is said to come from the sound this pigeon makes when it flies, but most of the names do seem to be based on birdcalls. One of the exceptions is *itirrki tjaru-tjaru* (Masked Lapwing, *Vanellus miles*), which refers to the fact that the bird in question has a habit of moving its head downwards and looking down – ‘down’ is *tjaru*. *Itirrki* was left unexplained, and I was unable to obtain an etymology for it. In general terms, it would be fair to say that the etymologies of some bird names are difficult for Arnangu to explain, or, for that matter, anyone concerned: although

their referents are clearly understood, they are nevertheless to all intents and purposes unanalysable (much like ‘hawk’, or ‘falcon’ for English speakers). These names arguably relate to non-onomatopoeic names in most cases. Both *ngarnamarra* (Malleefowl, *Leipoa ocellata*) and *warlawurru* (Wedge-tailed Eagle, *Aquila audax*) would seem to fall within the unanalysable category, in addition, Bobby remarked that he never heard the *warlawurru* utter any call.

Granted that most names are based on onomatopoeia (i.e. resulting from processes of lexicalizing bird sounds) and that these names are important in identifying the bird(s) in question, there is nevertheless no indication that bird sounds or representations thereof play any role in levels above the terminal taxa.

8. *Nganampa walytja*: our relations

The term *walytja* has several related meanings, but typically means ‘relatives’ and ‘relatedness’. In a broad sense, *walytja* or ‘kin’ relationships occur on three levels as far birds are concerned. *Tjurlpu tjurta* have their own *walytja tjurta* or ‘kin’. Birds may be grouped together in non-terminal taxa which are extended or classificatory family-like relationships, and in addition, some birds are seen as being related to (all) Arnangu.

The birds designated as *nganampa walytja* (literally ‘our family’ or ‘our relations’) are the *kurrparu* (Australian Magpie, *Gymnorhina tibicen*), *kaarnka* (Torresian Crow, *Corvus orru*; Little Crow, *Corvus bennetti*; Australian Raven, *Corvus coronoides*), and *tiil-tiil* (Magpie-lark, or Murray Magpie, *Grallina cyanoleuca*). These birds ‘stay close to the camp’, *ngurra itingka ngarapai*, or, as Bobby noted, they ‘hang around with Arnangu all the time’.

Itirriki tjaru-tjaru (Masked Lapwing, *Vanellus miles*) are not considered ‘our family’, although according to Bobby, *ngurrangka itingka ngaranyi*, *papa inuraku ngurlu*, *pakutjaku mulkuku ngurlu*, ‘they stay close to the camp, because they’re afraid of dingoes, foxes and wildcats’.

The birds within this grouping are otherwise dissimilar; the *tiil-tiil* (Murray Magpie) is the only one among them that makes a nest out of mud. In contrast to the predominantly insectivorous other birds in this group, the *kaarnka* (Crow) is said to ‘eat anything, any scraps of food he can find’, and is often referred to in Aboriginal English as *kapintja* (< English ‘scavenger’). In fact, the *kaarnka* might pick up just about anything it sees, even if it is not food. Thus, *wati/kungka kaarnka* (‘crow man’ and ‘crow woman’ respectively) are used for ‘light-fingered’ people. Metaphorical extensions of bird names provide a means to highlight certain people’s perceived antisocial behaviours.

9. *Tjurlpu tjurtangku tjakultunkupai*: birds that impart messages

As the day comes to an end, it grows darker *mungarringanyi*. The sun is setting, *tjirntu tjarrpanyi*. The sun is about to enter the realm of *munga* or ‘darkness’ and will traverse underneath the world from west to east before returning at *katjarungkarni* or ‘daybreak’. Now it is *wantitja* – just before sun goes down – or *mungawarluru* – twilight, just before night. This is when one has to watch out and listen for signs of dangers, especially those associated with *mamu*, ‘evil spirits’. They come from the west as it is getting darker and lie in wait close to the camp. A little later, they might move around in the dark. ‘When the sun is down’, Bobby said, ‘they’ll get your soul if they can. *Mamu* might be grabbing your soul’.

Not only do the calls of the *titirarra* (also *itarr-itarra*, Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater, *Acanthagenys rufogularis*) and *pirtitja-pirtitja* (also *pititjaku-pititjaku*, Grey Butcherbird, *Cracticus torquatus*) warn about the evil spirits, they attack them and pick on the spirits’ tails with their beaks.

There are several types of *mamu* or ‘evil spirits’. Apart from huge, hairy female (*kungkapan*) or male creatures (*tjangara*) that are known to steal children and eat them, there are invisible spirits who may enter one’s body and cause various mental and physical problems. As seen above, the *mamu tjurta* or ‘evil spirits’ described by Bobby will steal a person’s ‘soul’ *kurrun* whenever they get the chance to do so. If one hears and understands the bird calls properly and stayed inside the hut, one can avoid this, but if the *mamu* is successful, a skilled *ngangkari* or ‘traditional healer’ is needed to go in search of the lost soul, take it from the evil spirit, and put it back into the body of the person in question.

Titirarra and *pirtitja-pirtitja* may be grouped together with *wiilu* (or *wirlu*, Bush Stone-curlew, *Burhinus grallarius*)) in that they all warn about some immediate danger in the dark. Whereas the former two are diurnal, the latter is perhaps more clearly associated with *munga*, the night and the darkness, though not exclusively so, since it is said to also move around during *mungatji-mungatji*, ‘half-way between midday and sundown’.

The call of the *wiilu* (Bush Stone-curlew, *Burhinus grallarius*) is considered specifically to be a warning about *kurtatji*. At times this term broadly refers to one or more enemies, but mostly it concerns the traditional Law assassin, the *tjina karrpil*, literally ‘bound feet’, due to the emu feather shoes worn by these men as they move around, often through the air by means of extremely powerful magic. The importance of knowing whether assassins are close to camp can hardly be overstated.

Piiwi (Tawny Frogmouth, *Podargus strigoides*) is a nocturnal raptor, but different from *tjurrki* (Australian Owlet-nightjar, *Aegotheles cristatus*) and other owls, since it makes nests in tree branches: ‘the *piiwi* is a troublemaker, might trick you’. Its yellow eyes have associations with the dusk, when evil spirits and assassins typically move around. People with ‘yellow eyes’ or *kuru urntarnu-urntarnu* are possibly *kurtatji* (in the case of men) or otherwise potentially dangerous and cannot be trusted, because their eyes signify a link with some of the dangers of the dusk and night.

A second group of birds that communicate vital information to people consists of the *kaarnka* (Crow) and *tjintirr-tjintirr* (Willie Wagtail, *Rhipidura leucophrys*). Bobby did not suggest such subgroupings by referring to clear terminological distinctions, but I nevertheless think the Crow and the Willie Wagtail may be singled out from the others mentioned above in that they do not specifically warn about dangers; rather, they tell news about other people, frequently kin. According to Bobby: *Kulinma! Kaarnkangku nganarnanya wangkanyi. Arnangu kutjupa pika purlka ngarrinyi iluntjikitja*, ‘Listen! The Crow is talking to us. Some person might be very sick and be about to die’. The *kaarnka* (Crow) tells about the illness and death of *walytja* or ‘kin’ living elsewhere. The *tjintirr-tjintirr* (Willie Wagtail) may bring bad news as well, but mostly it imparts messages to the effect that visitors are on their way to the camp.

10. *Purnu yurltungka ngukurn tjunanyi*: (those that) lay eggs inside hollow logs

Birds that lay eggs inside hollow logs are distinguished from birds that make nests *purnungka* or ‘in trees’ and *putjangka* or ‘in the grass’. In fact, birds that lay eggs inside hollow logs are often called *minatjarra wiya* or ‘no nests’, but this also applies to those species that lay their eggs in holes in the ground like the *itirrkijaru-tjaru* (Masked Lapwing, *Vanellus miles*) or among rocks on the ground like the *pirtingkura* (Inland Dotterel, *Charadrius australis*).

The *purnu yurltungka* descriptive tag of nesting preferences mainly consists of *irriyulta* (Wood Duck, *Chenonetta jubata*), *piyarr-piyarr* (Galah, *Cacatua roseicapilla*), *tjiltjiltji* or *tjiil-tjiil* (Budgerigar, *Melopsittacus undulates*), *patil-patil* (Port Lincoln Parrot, *Barnardius zonarius*), *tjulily-tjulily* (Mulga Parrot, *Psephotus varius*), *kuurr-kuurr* (Boobook Owl, *Ninox novaeseelandiae*), *tjurrki* or *tjuurr-tjuurr* (Australian Owlet-nightjar, *Aegotheles cristatus*) and *wiratju* or *tjalku-tjalku* (Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*).

Irriyulta is also a *tjurlpu kapitja* or ‘water bird’. Within *purnu yurltungka* are also four birds that are grouped under *karlka ngalkupai*, ‘habitually eating seeds’ or ‘seed-eaters’: the *piyarr-piyarr*, *tjiltjiltji*, *patil-patil* and *tjulily-tjulily*. The remainder, collectively referred to by

Bobby as *tjurcki tjurta* or ‘tjurcki (owl) mob’,⁷ are all owls, are broadly similar in appearance and are all nocturnal predators (*mungskangka paarr-pakanytja*, ‘flying around at night’).

The *piyarr-piyarr* (Galah) and others in this group are mainly found near marshes, waterholes or along creeks, mostly preferring to lay their eggs in *ankarra* (coolibah trees), but sometimes also in *kurrku* (mulga) trees, at Mabel Creek, Longs Creek and Lake Phillipson.

It seems clear that the heterogeneous grouping together of those birds that lay their eggs inside hollow logs does not actually designate or imply *walytja* or ‘kinship’, i.e. that the birds in question and the groups they belong to are related. This was made clear by Bobby’s remark that the *tjiltjiltji* and ‘tjurcki mob’ are not in the ‘same mob’, although both ‘stay inside hollow logs’, *purru yurltungka nyinanyi*.

People called *tjurcki* (the Australian Owlet-nightjar, *Aegotheles cristatus*) are not thieves but have hidden motivations. They are untrustworthy, sneaky and typically miserly where money is concerned. Basically un-sharing and uncaring, they may also be *pangan*, ‘greedy’. Darkness and its associations with potential danger may be relevant here, probably combined with the fact that the *tjurcki* mostly stays hidden during the daytime. It is then not *uti*, ‘visible, in plain sight’, not even when it occasionally peeks out from its hollow log.

11. *Ngukurn mantangka tjunanyi*: laying eggs on the ground

Birds that lay eggs on the ground are typically associated with *manta uril* or ‘open country’ (with the exception of the *ngarnamarra*, which mostly prefers *tjarta*, ‘shrub land’). These birds are the *pirtingkura* (Inland Dotterel, *Charadrius australis*), *itircki tjaru-tjaru* (Masked lapwing, *Vanellus miles*), *ngarnamarra* (Malleefowl, *Leipoa ocellata*) and *kipara* (also *parrul*, or *nganurti*, Australian Bustard, *Ardeotis australis*). The *pirtingkura* and *itircki tjaru-tjaru* are related, in the ‘same mob’, because they both simply dig a hole for the eggs. The others in this group cover the eggs with leaves (*ngarnamarra*) or place sticks and gravel around them (*kipara*).

Ngukurn mantangka tjunanyi appears to be simply a descriptive tag for nesting preferences and not a close kin grouping.

12. *Tjurlpu minatjarra*: birds with nests

Among the numerous kinds of birds which make nests in trees (often referred to as *minatjarra*, ‘with’, ‘having’ or ‘using nests’), a finer distinction is made between those

⁷ ‘Mob’ is used in Aboriginal English as a plural marker.

making *mina tarrtja* or ‘shallow nests’ and others. The *irtartura* or *marninka* (Black Kite, *Milvus migrans*), *piiwi* (Tawny Frogmouth, *Podargus strigoides*) and *ararlaparlaparl* (Crested Pigeon, *Ocyphaps lophotes*) make shallow nests. These nests are frequently compared with those of the *kaarnka* (Crow) – in a sense, the widely distributed *kaarnka* provides a yardstick, a measuring template for other birds with superficially similar nests, because *kaarnkangu mina palya palyarni*, ‘the Crow makes good nests’, that is, not shallow nests. The nest of the *irtartura* is placed in the same location as Crow’s nests: *irtarturaku mina kaarnka puriny, purnu katungka*, ‘the Black Kite nest is similar to the Crow, it’s high up in the tree’, but Black Kite nests are slightly larger than the Crow’s. The *piiwi* (Tawny Frogmouth) and *kurrparu* (Magpie) build quite similar nests in the very same locations, but *kurrparu* nests are a little deeper.

The *nyii-nyii* (Zebra Finch, *Taeniopygia guttata*) is among those species known to make good nests, and their association with the huts of people is quite specific. *Tjirlpi tjurta karnkungka nyinanyi, nyii-nyii puriny*, ‘The old people would sit inside the hut just like the Zebra Finch’. Also, *tjirlpi tjurtangu karnku palyarni, tjurlpu tjurtangu ngaparrtji mina palyarni. Tjamula arangka, tjamula kamila arangka, alatji. Tjurlpu tjurta ninti tjamula arangka*, ‘The old people are making huts, the birds for their part make nests. Such are the ways of the grandfathers and grandmothers. The birds know the ways of the grandfathers’.

For both birds and people, what takes place is ultimately a realization of ‘the ways of the grandfathers and grandmothers’, *tjamula kamila arangka*. These ‘ways’ are traditions and techniques to be taught and learned. What to use for a nest, and how and where to build it, are important parts of what birds are taught by their elders. According to Bobby, the very first building of a *karnku* (a brush hut made with *mulga* wood branches and spinifex grass) happened a very long time ago when Arnangu saw the nests of the *nyii-nyii*:

Arnangu tjurta mina nyakula tjurlpu nyii-nyiiinguru nintirringu. *Nyii-nyiiingku mina putjangka karlpingka palyarni. Tjanpi wartatjarra mankula munu tjarukutu tjunanyi*, ‘As Arnangu saw the nest, they learned from the Zebra Finch. The Zebra Finch build [domed] nests with grass and feathers. (People) put the spinifex grass downwards with the roots on (so water can trickle down)’.

Nest location, size, shape, building materials and the relationship of nests to people are important features which in varying degrees constitute similarities as well as differences within the category of *tjurlpu tjurta* and between birds and people.

Two of the remaining groupings (*marnpi tjurtaku walytja* and *tjurlpu kapitja*) mainly have to do with typical habitat preference, while a subcategory of the *tjurlpu kapitja* (‘water

birds’), called *ngurntiwarlarta* (‘long neck’), is primarily defined with reference to morphology. This is also the case with the last group considered here, the *tjuku-tjuku tjurta*, or ‘small birds’.

13. *Marnpi tjurtaku walytja*: ‘*Marnpi mob*’, or the Pigeon family

‘*Marnpi* (pigeon) mob’ is an example of a group identified lexically with reference to its typical or main members – the *marnpi* are the Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*) and the Diamond Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*). The other members of this group are the *ararlaparparl* (Crested Pigeon, *Ocyphaps lophotes*), *purntaru* (Little Button-quail, *Turnix velox*) and *parmparnparlarla* (Crested Bellbird, *Oreoica gutturalis*). Birds within this group stay in the grasslands, the spinifex grass and the saltbush areas (i.e. *putjangka*, *tjanpingka*, *irriyangka*)

14. *Tjurlpu kapitja*, ‘water birds’, and *ngurntiwarlarta*, the ‘long neck family’

The taxon *tjurlpu kapitja* – *kapi* ‘water’, *-tja* ASSOCIATIVE – obviously refers to habitat, and contains the subcategory *ngurntiwarlarta*, ‘long neck family’. That the last mentioned is a subcategory is evident from the fact that the ‘long neck family’ are all ‘water birds’, but not all ‘water birds’ are in the ‘long neck family’. Within *tjurlpu kapitja*, only *irriulta* (Wood Duck, *Chenonetta jubata*) and *tjurnatjarlirli* (Black-tailed Native-hen, *Gallinula ventralis*) are not classified as *ngurntiwarlarta*. In the old days, Bobby’s *tjamu* or ‘grandfather’ told Bobby about another type of duck, said to be smaller than the *irriulta* but otherwise quite similar (and a *tjurlpu kapitja* like the Wood Duck), but he was unable to remember the name.

Around Ingkama there were more or less permanent water sources at Eight Mile Creek, Twelve Mile Creek and Mabel Creek, and one of several waterholes was located on the *manta uril*, the ‘plain’ or ‘flats’ north-east of the Stuart Range. Groups of the Ingkama region ‘used to live there long time, see. Lived there all their lives, swamp everywhere around them’. These ‘swamps’ or ‘claypans’— *tjintjira* – were important sites for collecting bird’s eggs, particularly those of the *irriulta* (Wood Duck, *Chenonetta jubata*). However, when possible, the *tjurlpu kapitja* stay near open water.

Bobby remarked: *irriti nganarna ngukurn manu purnu yurltunguru. Manta ipangka pauningi, taarnpaingka*, ‘In the old days we used to get eggs from the hollow logs and boil them in the hot sand next to the fire so that they wouldn’t burst’. Whenever they took eggs, customary behaviour was to leave half of them or so; at least within Bobby’s group it was considered bad to take all the eggs.

Ngurntiwarlarta is one out of two taxa in which morphology (body shape and size) is clearly lexicalized. More precisely, the *ngurntiwarlarta* taxon (*ngurnti* ‘neck’, *warlarta* ‘long’, translated by Bobby as ‘long neck family’) is based on allometric reasoning concerning the size or shape of a body part in proportion to the rest of the body. Only two members of the ‘long neck family’ have additional names. *Taparangu*, a name covering the White-faced Heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*), and the White-necked Heron (*Ardea pacifica*) are associated with swampy areas around Ingkama and with Lake Phillipson further north-west, the other name being *kurr tjal* ‘Swan’ (*Cygnus atratus*). Apart from these two names, the domain of the *ngurntiwarlarta* includes the Australasian Grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*), Australasian Darter (*Anhinga novaehollandiae*), Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), Great Egret (*Ardea alba*), Hoary-headed Grebe (*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*) and Pied Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax varius*). Several of the members within the *ngurntiwarlarta tjurta* category would be absent for a considerable time: typically, species like Australian Pelican, Pied Cormorant and Swan occur well south and south-east of the Antikirrinya lands. However, as Kingsford noted (1995: 422), several water birds may occur in arid Australian regions.

The *tjurnatjarlirli*, ‘Swamp Hen’ or ‘Black-tailed Native-hen’, are permanent residents in swampy areas or *tjintjira* and ‘go together’ with *ngurntiwarlarta*. This may have something to do with the neck of the *tjurnatjarlirli* not being quite as long as the other members of *ngurntiwarlarta* relatively speaking, but longer than that of the ‘Wood Duck’ or *irriyulta*.

Allometric patterns are not in themselves decisive for inclusion in the *ngurntiwarlarta* taxon, since ‘long neck family’ is a subdivision of *tjurlpu kapitja*. The *kipara* or ‘Australian Bustard’ (*Ardeotis australis*) does have a fairly long neck, but it is not *tjurlpu kapitja* and consequently not in the ‘long neck’ family. *Kipara manta urilta ngaranya*: ‘*kipara* lives on the flats, in open country’.

The *wiilu* or *wirlu* (Bush Stone-curlew, *Burhinus grallarius*) and *piil-piil* (Yellow-throated Miner, *Manorina flavigula*) represent different cases to the above, both being associated with swampy areas, but they are nevertheless not classified as *tjurlpu kapitja*. The *piil-piil* is grouped together with others that have nectar among their food preferences, i.e. *wama ngalkupai*, ‘eating nectar’ or ‘eating sweet substance’. The *wiilu* is different from the *tjurlpu kapitja* birds in that it ‘flies around at night’, *mungangka paarr-pakanytja*. In addition, it is a type of messenger bird, as seen above.

This broadly corresponds to Bulmer’s (1967) discussion of how the cassowary is classified by the Karam of Papua New Guinea: its ‘special taxonomic status’ is a ‘function of

something broader, a special status in culture, or cosmology, at large' (ibid.: 19), especially that of its relationship to human beings. Readily observable features of morphology and habitat are not all there is to it; at the 'upper level' of Karam taxonomy, 'culture takes over and determines the selection of taxonomically significant characters' (ibid.: 6).

15. *Tjurlpu tjuku-tjuku tjurta*: small birds

Many Antikirrinya-Yankunytjatjara speakers, Bobby included, use *tjuku-tjuku* for all things small, be it size, amount, or young and small creatures. Thus, while all chicks and a number of other phenomena could be termed *tjuku-tjuku*, the group of *tjurlpu tjuku-tjuku tjurta* relates to the size of adults. In contrast to the Great Basin Shoshoni distinction (Hage and Miller 1976: 483) between *kwinaa* '(large) birds' and *huittsuu* ('small birds'), the Antikirrinya 'small birds' constitute a marked category in that there is no contrasting lexicalized taxon of 'large birds', although certain birds may of course be described as 'big'.

This group mainly consists of the birds represented within the *mininy-mininy* and *mirrilyirrilyi* groups, i.e. predominantly the Pardalotidae and Maluridae families. Of the *mininy-mininy*, the smallest are the Chestnut-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza uropygialis*) and the Weebill (*Smicronis brevirostris*), which have an average adult weight of six grams and a wingspan of 15 cm (Higgins and Peter 2002: 292, 458), followed by the Inland thornbill (*Acanthiza apicalis*, seven grams and a wingspan of 15 cm on average) and the Yellow-rumped Thornbill (*Acanthiza Chrysorrhoa*, nine grams and with a wingspan of 17.5 cm) (ibid.: 437, 506). The heaviest of the *mininy-mininy*, which is twice as heavy as the smallest in this group, is the Southern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*), weighing 12.5 grams, but with a wingspan of 17 cm (ibid.: 550). Most of the *mirrilyirrilyi* are not that much bigger or heavier than the *mininy-mininy*: the Variegated Fairy-wren (*Malurus lamberti*) and the White-winged Fairy-wren (*Malurus leucopterus*) both weigh seven to eight grams and have wingspans of 14.5 and 13 cm respectively (Higgins et al. 2001: 311, 348), whereas the Splendid Fairy-wren (*Malurus splendens*) has an average weight of seven to eleven grams and a 14.5 cm wingspan (ibid.: 294). The heaviest of the *mirrilyirrilyi* are the Striated Grasswren (*Amytornis striatus*, 18 grams, and with 18 cm wingspan) and the Dusky Grasswren (*Amytornis purnelli*), which has a weight of 21.5 grams and a wingspan of 17 cm (ibid.: 414, 447), or three times the weight of the smallest species in this group.

Over half the *tjurlpu tjuku-tjuku tjurta* (6/10) are below 10 grams and have an average wingspan below 15 cm. Taking into account the larger and heavier species within this group;

one could safely say that all *tjurlpu tjuku-tjuku tjurta* are below 25 grams in weight and have a wingspan below 20 cm.

Interestingly, there are other birds that would fall below these values, for example, the *nyii-nyii* or Zebra Finch (*Taeniopygia guttata*), which Bobby called *tjurlpu tjuku-tjukukutu* ('a very small bird'). My understanding is nevertheless that the *tjurlpu tjuku-tjuku tjurta* group only consists of the *mirrilyirrilyi* and *mininy-mininy* taxa and that *nyii-nyii* is not actually included. What seems to be the case here is that all the birds in this category are small, but not all small birds are in this category. Explicitly, morphology is the desideratum. However, typically, unstated knowledge modifies the property of 'smallness'. The *nyii-nyii* may to some extent be in a category of its own (albeit unnamed), since *nyii-nyii tjurtanku kapi nintini* ('the Zebra Finches show [the way to] the water'). Also, it is associated with a very important *inma* or 'song, ceremony with song' (Ellis 1982), and, as noted above, is thought to have inspired or taught Arnangu in the old days how to make a *karnku* or brush hut. More generally, feeding preferences do seem to play a part. The *mininy-mininy* and *mirrilyirrilyi* eat both seeds and insects, whereas the *nyii-nyii* is predominantly grainivorous. Another tiny bird not within the 'little birds' category, the *tirtu-tirtu* (Striated Pardalote, *Pardalotus striatus*), with an average weight of 12 grams and a wingspan of 18 cm (Higgins and Peter 2002: 69), also has somewhat different feeding preferences from the *mininy-mininy* and *mirrilyirrilyi* groups, feeding on insects and nectar, *wama*, but not on seeds.

16. Concluding discussion

In so far as it is considered necessary, the task of separating overt taxa from other descriptive devices that are not taxa as such is far from simple, nor is the extent to which one can distinguish covert categories (unnamed taxa) from taxonomically overt categories (for a discussions of covert categories in biological classification, see Berlin et al. 1968, Atran 1983). Some of the groups of birds above are terminologically realized as phrases with characteristic ellipsis, though they represent typical ways of talking about these groups. Groups of birds not named by single nouns broadly correspond to the taxonomy patterns of some American First Nation languages. Drawing on Hupa and Sahaptin data, Valenzuela (2000: 11) mentions that 'categories that are usually named by monolexemic nouns in other languages tend to be coded by plurimorphemic (nominalized) verb forms or even by complete sentences'.

Contrary to the claim that 'the taxa which occur as members of the same folk ethnobiological category are always mutually exclusive' (Berlin 1973: 260; see also Berlin et

al. 1973: 215; Atran 1998: 548-9), a bird within one grouping may have memberships in other categories, as seen above. Those that lay eggs inside hollow logs may or may not be seed-eaters, nocturnal predators or a *tjurlpu kapitja*, a ‘water bird’. The above corresponds quite closely to Forth’s statement (2004: 427) that it ‘is by now fairly well established that speakers of a single language can employ a variety of conceptual criteria in defining and categorizing natural kinds, and, moreover, that, within a single culture, the same animal categories can participate in several classificatory schemes...’.

The most important groupings of *tjurlpu tjurta* appear to be birds seen as kin to Arnangu, followed by storytelling or messenger birds. As we saw above, the *kaarnka* (*Corvus* spp) is both *walytja* or ‘kin’ and a messenger. Both these groupings deal with the birds’ relationship to human beings and are based on their typical proximity to camps as well as behaviour. Spatial and behavioural patterns also combine when it comes to birds that lay their eggs in hollow logs or on the ground, the latter being distinguished from those that have nests in the grass like the *purntaru* (the Little Button-quail, *Turnix velox*). The above, and those that dig burrows for their eggs in riverbanks – the *ruurl* (*luurn*) or Sacred Kingfisher (*Todiramphus sancta*), Red-Backed Kingfisher (*Todiramphus pyrrophygia*) and *ruurl* or *tirrun-tirrun* (Rainbow Bee-Eater, *Merops ornatus*) – constitute a minority of birds in terms of nesting preferences and locations. The majority, simply put, make their nests in trees. Location, or habitat, is again important concerning the ‘*marnpi* (pigeon) mob’ and the *tjurlpu kapitja* ‘water birds’, whereas the ‘water bird’ subcategory of *ngurntiwarlarta* or ‘long neck’ is defined in terms of allometric morphology. The last grouping outlined above consists of the morphologically defined *tjurlpu tjuku-tjuku tjurta*, ‘little birds’ or ‘small birds’, although feeding preferences also distinguish these from other species. Other groupings or distinctions, some mentioned above, are *mungangka paarr-pakanytja*, ‘flying at night’, versus *karlarlangka paarr-pakanytja*, ‘flying during the day’; *karlka ngalkupai*, ‘seed-eating’ and *wama ngalkupai*, ‘nectar-eating’. Note, however, that categories of eating habits concern typical or habitual preferences and do not imply that the relevant birds necessarily eat this food always.

Most of the groupings considered here refer predominantly to space. This is connected to the concept of *ngurraritja*, ‘someone that belongs to a place, traditional owner, custodian’ (Goddard 1996b: 102). Translations I have heard from Bobby and other Arnangu emphasise this belonging, specifically that *ngurraritja tjurta* belong to and come from a place, ‘from the country’. As we saw above, some birds are said to have their own *tjukurr* (‘Law’) and to have

been taught *tjamula kamila arangka*, ‘the ways of the grandfathers and grandmothers’, from their elders. This is a continual process, and the teachings extend to people.

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SOCIALITY AGAINST THE STATE:
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF PIERRE CLASTRES

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Abstract. Clastres ‘de-substantializes’ the state, which is not ‘the Elysium, the White House, the Kremlin,’ but ‘an actualization of a relation of power.’ There is no reason, therefore, to believe that, in a Durkheimian mood, he has reified society. Even though he makes no use of the concept, I believe there is already a concept of ‘sociality’ at work in Clastres: hence, the idea of sociality against the state. In the three sections of this study, I show the role played by ‘society,’ the ‘state’ and ‘against’ in Clastres’s writings. In this way, I aim to demonstrate that his ethnography is filled with indications about how to deal with some of the continuing dilemmas of anthropology, such as: how can we avoid methodological individualism without becoming spellbound by a transcendental holism or vice-versa? How can we erect models of intentionality without a subject? How can we conceive of social relations without a society? And finally, how does the ‘objectivity’ of sociality work through the ‘subjectivity’ of persons-in-interaction?

‘... something exists in absence.’

Pierre Clastres, 1974

1. Towards a Minor Shakespeare

Carmelo Bene is fond of losers. In rewriting two classic plays by William Shakespeare – *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III* – he conducts a similar kind of ‘surgery’ in each.² In the first, he prematurely ‘amputates’ the gallant Romeo from the original story; in the second, he removes all the male lead characters apart from Richard III himself. This shoves Power off-stage, literally: the power of the families in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the apparatus of the State in *Richard III*. By applying a ‘minor treatment’ (Deleuze and Bene 1978: 96) to a ‘major playwright,’ Bene unleashes potentialities that had remained unexplored in Shakespeare, since something always exists in the apparent absences.

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² This is how Deleuze describes the theatre of Carmelo Bene (Deleuze and Bene 1978: 97). The comments that follow are mostly based on Deleuze’s observations concerning Bene’s *Richard III* (ibid.: 85 ff.).

How does one apply a ‘minor treatment’ to a ‘major author’ in such a way as to uncover potentialities otherwise unexplored in his or her work, as well as so many becomings prematurely aborted? Deleuze provides a ‘formula’ in explicating the outcome of Bene’s dramaturgy: one begins by extirpating all the elements of power – in language, in gestures, in representation, and in the represented. One abolishes History, the ‘temporal marker of Power,’ and extinguishes structure, its ‘synchronic marker, a set of relations between invariants’ (ibid.: 103). What is left? Everything, replies Deleuze. Thus, ‘operation by operation, surgery against surgery, one conceives (...) how to ‘minorize’ (a term used by mathematicians), how to impose a minor or minorizing treatment, to extract becomings against History, life against culture, thought against doctrine, fortune and misfortune against dogma’ (ibid.: 97).

What sense could there be in ‘minorizing’ an author already deemed ‘minor’? In actuality, “minor” and “major” do not designate intrinsic characteristics of the authors in question, but “operations” or “surgeries” to which their texts are subjected (Goldman 1994: 32; Vargas 2000: 260). Following Deleuze and Guattari’s argument about languages, even English – despite its universalistic ambition – is open to ‘minor’ uses: Black English and other American ghetto dialects corrupt its constants and any supposed homogeneity (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 2: 47-8; Deleuze and Bene 1978: 98-102).³ However, far from rarely, the dogmas and rules of ‘royal science’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 26) and the petty demands of our ‘theoretical brandings’ inhibit ‘minor readings,’ possible even in the case of authors deemed to be ‘major.’ The disciplinary (in all senses) use of their more comforting texts smother any subversive threat: let us receive the soothing balm of the positivism of the *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté*, rather than the disturbing and fluid ‘rosaceous’ method of the *Mythologiques*. It is perfectly understandable why so much more effort is unleashed in the domestication of ‘minor authors.’ If they trouble the canons of our ‘royal science,’ let it subject them to aseptic corrective readings so we may sleep like angels. Unfortunately, some among us suffer from acute insomnia.

What point is there in returning to the work of Pierre Clastres? The question recalls

³ In the case of Deleuze and Guattari, citations have been translated into English from the Brazilian editions of their books. All other citations refer to the original books. In the case of originals in French or Portuguese, the citations have also been translated into English.

another, one repeated a thousand times in the reader of *Mille Plateaux* with the cadence of a refrain: ‘why keep returning to primitive peoples, when the issue is our own lives?’ (Deleuze and Guattari *ibid.*, Vol. 3: 84)? François Châtelet provides elements for a reply in claiming the absolute contemporaneity of studying the history of philosophy. The reference to the past, he asserts, permits a desacralization and demythologization of the current discourses of power (Châtelet 1976: 34). In sum: a deterritorialization.

Although anthropology has always looked to exorcise the perpetual threat of evolutionism, this has not prevented it from casting a typically evolutionist eye over its own history (Goldman 1999: 9), as though ideas are born, ripen and die and could be neatly organized in pigeon-holes: evolutionism, functionalism, structural-functionalism, structuralism, contemporary fragmentation, etc. However, ideas don’t die – ‘Not that they survive as archaisms’ – Deleuze and Guattari remind us. ‘Ideas can always resume their usefulness, precisely because they were always useful, but in the most varied actual modes’ (1997 [1980], Vol. 4: 14). This implies, therefore, taking the anthropological program seriously enough to enable an ethnological appraisal of the discipline’s own history, registering differences, and registering them precisely for ourselves and for our actuality (Goldman 1994: 23-4). This is what Châtelet recommends for the history of philosophy: ‘the reference to the past allows us to think of our actuality (and who knows: imagine our future) through the *differential factor*’ (1976: 40, author’s italics). Thus, ‘concepts developed in specific historical circumstances – that is, during intellectual (political) debates with precise dates, inserted in mental structures distinct from our own and possessing different codes – ... can be imported to another epoch, to another system of rationality, and remain in operation, functioning as decisive factors of intelligibility’ (*ibid.*: 51). A genealogy of ideas as a critique of the present thereby acquires sense: the approach suggested by Châtelet allows at one and the same time the comprehension of philosophical statements; the precise rules of production, dated, which gave rise to them, and a distancing from the reality in which we are immersed, to which we can import concepts that will function as grids of intelligibility and, perhaps, as a guide to our political action (*ibid.*: 49, 52).– a ‘spatial view’ of philosophy, which transforms history into a *geography* of ideas.

In this way, concepts can be uprooted and deterritorialized and, reterritorialized in the future, can supply grids of intelligibility for other realities and other authors.

Clastres himself had already suggested a similar path in an article in which he exposes the paradox of ethnology and what he believes amounts to its only way out: ‘Between Silence and Dialogue’ (1968b). Ethnology was born as a science in thrall to a certain humanism, whose ‘reason’ refused any alliance with the ‘strange tongues’ of the mad and the savages: Artaud among the Tarahumara (ibid.: 35). However, it defined itself as a branch of knowledge *about* those peoples it would prefer to see excluded:

The paradox of ethnology is that it is at once a science and a science of the primitives; entirely disinterested, it achieves, more than any other activity, the Western idea of science, but by choosing as its object those found the furthest from the West: the surprising thing in the end is that ethnology is possible! (ibid.: 36)

While it may be possible, there is a price: by claiming itself to be a *discourse on* primitives, it carries in its wake all the arrogance ‘of the most foolish product of the 19th century, scientificism’ (Clastres 1978: 167).

Since paradoxes corrupt organicity *from within*, a viable escape route needs to be sought: as the only ‘bridge’ spanning the tragic divide between the West and the savages, ethnology should cease *discoursing about* primitives and look to establish a *dialogue* with them (Clastres 1968b: 37). This removes from the stage the distanced ethnologists, dictating from Sirius marriage rules, food taboos and norms of social avoidance for ‘their’ natives. No more metaperspectival and geometrical premises, the point of view of all points of view, from where the anthropologist would proudly look down on ‘his’ or ‘her’ societies. As dialogue, anthropology is produced alongside, with, next to. It forms a bridge – and a two-way one. Immersed in state forms, we can easily comprehend that indigenous societies resort to powerful mechanisms to inhibit the full-blown development of the former – which are already there and function, present in their apparent absence. Likewise, and inversely, indigenous societies provide us with the grids of intelligibility allowing us to comprehend the action of anti-state forces among ourselves, suppressed but likewise present in their apparent absence. Everything is in everything and reciprocally, in Donzelot’s delightfully apt expression (cited in Carrilho 1976: 155): State among the Indians; anti-State among ourselves; Clastres in the dilemmas of contemporary anthropology and vice-versa.

No author is unique, and Clastres is no exception. As we know, the illusions and risks of the ‘author function’ are manifold (Foucault 1969), transforming the writer into a unit, his or her work into a unit – in both cases, isolated islands, eternalized

Trobriands, awaiting a biographer to translate their supposed equilibrium. Neither work nor author are closed and self-sufficient monads however, and excessive contextualizations, as Vargas reminds us, ‘hem ideas into the time and place in which they emerged’ (2000: 27), inhibiting graftings capable of allowing these concepts to pollinate other territories.

Clastres’s ethnography provides us with lines of flight enabling escapes from some of the dilemmas of contemporary anthropology. While the linguistics of Sapir and Whorf suggested a certain ‘semantics of culture’, as though a correlation necessarily existed between linguistic and cultural structures, and the linguistics of Saussure and Trubetzkoy inspired a ‘syntax of culture’, with language and culture being seen as actualizations of immanent rules presiding over the organization of both systems, Clastres offers us an escape route in the form of a third modality, namely a *pragmatics* of culture. ‘From this third point of view,’ Goldman writes, ‘the aim is not to apprehend codes on the basis of their internal organization (privilege of syntax) nor of analyzing them according to their relations to the referents to which they refer (privilege of semantics), but of seeking out the specific modes through which these codes are actualized, played or manipulated in the concrete reality of each particular society – a kind of “pragmatics”, therefore’ (1999: 20).

Not that Clastres allows himself to fetishize a particular conception of the ‘person’ as an individual, something non-existent among the Guayaki. In identifying the concern with *praxis* as an increasingly prominent feature in anthropological studies from the 1980s onwards – providing them with a degree of unity, perhaps – Ortner does not fail to point out the evident, and also unresolved difficulties arising from this shift in approach, deriving precisely from the nature of the interaction between ‘practice’ on the one hand and ‘system’ on the other (1984). Indeed, how does ‘practice’ engender a ‘system’ and a ‘system’ engender ‘practice’? In the end, we are forever faced with the same dichotomies, the same pairs eternally held to be exclusive: the ‘all-powerful society’ and the ‘manipulating individual.’ However, as Ortner indicates, ‘the study of practice does not comprise an antagonistic alternative to the study of systems or structures; it is, rather, their necessary complement’ (ibid.: 146, 147). Not the ‘system’ *or* ‘practice,’ but the ‘system’ *and* ‘practice.’

In Guayaki ‘pragmatics,’ Clastres finds the line of flight escaping the paralyzing

dualism of 'individual' and 'society.'⁴ The precise challenge seems to be how to construct models of intentionality without subjects? How to avoid personifying society, turning it into a mega-subject? How to escape methodological individualism without falling into a kind of transcendental holism, or vice-versa? How to think of social relations without society? Or, put otherwise, namely in terms more in line with the following discussion: how does the 'objectivity' of sociality operate by means of the 'subjectivity' of people-in-interaction?

Like Bene, I'm equally fond of 'losers.' Hence, it is not my intention to discuss the legitimacy of the readings typically made of Clastres's work by his detractors: they are perfectly valid, for sure, but just not the most interesting. Indeed, there has been a tendency to banish the work of Clastres to a remote corner, extirpating it from the corpus of royal science, with its demands and politics (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 24 ff.), and transforming him into a 'minor author,' a 'loser'. In a sense – an ironic sense, of course – I shall take this tendency to paroxysm: his exile deterritorializes him, allowing us to recover his work from a new perspective, free of the strait-jacket of the narrowly Durkheimian reading. For this reason, I shall 'minorize him' even further, extirpating his work from one of its central concepts – 'society' – not so much from a desire to convert him into a 'winner,' but simply because the 'rules of the game' appear lacking in sense.

Freed from the constraints of the concept of 'society' *à la Durkheim*, which some analysts insist in foisting upon it, Clastres's work can start spinning on other axes – like the tragedies of Shakespeare liberated from Romeo and the powerful male figures of *Richard III*. All we have to do is select other passages and other developments than those that sustain the traditional approaches, thereby allowing us to identify unsuspected potentialities in Clastres's writings – for example, a particular conception of 'sociality,' in the meaning given to the term by recent British anthropology (Gell 1999; Ingold 1996: 55-98; Strathern 1988) – which, in truth, were always there, present in their apparent absence.⁵

⁴ For a provocative debate concerning the actuality or obsolescence of the concept of 'society' – and its excrecence, that of the 'individual' – see 'The concept of society is theoretically obsolete' in Ingold 1996: 55-98.

⁵ I have no intention of disrespecting here one of the canons of ethnology through the hasty attribution to 'our native' – here, Clastres himself – of concepts which have nothing to do with him. Rather, my hypothesis is that a certain conception of 'sociality,' *in operation*, already exists in his ethnography.

In sum, the present reading, while not necessarily being interesting, is at least *interested* in Clastres, a reading that is willing to accept his points-of-view, and a political reading, for sure, as all readings are.

There is Clastres the sociologist, Clastres the political philosopher, Clastres as the ethnographer-in-becoming, all simultaneously and reciprocally, which makes the division of this article into discrete sections highly artificial.⁶

The first part of this study charts a genealogy. It inspected tradition and demanded precautions: royal science was always lying in wait. The aim was to quickly map the transmutations (Châtelet 1976: 52) undergone by the concept of ‘society’ in the horizon defined by the works of Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss.⁷ My hypothesis is that the healthy exercise that Clastres performs of ‘approaching and moving away from’ Lévi-Strauss need not imply re-establishing Durkheim.

When the genealogy threatened to turn into an arborescent stratum (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 1: 54, 88, 89), I undertook the first flight and aborted the root, converting it into a radicle: we return to aspects of political philosophy in Clastres. In actual fact, the treatment he gives to the ‘state’ allows us to pursue a complementary deterritorialization of his own concept of ‘society.’ The state, claims Clastres, ‘is not the Elysium, the White House or the Kremlin’ (1978: 166), but the ‘effective actioning of the relation of power’ (1976b: 115): this is what enables us, for example, to assert that the state exists among the primitives, present in its apparent absence.

At this juncture, the third, rhizomatic flight emerges: ‘the rhizome is an antigenealogy’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 1: 20). By placing Clastres’s conception of the state against his notion of society, both concepts uproot themselves, allowing us to perceive both as sets of relations: socialities, machines of subjectification with no externality in relation to the people who engender them and are engendered by them. Identifying in what Clastres ‘does not say and yet is present in what he says’ (Deleuze, cited in Goldman 1994: 379), we shall re-encounter, over the course of this work and throughout his work, his ethnography.

⁶ On the ‘roots,’ ‘radicles’ and ‘rhizomes’ used to divide this work into sections, see Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 1: 13; Vol. 5: 220.

⁷ This exercise will be deliberately succinct, since its purpose is not to embark on an ambitious critical survey of the works of Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss, but to mark the difference – and the ‘novelty’ – of Clastres’s concept of ‘society’ in relation to these authors.

2. Roots: 'Society' in Clastres, Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss

Durkheim contributed to a certain canonization of a state-form of thinking in sociology. Deleuze and Guattari record that, in the *Timaeus*, Plato contrasts two models of science – one of the Identical and the Uniform, the other of Becoming – only to discard the latter very swiftly (1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 36). The first legal and legalist model highlights constants, reasons through theorems and axioms, and looks to subtract operations from the conditions of intuition in order to convert them into 'concepts' and 'categories': this is the royal science, a state-form of thinking. However, there is always 'a Palestinian, a Basque and a Corsican' to challenge the sense of security thus acquired. Meanwhile, the second model operates with variables rather than constants, reasons through problems and, instead of occupying the stable, eternal and identical, opts for becomings and heterogeneity. To essences, it prefers events, accidents and transmutations. The 'polished binarisms': gift and commodity; status and contract; *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*; affective reasoning and instrumental reasoning; organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity; individual and society – true stopping points that are so characteristic of state science – end up in the latter case being discarded in name of a logic of flows passing between points, *intermezzos* in continual movement. Opposing this, however, was Durkheim's favouring of large-scale collective, binary, resonant and over-codifying representations, which established a school of followers (ibid., Vol. 3: 98).

In *French sociology*, Lévi-Strauss shows how the entire Durkheimian system can be related to the individual/society pairing (1947 ff.). Hampered by antimonies from one end to the other – the finalism of consciousness versus the blindness of history; sociology versus psychology; the logical sense of 'origins' and 'elementary forms' versus genealogy; moral norms versus sensual appetites; concepts versus sensations; the sacred versus the profane (Lukes 1973) – the Durkheimian edifice looks to surpass the inevitable ambiguities that arise in the process by determining intermediary levels of collective reality (Lévi-Strauss ibid.). However, he vehemently rejects the adoption of a similar attitude at the individual level. Yet, in Lévi-Strauss's opinion, it is precisely the delimitation of these intermediary levels, such as unconscious thought, which enable the transposition of the apparent opposition between individual and society. Refusing to face the question head on, Durkheim persists in the ambivalence of the pair, a fact which traverses his theoretical constructions as a whole.

In fact, the individual/society distinction comprises an especially opportune tool in Durkheim's endeavour to define an autonomous domain for sociology. This independence was particularly desired in relation to psychology and philosophy. Working a series of epistemologically innocuous substitutions (full of implications at the ontological and political levels; Vargas 2000: 140), Durkheim looked to free his reasoning from the metaphysical notions then in vogue – such as God or Kantian *aprioris* – resorting to concepts which struck him as cloaked in far greater scientificity. As a result, the categories of logic and the ideas of God and totality acquired extralogical – or more precisely, sociological – matrices. It is society, he argues, which is found at the root of classificatory systems, concepts such as totality and divinity and the classical philosophical concepts. However, the conquest of a supposedly autonomous domain for sociology in the field of scientific knowledge demanded a high price, namely the radical splitting of individual and society and the (imperial) prevalence of the latter over the former. This inaugurated a tradition whose difficulties would be inherited wholesale by anthropology and from which it has only very recently become aware and worked to extricate itself (Viveiros de Castro 1996: 518, 521; Ingold 1996: 57 ff.).

An explanatory key for everything, 'society' in Durkheim thus ends up naturalized and itself remains unexplained. As Gianotti, quoted by Vargas (2000: 158), carefully observes, at bottom there is no epistemological difference between the God of the spiritualists and the 'society' of Durkheim: both comprise the ultimate foundation, attributing rationality to everything, and beyond which no question is justified. There is consequently a marked irony in the fact that Durkheim's extreme sociology viscerally depends on its excrescence, the individual. It could not be otherwise in fact: the difficulty arises precisely from the supposition that entities such as individual and society exist and lead an independent, autonomous and external life in relation to each another. Durkheim's 'society' betrays the emancipatory aims which the scholar daydreamed for his discipline. Impure, as it could not fail to be, society depends on individuals since it is itself thought of as a mega-subject endowed with wishes, a conscience, a personality, a being and a soul, even (Lukes 1973: 11, 236, 523, 526). And, surprisingly enough, it is devoid of life. It is van Genneep who writes:

I fear that M. Durkheim, despite his apparent respect for ethnographic data, appreciates only metaphysical and, moreover, scholastic conceptions; he

attributes true reality to concepts and words. Deprived of the meaning of life – that is, the biological and ethnographic meaning – he transforms living entities into scientifically dissected plants, as though in a herbarium. (cited in Lukes 1973: 526-7)

A plane can point in two directions (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 4: 54-5). In its first version, the plane remains hidden. At each instant, it ensures that the given is given, but the plane itself hides, and nothing can be done apart from inferring it or inducing it – simultaneously or sequentially, in synchrony or diachrony – on the basis of what it agrees to reveal. Teleologic, it functions as a mental principle, always in a supplementary direction ($n + 1$) to what it effectively reveals. It is a plane of transcendence, par excellence: ‘it may be in the spirit of a god, or an unconscious aspect of life, the soul or language’ (ibid.: 54). In the second version of the plane, there no longer exist forms or developments of forms, subjects or formation of subjects, structures or geneses, only relations of movement and stillness, speed and slowness of elements still not yet – or never to be – formed. This is a plane of immanence, par excellence: here one knows only of longitudes and latitudes, velocities and hecceities, affects and individuations without subject, forming collective assemblies (ibid.: 55).

The structuralism of Lévi-Strauss depends fundamentally on a plane of transcendence. In searching to circumvent the difficulties of Durkheim’s propositions on the social origins of symbolism and substitute them for the thesis of the symbolic foundations of the social, Lévi-Strauss resorts to the notion of the unconscious. The obligations to give, receive and return, concrete exchanges and their mystical and affective concrete bases (Lévi-Strauss 1950: XLVI), rocks of the social world in Mauss, become mere appearances in Lévi-Strauss, in denouncing the operation at a deeper level of the unconscious. In exchanges, Lévi-Strauss argues, there are more than the things exchanged (1967: 520): as reflexes of the operation of the principle of reciprocity, exchanges testify in the cultural domain to an unconscious natural structuration, responsible for the emergence of symbolic thought (Simonis 1968: 35). Exchange, reciprocity and communication, in increasing levels of abstraction, occupy a central place in Lévi-Strauss’s theoretical edifice in so far as they allow the inherent contradiction of symbolic thought, the perception of the same as belonging to self and other, to be overcome and enable the ‘dialogue’ between the two. Here we have the bases for a new humanism making possible the anthropological exercise itself.

But what, then, are the conditions of possibility of this anthropology, concerned, in Kantian fashion, with the conditions of possibility of life in society? What, in order to function, does it find itself forced to exclude? Here we encounter a very particular relationship to ethnography, transformed into a tool for accessing the universal unconscious. The liturgy of Lévi-Strauss suggests a circle in its doubly progressive and regressive reasoning: in response to concrete cultural diversity, the analyst should seek out constants which provide clues to the system of social structure under study (ibid.: 170ff.). However, the investigation doesn't stop there: once these constants have been verified, the scholar may *think* cultural diversity and extract from it constitutive pairs, whose relation of opposition characterizes the structure of the unconscious. Meanwhile, closure of the circle lies in demanding the return to the concrete lived world. Here, though, something is lost – because something is always lost – and the return ceases to be eternal.

What are lost are history, time – which is never found again – and the lived world. There is little point, however, in attempting to anaesthetize the evident effects of ethnography, transforming its data into a mere manifestation of a structural unconscious – a form of surpassing, but only on this plane, the antinomies of Durkheimianism, especially between individual and society, and relating it to the cerebral binary matrices which make Man out of men and submerge culture in nature. In this way, man really does end up naked. However, to a certain extent, this procedure also strips the clothing off the king.

‘Naked as a worm’ except for ‘the boot – I would have been unable to walk barefoot and feared the snakes – and a thick leather belt which held my 38 in its holster. [...] It was with this bizarre equipment that I started to march’ (Clastres 1972: 146). This is how Clastres relates his decision to free himself of clothes when he plunged into the forest along with a group of Indians. Perceiving that his clothing would prevent him from keeping up a quick pace alongside his companions, Clastres decided to go naked. Here we can detect a kind of Indian-becoming of the ethnologist, a real condition of possibility for an anthropology which doesn't produce discourses *about* alterity but constructs itself halfway, in an eternal *intermezzo*, an ever-renewed effort of deterritorialization which makes us strangers not only in strange lands but also, and in an even more radical sense, in our own.

The centrality accorded to ethnography in his work – magnificently illustrated by the *Chronique des Indiens Guayaki* – explains the slow uprooting from Lévi-Strauss. Although Clastres starts where Lévi-Strauss had stopped – with naked men (Verdier in Abensour 1987: 25), we are not dealing with the same men. Following the example of Elena Valero, captured while still a girl by the Yanomami, with whom she lived until, when adult, she decided to flee the tribe and fascinate us with the report of her years lived among the Indians, what Clastres undertakes is a savage ethnography: instead of just remaining *before* the indigenous world, he also journeys *within* it (Clastres 1969b: 34). In place of the savage mind, we are presented with a savage ethnography and a savage politics.

As a result, the hero of the report changes (Verdier in Abensour 1987: 26). The gods beat their retreat (ibid.: 35) at the level of the narration itself: there is no longer a perspective of perspectives, Sirius, the proud ethnographer who extracts statements from his informants with forceps. In spite of the fact that Clastres makes no attempt to mask his presence in what he narrates (Dadoun in Clastres 1972: 292) – even speaking at times in the first person (Lefort in Abensour 1987: 184) – those who really speak, act and claim centre stage in his ethnography are the Guayaki (Verdier in Abensour 1987: 26), who, very much alive, ‘acquire a subjectivity generally excluded from anthropological analyses [...] they have passions, they are active’ (Goldman and Lima 2001: 308). Clastres is a field man (Abensour 1987: 7) wishing to be a chronicler: no trace of the desire to build a ‘system of universal explication, to which all social formations, past and present, reveal their secrets’ (ibid.: 44). ‘I don’t develop programs,’ he writes; ‘I am content with describing’ (cited in Cartry 1978: 49). To questions like ‘what does this mean?’, ‘how is this possible?’ or ‘what is this used for?’, he counter-poses another, less ambitious question: ‘how does this function?’ Indeed, as he proposes, ‘the Aché are what they do’ (Clastres 1972: 209).

Through the Aché, his investigative strategy appears to nomadize (Deleuze in Clastres 1972: 297). Forever in search of lines: of conjunction, of disjunction, of flight. A reading of the ‘The bow and the basket’ (1966), for example, suggests a first line of conjunction: *men-hunters-forest-bow-prey*. This line calls up another, this time a line of disjunction: *women-bow*, since women are forbidden to touch bows. This in turn introduces another line, now one of conjunction again: *women-domestic tasks-encampments-basket*. From this point on, the text inflates the lines; eventually, however, they explode in a line of flight. Especially if compared to the relative good

fortune of Krembegi, the misfortunes of Chachubutawachugi, reported by Clastres in 'Life and death of a pederast' (1972), illustrate the point well. The perspective of the line of flight, which enables abandonment of the 'territory' (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 224), favours a certain analytic richness, not only because it accentuates the 'order' of the society in question, but also because it spares the scholar from having to constrain his or her informants with strait-jackets. Krembegi is a *kyrypy-meno*, an anus-lover-maker, a pederast. The Guayaki are not aggressive towards him, as long as he makes no claims to being a hunter, a man. Among the Guayaki, a man is only a man vis-à-vis a woman, and Krembegi faithfully observes the limits arising from this fact; he carries a basket rather than a bow; and his sexual partners are his brothers, in a metaphor of incest which confirms for the group that true incest, between a brother and sister, threatens the social body. 'Krembegi is the Aché world upside-down, but this still does not make him the counter-order of the existing social order (...) [he comprises] an inverted image, but still an image, of order and "normal" rules' (Clastres 1972: 219). Chachubutawachugi does not enjoy the same fortune. Although unable to hunt, he wishes to remain in the universe of masculinity. His obstinacy in occupying a third position, between male and female, which in any rigorous sense does not exist, provokes resistance on the part of the Guayaki, who find him ridiculous and, at best, deserving only of pity. 'A pathetic inhabitant of an impossible dwelling place. This is what makes him "invisible", he is elsewhere, nowhere, everywhere' (ibid.: 217). And yet Chachubutawachugi indeed *exists*, and his existence, although almost subliminal, finds a space in the pages of Clastres.

Described in this abstract way, warns Deleuze (in Clastres 1972: 297), this method of investigation, which proceeds by lines – of conjunction, of disjunction, of flight – loses much of its dynamism, and there is a risk of its progressive character vanishing. By means of this composition in the form of irradiation, a local theory of the group is developed, piece by piece, segment by segment (ibid.). There is no need for a pre-existing totality – a *society* in Durkheim's sense – whose parts would be duly put together. Instead of seeking out structures, Clastres simply accompanies what the Indians do and 'follows the path of the savage nomads' (ibid.).

The incidents of Guayaki life thus become absorbed into a plane of primary intersubjectivity, which pertains to the sociological and the psychological domain, and neither of them, at the same time, blurring the boundaries between the two disciplines

until they completely disappear. Clastres writes:

The constant preoccupation of the Indians is to use the event from individual history as a means of restoring tribal unity, as a pretext for resuscitating in each of them the certainty of constituting a community. [...] Hidden here are a personal ethics and a philosophy of society which proclaim that the fate of men is only established on the horizon of the collectivity and demands that each one renounces the solitude of their self, the sacrifice of private delight. (1972: 41)

‘Echoes’ of the last page of *The elementary structures of kinship* (Lévi-Strauss 1982 [1967]: 537)? Undoubtedly, but only up to a certain point.

De près et de loin. The dialogue which Clastres knew how to maintain with Lévi-Strauss never translated into subjection: always so near to the Lévi-Straussian problematic, and paradoxically always so far. Some identify in Clastres’s attempt to distance himself from Lévi-Strauss an eternally lurking Durkheim. It is certainly true that the actual vocabulary used by Clastres sometimes appears to reify *society*, bordering on voluntarism; this is precisely what happens with his more ‘popular’ articles, such as ‘Society against the state’ (1974b). However, the excessive esteem for a possibly inadequate vocabulary and the slippery reasoning found in some of his articles only hinders access to alternative readings. The distancing from Lévi-Strauss does not necessarily imply a re-establishment of Durkheim, especially since, most of the time, and particularly when producing ethnography, Clastres avoids the simplifying dichotomies of the ‘individual versus society’ kind and proposes no form of exteriority between the ‘primitive social machines’ and the ‘forms of subjectification’ which they operate. In the text ‘The return to enlightenment’, Clastres himself, in rebutting the critique of Birnbaum, reflects on the distance separating him from Durkheim:

[For Birnbaum] it is a matter of establishing that ‘the society against the State appears (...) as a society of total constraint’. [...] ‘Social control’ is exercised here in absolute form: it is no longer society against the State, but society against the individual. Ingenuously, Birnbaum explains to us why he knows so much about primitive society: he has read Durkheim. (1977a: 149)

Structuralism’s difficulty in accounting for rites is well known (Clastres 1978: 160). This ‘grand discourse of anthropology’ (ibid.: 158) was developed with another purpose: its concern centres on kinship systems and mythological systems. In both its analysis of kinship and its analysis of mythologies, however, structuralism renounces

the study of the *place of production* of kin and myths: society (Abensour 1987: 9). 'What is eliminated, suppressed from structuralist discourse [...] is concrete society, its mode of functioning, its internal dynamic, its economy and its politics' (Clastres 1978: 158). Here the 'savage ethnography' of Clastres makes the difference, and this is really the fundamental distinction between Lévi-Strauss and Clastres: the former is preoccupied with the logic which allows society to function, the latter with the logic of society as it functions. Lévi-Strauss, writes Clastres, produces a 'theology without god [...], a sociology without society' (ibid.: 160). Perhaps this is also the real reason why Clastres had to use the word 'society', which here doesn't betray any Durkheimian inclination. What we find in his savage ethnography are functioning societies, social machines in operation, which, on the basis of the specific forms of subjectification which they engender and which are engendered by them, prevent the emergence of exploiters and the exploited, dominators and the dominated, and therefore act *against* economy and *against* the state.

Clastres's first essay, 'Exchange and power: philosophy of the indigenous chief' (1962), launches a programme of work to which he remains faithful throughout his career, a program which appears inscribed in a typically Lévi-Straussian problematic. In studying the place of the chiefdom in primitive societies, Clastres certifies that the 'exchanges' between the chief and the group are made up of the same elements whose circulation, according to Lévi-Straussian theory, institute society – words, goods and women – which would appear to indicate the profound nature of the questions raised by power. Here, though, Clastres does not establish any kind of reciprocity between the chief and the group: words and goods trace a one-way flow, invariably from the chief to the group, while women go in the opposite direction. These therefore involve 'terms' that do not easily fit into the category of 'signs' which found communication. Noting that this involves a chief without power, Clastres expresses surprise that the group bestows its chief with the privilege of polygyny. Why, if they are not forced to do so, do the Indians gratuitously transfer one of the most valuable of goods to the chief, namely their women? The impasse reveals a fundamental aspect of politics, present even in the 'powerless power' of indigenous chiefs: power is against the group. The chief benefits from an excess of women, and the words and goods which travel in the opposite direction are insufficient as any form of compensation. The article 'The primitive economy' (1976a) provides additional explanations. The chief's family unit, bolstered by the 'extra arms' of his 'extra women,' enable the production

of the goods which the group expects to receive from him: this because the chief *owes* the group. He owes words, which explains the importance of his oratory skills (and the speeches, always ignored, will make it clear to the chief that he does not possess a voice of command); he also owes goods, which explains his ‘forced generosity.’ Further still, the debt shows where the power in primitive societies really lies: in the group, which subjects the chief to the condition of being eternally in its debt (ibid.: 140).

In place of reciprocity, debt. In place of exchange, warfare. Differences from Lévi-Strauss – and, definitively, differences which make a difference. The ‘Copernican revolution’, to which Clastres invites us in ‘Copernicus and the savages’ (1969a), demands that we think of ‘debt’ and ‘warfare’ positively and not as reflections of a lack – of faith, of laws, of kings – which would condemn primitive societies to a state prior to the emergence of politics. Debt makes evident the place of politics in indigenous groups by producing, in one and the same movement, a chief without power and a society without a state, and hence without a political body hovering over it. It is the same aim which pursues the productive machine and the war machine of primitive peoples, both safeguarding the singular totality of primitive societies – that is, maintaining them entirely homogeneous and preventing the emergence of the One, the State, the distinction between a chief-who-orders and a group-which-obey (Clastres 1977b: 191-2).

The primitive productive machine pursues an ideal of autarchy, since it operates according to a centrifugal logic, just like the war machine (ibid.: 194-5). Pitting groups against each other, armed conflicts forestall their unification and allow each one to maintain its singular totality against the unifying principle of the One, the State: primitive societies demand an upside-down reading of Hobbes. For this reason, society against the state is a society-for-war (ibid.: 187, 201). This is precisely where its positivity lies, which prevents Clastres from developing an *exchangeist* theory of warfare and characterizing it, in Lévi-Strauss’s wake, as a simple negation of exchange, as an exchange which failed (ibid.: 186 ff.). Once more, the negation of reciprocity; once more, the re-reading and widening of Lévi-Strauss’s problematic. Clastres does not question the fact that, at the level of a socio-logics, the Kantian-style preoccupation with the conditions of possibility of social life, reciprocity operates and ensures the institution of society, through the establishment of a discontinuity in relation to nature (ibid.: 198). However, this does not allow us to seek out exchange

and reciprocity everywhere, as though every blink of an eye had to be returned in kind. This accounts for the need to distinguish between the planes on which the analysis is developed (ibid.: 188, 199 ff.): on the level of instituting society, exchange necessarily unfolds, but on the level of the functioning social life it doesn't, precisely as shown by the discussion concerning the exchange of women and alliance with brothers-in-law. The prohibition on incest forces the exchange of women: in this sense, it founds society and inaugurates our definitive separation from animality. So far, Clastres accompanies Lévi-Strauss (ibid.: 201). But the operationalization of the exchange of women, the actual exchange, in operation, demands another type of reasoning: on this terrain, Clastres demonstrates, warfare precedes alliance, and alliance establishes the limits of exchange. It is because primitive societies have enemies (and the latter are needed: they would be invented if societies hadn't them (ibid.: 204), as wars have to be fought since they conspire in favour of the logic of the centrifugal) that brothers-in-law are necessary. Hence alliances are expected to strengthen the group, enabling it to defend itself and preserve its autonomy and independence in relation to others.

Clastres seems to ask himself how, on the basis of Lévi-Strauss, can ethnography be pursued? In fact, it is Lévi-Strauss himself who emerges transformed from the clash with savage ethnography. However, the society which makes its comeback with Clastres does not suffer from the same illnesses which irremediably hindered the concept since Durkheim. Here society does not refer to cohesive entities, discrete units opposed, in supposed concrete fashion, to their inescapable (and politically dangerous) excrescence, the individual.⁸

Clastres's work – ethnographic in essence – undeniably ends up containing a philosophical and political dimension (Abensour 1987: 7). In a sense, the ethnological knowledge summons up the philosophical interrogation, in so far as social life implies, for those immersed in it, a questioning of man and the world (Lefort in Abensour 1987: 191-2). Ethnologist and philosopher – and both at once – Clastres takes his reflections on primitive societies far enough to 'reveal to us an unknown and crucial aspect of every society' (Gauchet 1977: 55). In this way, he avoids

⁸ Lady Thatcher's declaration that 'society does not exist, only individual men and women' illustrates the point well. The phrase betrays the individualist creed of the former Prime Minister, who justified the dismantling of the welfare state in the United Kingdom in a curious and far from naive inversion of Clastres, involving the *State against society*.

essentialisms and teleologisms – whether those of society or of the state – and bequeaths to us a work, which, at once philosophical and ethnological, gains form *in the meeting* with a sociological planet different from our own (Richir in Abensour 1987: 61-2).

3. Radicles: the ‘state’ in Clastres and political philosophy

Clastres never produced a state science, though not exactly in the sense that he didn’t produce a political sociology. Although he did not institute a school as such – Clastres ‘belongs to a family of spirits without a family spirit’ (Meunier in Clastres 1972: 307) – he did found a political sociology, only *in another way* and *from another perspective*. Here it is a question of the kind of Copernican revolution he proposes (1969a: 23) in shifting from *privation* to *opposition* and in identifying in indigenous societies not absences – of faith, of laws, of kings – but affirmative presences and desires, against economy and against the state. His assertion concerning the fully political status of indigenous societies is based on a hypothesis, namely that it is possible to escape the umbrella of the state and think beyond the boundaries it imposes, which, at the limit, culminates in the questioning of the institution itself as an inescapable principle of social organization.

Both so-called political anthropology and political philosophy became addicted early on to the viewpoint of the state and tended to focus their attention on the analysis of order, cohesion and mechanisms of control. However, this privilege denounces precisely a certain consecration of the state’s perspective, as though accepting as ‘necessarily given in advance that which perhaps only exists as its very mode of operation’ (Goldman and Lima 2001: 304). In this way, the circle closes itself in a dubious philosophy of history, to which Clastres opposes an ethnology that excludes ourselves not so much as objects but as points of view.

Despite the tradition of all the dead generations weighing like a nightmare on the minds of the living, the tropics very quickly imposed their own particularities on the anthropologists who disembarked there from the 1960s onwards. The analytical instrument of Fortesian inspiration which many brought in their baggage quickly revealed its shortcomings. Clastres notes this fact: ‘The British typologies of African societies may possibly be pertinent to the black continent; they do not serve as a model for America’ (1969a: 12). Apart from a few rare exceptions, the traditional equation which reduces power to coercion and the command–obedience relationship –

precisely *our* conception of what politics should be – does not function in America (ibid.: 10, 11). Moreover, behind ethnology's refusal to recognize the eminently political nature of the powerless power typical of Amerindian societies eternally lurks the 'ever vivacious adversary' (ibid.: 15) of anthropological research, ethnocentrism, which, by making ourselves the inescapable *telos* of all human groupings (Clastres 1974a: 161), 'mediatizes every gaze upon differences to *identify them* and finally *abolish them*' (Clastres 1969a: 15). Although indigenous societies reject political power as coercion or violence, this negation does not necessarily correspond to a void. 'Something exists in the absence' (ibid.: 21), Clastres asserts. It is possible to think politics without violence, but there is no way to think of the social without politics (ibid.).

Lebrun recalls that the definition of politics is usually accompanied by the notion of force (1984: 11). On this subject, he makes use of Julien Freund's statement on politics: '[It comprises the] social activity which proposes to ensure through force, based generally in law, the external security and the internal harmony of a particular political unit' (ibid.). Power, which presupposes force in accordance with such a vision, therefore only exists *against* someone: directors, foremen, military chiefs, helmsmen and presidents only exist because those lacking the voice of command respect their orders (ibid.: 18). It matters little that power – and at this point we can opportunely qualify it as potent – has become bureaucratized, technicized and sophisticated so as to organize domination: its basis remains being force (ibid.: 22). It is not always so, nor was it always so.

Despite choosing ethnology, Clastres's apparent renunciation of political philosophy naturally does not exonerate him from eternally returning to it (Cartry 1978: 47-8; Abensour 1987: 115-16). Just as something continues to function in the apparent renunciation, political philosophy – initially deterritorialized by Clastres's *démarche*, only to be reterritorialized soon afterwards – reveals its hitherto unsuspected potentialities. Loraux initiates us into a healthy 'academic impudence' by admitting the pleasure with which she disrespected the ban – recommended by morality and the appeal to method – on comparison (Loraux in Abensour 1987: 157). Specialists in classical Greece, she assures us, mostly feel at home and find, at least to a certain degree, complicity among the Guayaki of Clastres (Loraux in Abensour

1987: 155).⁹ An undivided society that wishes to remain as such resorts to warfare – as a mechanism which produces and protects the dispersion of different groups – in order to preserve itself in the face of the multiplicity of other units of a similar nature: ‘Clastres talks about the Indians; I think of the Greeks,’ writes Loraux (ibid.: 156). The same rule prevails in both cases: against the outside, violence, so as to eliminate tensions among the indigenous companions and among the Greek citizens (ibid.). Among the Guayaki and the Athenians alike, therefore, the internal lack of division is neither given nor immediate: its maintenance and re-institution demand specific strategies (ibid.: 157).

For Lebrun too, the *arkhé politiké* of the Greeks has little to do with modernity’s concept of political power, viscerally dependent as it is on the idea of domination (1984: 26). The expositor par excellence of this concept is also, par excellence, an anti-Aristotelian (ibid.: 37), namely Thomas Hobbes. The demands of politics in Hobbes subvert the Aristotelian teleology. Citizens, previously equal through the Greek myth of autochthony (ibid.: 43), will have their equality preserved, but only *in their submission* in the face of another myth, that of the Leviathan (ibid.: 44). The

⁹ Since ‘dialogue ... does not live by concordances alone’ (Loraux in Abensour 1987: 159), it is precisely when Clastres explicitly returns to Greek thought as the origin of the One, the State, that the historian of Greece ceases to recognize, on the pages of the French anthropologist, a universe with which he is familiar (ibid.: 159). To the ‘active insurrection against the empire of the One’ of his Indians, Clastres opposes the supposed ‘contemplative nostalgia of the One’, which he imputes to the Greeks as if, in thinking of the same, the One, the savage prophets and the ancient Greeks had attributed swapped values to it, negative in the first case, positive in the second. For Loraux, by seeking to find the origin of Western political metaphysics in Athens – founded on the difference between the dominant and the dominated, deemed to be immanent in society – Clastres fabricates for himself a Greece that is made to measure. Politics in ancient Greece, Loraux tells us, is undertaken between equals according to the mode of the *arkhé*, which, by promoting a rotation of the *polis*’s administrative tasks among its citizens, enables each and everyone, in his own time, to command and obey. Although the Greeks indeed placed politics under the dominion of the One, they did so not in the sense of inaugurating a hierarchy between dominators and dominated – in reality, this was non-existent – but, Loraux suggests, in the sense of evading the threatening potentiality of the two. By submitting their politics to the empire of the One, the Greeks sought to preserve the indivision at the heart of the *polis* and avoid the emergence of the two (ibid.: 163). Meanwhile, according to Clastres, the Guarani worshipped the two as the number of the Land-without-Evil, which would allow them to be men and gods at the same time. In a sense, at this point Loraux inverts the reasoning of Clastres, expanding and subverting it: to the ‘active insurrection against the *two*’ of her Greeks, she opposes the ‘contemplative nostalgia of the *two*’ of Clastres’s Indians. And curiously enough, *only* contemplative, as Loraux acutely observes: faced by the very real two, manifested in the inescapable existence of two sexes, Clastres’s Indians opted to seek refuge in the monadism of the one, which means a man is obligatorily and irrefutably a man, a hunter is a hunter, A is A. This makes Chachubutawachugi, the man who is unable to hunt and who, nonetheless, wants to remain in the universe of masculinity, a ridiculous figure, since he insists on occupying a place halfway between the male and the female, which, in all rigour, does not exist (Clastres 1972: 217).

Greek-style community in principle no longer exists, and the integration of men – withdrawn in their atomism of dispersed wolves, zealous of their independence, and selfish in the defence of their interests – only occurs by operationalizing the Leviathan through the creation of adequate stratagems: the *individual*, isolated, apolitical, and owner of natural rights (ibid.: 44, 45); the *people*, constituted as a political body (ibid.: 32-3), and finally *society* (*societas*) as a sphere in which private life develops, distinct from participation in public life (ibid.: 37). The link established between the advent of the isolated individual, understood as a fundamental tool in the construction of politics, and the institution of a sole power as a condition of the City (*civitas*) is therefore inextricable. The difference between *civitas* and *societas* digs the abyss, the abysmal gap, the modern phantasmagoria which buries Greece for us once and for all, where man only realized his essence as a political animal through full participation in the business of the *polis* (Châtelet et al. 1982: 15). By transferring the right to self-government to the Leviathan, identified as the only effective anti-disorder possible (Lebrun 1984: 35), the modern citizen – already now undeniably a subject – inaugurates the splits between private life and public business, society (*societas*) and *civitas*. Life in *society* no longer requires life *in* the city; irremediably depoliticized, man, already an ‘*individual*’, becomes preoccupied only with those affairs which directly concern him, transferring the carrying out of public business to the Leviathan. Hence, the state not only enables, but also, in a sense, invents both society and the individual alike (ibid.: 38, 45). As an *operation*, the state therefore demands, in order to function, the convergence of subjective figures and specific social arrangements – the ‘individual’ and ‘society.’ It remains to be known what happens to these figures and arrangements when they move offstage, or at least when the state operation ceases to prevail.

Étienne de la Boétie urges a shift from history to logic (cf. Clastres 1976b: 112) and declares himself astonished that so many have subjected themselves to just one authority and have done so willingly: ‘[W]hat misfortune was this that so denatured man, the only being really born to live freely (...)?’ (la Boétie 1983 [1576]: 143). The wonder is due to the fact that, although the societies to which la Boétie refers only provided him with examples of the misfortune, at least on the terrain of logic it could be imagined that things could proceed otherwise. Clastres proposes another shift, from logic back to history (which, ironically enough, demonstrates that the state is not *historically* ineluctable (Clastres 1976b: 112; Châtelet and Pisièr-Kouchner 1983:

712). His astonishment is different from la Boétie's. He asks himself: why does Jyvukugi, the 'chief' of the Guayaki in Arroyo Moroti, feel obliged to go from *household to household* to notify his people what they already knew, since they had already been informed by the Paraguayan who presided over the encampment?

For the first time, I could directly observe – since it was functioning, transparently, under my very eyes – the political institution of the Indians.... The Guayaki, devotees of ... savage political philosophy, radically separated power and violence: in order to show he was worthy of being chief, Jyvukugi had to demonstrate that, differently from the Paraguayan, he did not exercise his authority through coercion but, on the contrary, performed it through what is most opposed to violence ... in the word. (Clastres 1972: 78-9)

Here we can witness, under our very eyes, a non-state *in operation*, which confers a fresh intelligibility on the state, also in operation, and already among us (and not only). Clastres tells us: the State is not 'the ministries, the Elysium, the White House, the Kremlin. [...] The State is the *exercise* of political power' (1978: 166, my italics). Faced by a power being exercised, the question 'How does this function?' is more fruitful than the alternative and much more ambitious 'What does this mean?' or 'Where does this come from?'. It functions due to the convergence of specific social machines and subjective figures, which allow it to function. The same applies to a power that is *not* exercised.

The power that is *not* exercised, the non-state operates through social machines and subjective figures that perennially conjure up the possibility of the emergence of division in the midst of the group. Societies against the state resort to their own strategies and make use of vigorous mechanisms – such as war, economy, religion, language and the actual 'subjectification' of their 'chiefs' – as a way of avoiding the emergence within themselves of a bad desire to command and, as its necessary counterpart, the equally bad desire to obey (1976b: 119). And here we can perceive just how much politics there is in desire (1977a: 154-5).

Hobbes and the savages. Out of this conflict emerges the 'contra-Hobbes' of Clastres (Abensour 1987: 121): we need to think of war *in another form*, no longer as a symptom of severe chaos and an asocial state (or, worse, a pre-social state, in a reasoning which once more elevates us to the position of the inescapable *telos* of indigenous groups), but as a mechanism for instituting the primitive social cosmos (Clastres 1977b: 195). Warfare, as an anti-state machine par excellence, preserves the

logic of the multiple so characteristic of indigenous groups and conspires against the One (ibid.: 188): *there exists a sociality which is instituted in and through war*, which obliges us to undertake the healthy intellectual exercise of, on the one hand, avoiding the dialectically excluding Manichaeisms and, on the other hand, thinking of warfare *and* society at one and the same time. For Clastres, the savage *politeia*, an original form of politics, is instituted *in* and *through* warfare, not because war attracts exchange and clamours for the birth of reason, but because, *in* and *through* war, we pass from ‘wolves to men’ (Abensour 1987: 128). The primitive community inscribes its political order in a territory from which the Other is violently excluded (Clastres 1977b: 189, 192) and this defines its external politics. Its internal politics is geared towards its affirmation as a homogeneous unit, preventing the emergence of any splitting in its midst, of any division between dominators and the dominated.

How is a chief made? With his words – and so too with the sweat of his own face, and those of his wives, strategically granted to him by polygyny (Clastres 1962: 33; 1976c: 137-8; Lizot 1976: 167). The three terms – words, goods and women – whose exchange had assured us the definitive passage from animality to society, now serve for torsions (Clastres 1962: 34ff.) – not on the ethereal plane of mythologies, but under our eyes, assuring our passage, likewise irrevocable, from society to *political sociality*. This is not because there already exists a miniature despot here (Clastres 1972: 81; 1974a: 175), whose potentialities will be increasingly perfected by later forms of political organization, but because the problem of politics is already posed here in its entirety. Power is inevitably exterior and *against* the group (Clastres 1962: 38; Gauchet 1977: 64) and is resolved, with particular subtlety by primitive societies (Clastres 1962: 40), through the establishment of an institution – chiefdom – which functions *in the void* and, precisely for this reason, *functions*. It functions by *denying* and *going against* the exteriority of power: by rupturing the logic of reciprocity precisely where chiefdom is located. Primitive society, while recognizing the inescapable exteriority that defines power, blocks its virtual threats, preventing the leader from taking shape as a heavy nucleus hovering over the other members of the community (Clastres 1962: 38; Richir in Abensour 1987: 63). In actuality, the chief ends up *owing* the group and remains chief as long as he continues in its debt (Clastres 1976c: 141): his ‘generosity’ comprises more than an obligation: an eternal – and voluntary? – servitude (Clastres 1962: 28).

This prevents a power which *is already there*, present in its apparent absence, from becoming dominant.

[Primitive societies] do not purely and simply eliminate from themselves the dimension of power. They do not act as though power does not exist. On the contrary, they place a ‘chief,’ an individual formally distinct from the rest, in the place which could be that of someone who gives orders, sets out rules, possesses force.... [T]hey place him there to mark the fact ... that the place remains empty. (Gauchet 1977: 59-60).

To cast out is to precede (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 121), and, if primitive societies reject the state, it is because it is already there (Gauchet 1977: 60). ‘Yes’, Clastres concedes: ‘the state exists in primitive societies’ (in Carrilho 1976: 76). In fact, the more archaeologists delve downwards, the more states they uncover (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 5: 23).

The perennially cast-out presence of the state in primitive societies, as well as lending intelligibility to the functioning of the savage *politeia* and to the primitive social mechanisms and specific subjective figures through which it operates, allows us to see the non-state where it apparently is not and yet acts: among ourselves. This enables an anthropology which takes itself to be a dialogue, a bridge – and a two-way one – projected between our societies and those from ‘before the divide’ (Clastres 1968b: 37). Once the absolute vulnerability of excludent ontological dualisms is exposed – dualisms which demand that societies either have a state or do not, that their politics is defined as either segmentary or centralized, that we are men or jaguars and the Bororo are Bororo or macaws, discarding aprioristically and prematurely the fertile possibilities of mixtures and juxtapositions – new horizons open up for analysis. This is an indication that, as long as we think against the current, ‘fertile corruptions’ can reveal previously unsuspected potentialities in ‘idioms’ once considered in the radical isolation of their monadism. Deleuze and Guattari write:

As many centres of power exist already in primitive societies as exist in societies with a State; or, if we prefer, as many centres of power still exist in societies with a State as in primitive ones. (1997 [1980], Vol. 3: 87, italics in the original)

There is a thus a certain state of the state, constant and present everywhere, and a certain state of war, also constant and present everywhere, one or the other inhibited

or potentialized, depending on the form in which the operation of the social mechanisms, and the subjective figures through which they act, takes place. In both states, however, something is always left out, claiming and imposing its presence despite its apparent absence. The street-children of Bogotá are indeed insolent (Meunier 1977).¹⁰

4. Rhizomes: ‘against’ in Clastres and minor anthropology

Some anecdotes should be taken seriously. In trying to disprove the arguments of Marilyn Strathern and Christina Toren – his opponents in an debate on the theoretical obsolescence of the concept of society, in which both advocated its substitution by that of *sociality* – Jonathan Spencer makes the ironical comment: ‘‘Sociality against the State’ somehow loses the force of Clastres’s original title’ (in Ingold 1996: 80). But is this really so?

In actuality, Clastres himself uses the term ‘sociality’ in two places.¹¹ Although, in terms of the relationship between two authors, the ideas of forewarning and precedence are at the very least complicated (and if to cast out is to precede, perhaps to precede is also to cast out) – and it is certainly not my intention to detect in Clastres a Strathern (1988) in embryonic or foetal form, which would be, moreover, a totally inappropriate *démarche* – Clastres’s use of the term ‘sociality’ in these two places should at least arouse our curiosity.¹²

¹⁰ On the *galladas*, the ‘singular forms’ – anti-state, I should add – of the organization of ‘bands’ of street children in Bogotá, see Meunier 1977.

¹¹ I cite the passages in question: ‘It is not exchange which is first, it is warfare, inscribed in the mode of functioning of primitive society. Warfare implies alliance, alliance stimulates exchange (understood not as the difference of man and animal, as the passage from nature to culture, but, of course, as the unfolding of the *sociality* of primitive society, as the free play of its political being). It is through warfare that exchange can be comprehended, and not the inverse’ (1977b: 200, my italics). And: ‘Taking seriously, on the one hand, primitive societies and, on the other, the ethnological discourse on these societies, I ask myself why they are without the state, why power is not found separate from the social body. Little by little, I am convinced that this non-separation of power, and this non-division of the social being, are not due to a foetal or embryonic state of primitive societies, to an unfinished nature or incompleteness; they relate, rather, to a sociological act, to an institution of *sociality* which refuses the division, just as it refuses domination. If primitive societies are without the State, it is because they are against the state’ (1977a: 153-4, my italics).

¹² Although I am primarily concerned here with how the concept of sociality possesses a high analytic yield in Clastres’s work, this does not eliminate – quite the opposite – the complementary question: what can Clastres’s work add to the concept of sociality? The replies, however, would demand another article.

In fact, we have just ascertained that Clastres promotes a certain desubstantialization of the state, which is not ‘the Elysium, the White House or the Kremlin’ (1978: 166), but an ‘effective actioning of the relation of power’ (1976b: 115). Evidently, he proceeds in the same way with the anti-State and ‘society’ (so to speak), both also seen as effective actionings of relations, as machines that function – ‘*this works*’ – and that function precisely by means of the subjective figures that produce and put them into operation: the chiefs, eternally immersed in debt; the warriors, in eternal search of wars which will confer prestige on them; the husbands, eternally compelled to share their respective wives with other consorts; the hunters, eternally obliged to give away the prey they are forbidden to consume; the men and women, whose bodies – eternally marked by rituals of initiation – offer them evidence of the eternal law of the group – ‘you, whose skin carries identical marks, are worth no more than any of the others.’ However, it should not be imagined that these figures are erected as ideal types and raised to an immaterial theoretical heaven from where they contemplate, abstractly, our all too human-ness. They have names, they are alive, and they have the passions and reactions of the living (Goldman and Lima 2001: 308).

Nor do individuals exist here, properly speaking. The ‘against’ in Clastres – which, rhizomatically distributed throughout his work, constantly breaks down any potential hard nuclei – never permitted him to determine the existence of an ‘individual’ against ‘society.’ By establishing the formula ‘society against the State’, which I believe should be more precisely termed ‘sociality against the State’, Clastres reasons not in terms of abstract entities – ‘*the society*,’ ‘*the State*’ – but, on both sides, in the sense of social machines without any externality with the forms of subjectification that engender them and through which they operate. In some of the essays in *The archaeology of violence*, and especially in his ethnography of the Guayaki (1972), we can find social machines at work producing the chiefs, warriors, men, women, homosexuals and neither-men-nor-women-nor-homosexuals through which these machines operate.

Ethnographically, since ‘*this works*’,¹³ Clastres confronts some of the difficulties faced by anthropology. In fact, in the name of metaphysical entities – such as the

¹³ The phrase is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, themselves interested in tracking the ways in which various social machines, in response to the assemblies operating them, produce specific forms of subjectification – see, for example, the chapter ‘Savages, barbarians and civilizeds’ in *Anti-Oedipus: capitalism and schizophrenia* (1972).

‘individual’ and ‘society,’ which despite being ‘fallacies of misplaced concreteness,’ seem to enjoy a supposedly material existence – what is truly constitutive is very frequently obliterated, namely relations. The challenge is precisely as follows: in attempting to escape methodological individualism without falling into a kind of transcendental holism or vice versa, how do we think of social relations even in the absence of society, or, if one prefers, how do we build models of intentionality without subjects?

In his work, Clastres multiplies – in a ‘rhizomatic progression,’ so to speak – the ethnographic examples of how the ‘objectivity’ of ‘sociality’ can operate by means of the ‘subjectivity’ of people-in-interaction. ‘We note [...] that the author’s interrogation is twofold’ – observe Goldman and Lima:

On the one hand, it involves society as a machine and, on the other, that which makes the machine function concretely and comprises at once an effect of its existence and a condition of its functioning.... Since, as Clastres sees it [the idea of the ‘society against the State’], either as a property of primitive social machines, or from the viewpoint of the subjective figures which accompany them, we run the risk of losing sight of the fact that in the two instances we are faced with the same thing. (2001: 306-8)

We already know how a chief is made: through the sweat of his own face, which, through the ‘generosity’ into which he is forced, allows him to repay to the group, though never entirely, his eternal debt, necessarily a relationship. He stays chief as long as he is capable of remaining in debt. No externality, then, separates the chief from his group: the debt places both in a relationship and defines their respective places. While a certain desire for prestige is fed in the chief – care being taken, of course, to satisfy it – his access to a certain desire for power, duly censored, is simultaneously denied him (Clastres 1976c: 139). Both the chief and those he ‘leads’ end up satisfied, but in their *good desire*:

What does the big man get in exchange for his generosity? Not the realization of his desire for power, but the fragile satisfaction of his point of honour; not the capacity to command, but the innocent pleasure of a glory whose maintenance exhausts him. He works in a proper sense for glory. Society grants him it willingly, seeing that it is busy tasting the fruits of the toil of its chief. Every flatterer lives at the costs of the one who listens to him. (ibid.)

Through this practice, an intention is realized which is properly political, and political in its entirety. All Clastres’s analyses converge on this point, always in search of

social machines and subjective figures that boycott on a daily basis any hierarchical whims. ‘His general thesis was based on converging analyses’, Lefort agrees, and then enumerates them:

[That] of chieftom which reveals the interdiction made on who was installed in a pre-eminent position to exercise command; that of the initiation ritual, in which the elders imprint on the bodies of adolescents, by means apparently akin to torture, the law of the community – a law of which they will know forever that it imposes on each one to remain equal to the rest; [...] or that of the incessant wars to which the savage tribes dedicate themselves, whose function seems to be to maintain the integrity of each one in function of the fight against the stranger or, more generally, to preserve the configuration of a diversified world, refractory to any intrusion of a conciliatory and unifying potency. Clastres unites the facts which various ethnologists had already described without relating to each other and explains them, showing that, beyond the singularity of behaviours and institutions, one finds an intention common to all primitive societies, a political intention. (Lefort in Abensour 1987: 190)

Indeed, the same ‘order presides over the disposition of the lines of force of this geography’ (Clastres 1972: 212), whether in the form in which a warrior is made, how a hunter is made, how a husband is made, and finally, how adult men and women are made.¹⁴

How is a warrior made? Through his own blood, which, if not in a war situation and in front of other warriors, will be spilled in vain. In fact, just as there are no wars without warriors, so there are no warriors without wars: ‘the warrior is above all his passion for war’ (Clastres 1977c: 219). Warriors are made in and through warfare – whose permanent state preserves the centrifugal logic of indigenous societies, even if the battles themselves are not constant – and in and through their relations with other warriors. The warrior’s desire for prestige, pursued individualistically in competition with himself and with others, leads him to aspire, at the limit, to a glorious death. This impedes the group of warriors – continually riven by visceral disagreements, since the glory of one is only ever achieved at the costs of and in comparison to the others – from affirming itself as a faction feeding on the caprice of subordinating society. Simultaneously, it prevents a more valiant warrior, perhaps, from wanting to become chief and take command for himself: at this point, he would be irrefutably dead

¹⁴ Here I shall only have room to indicate how a warrior is made. For an indication of how the ‘desire’ of each one and the ‘will’ of the group – without any externality – act in the constitution of hunters, husbands and adult men and women, see Barbosa 2002: 78-84.

(Clastres 1974a: 178-9). Devoured by an inescapable ‘scaling of temerity’ (Clastres 1977c: 233), ‘a precise adjustment between the ethical world of tribal values and the warrior’s individual point of honour’ (ibid.: 217), our duellist will only carry out his luck: submitting him to an eternal ‘flight forward’ (ibid.: 229) – each conquest, though it may serve to nourish his prestige, places him on trial and compels him to other, even more audacious deeds – his constant dissatisfaction condemns him from the outset. Clastres explains to us the misfortune of the savage warriors: ‘*[The warrior is never a warrior, except in this infiniteness of his task, when, performing the supreme exploit, he gains death, precisely the absolute glory]*’ (ibid.: 237, original italics).

Expressions such as ‘desire’ and ‘will’ in Clastres carry no psychologizing inspiration, as if the spectre of the ‘individual’ was in eternal pursuit of us. These expressions ‘do not refer to constants rooted in a supposed human nature given in advance, but to the subjective effects of particular functionings which take place on a plane of primary intersubjectivity and which are equally manifested at the sociological level properly speaking’ (Goldman and Lima 2001: 308). Here Goldman and Lima echo the words of Deleuze: ‘As for ethnography, Clastres said everything, in any case the best for us. What we try to do is put the libido into relationship with an ‘outside’’ (in Carrilho 1976: 80).

The reading of this part of the present article should be summarily discarded if it has led to the crystallization of impervious identificatory notions such as *the* chief, *the* warrior. There is no need here for identificatory machines producing faciality, the latter being already inescapably a state-form of thinking. Indeed, ‘the face is a politics’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1997 [1980], Vol. 3: 50), and there are power assemblies which dispense with the face (ibid.: 42). In primitive societies, very little takes place via the face, since ‘the “primitives” may have the most human, the most beautiful and the most spiritual heads; they do not have the face and do not need it’ (ibid.: 43). Continuing in the same line, Deleuze and Guattari point out the reason for this: ‘The face is not a universal, not even the face of the white man; it is the White Man himself.... the face is the typical European’ (ibid.), whose unity is constituted always by exclusive choices: it’s a man *or* a woman; a rich person *or* a poor person; an adult *or* a child; a boss *or* a subaltern; an x *or* a y (ibid.: 44). The polyvocal primitive machines unveil new possibilities – including for ourselves. When we consider that people are multiple due to the varied intersubjective relations in which

they are and will be, at one and the same time, taking part and constituting, it becomes clear that we can be at once chrysanthemums and spades, citizens of England, husbands, parents, stoneworkers, members of a particular parish, voters in a particular electoral cycle, members of a union, affiliates of the Workers Party, men and women, 'our thousand little-sexes' (ibid.: 91).

In fact, there is another form of individuation which dispenses with subjects and individuals and which Deleuze and Guattari call *hecceities*:

A season, a winter, a summer, a time, a date have a perfect individuality, lacking nothing, although it is not the same as the individuality of a thing or a subject. These are hecceities, in the sense that everything here is a relation of movement or rest between molecules or particles, the power to affect and be affected. [...] It is the wolf itself, or the horse, or the child who cease being subjects in order to become events in assemblies which are never separate from a time, a season, a climate, an air, a life'. (ibid., Vol. 4: 47, 50)

True *total* social facts – no less and much more.

Hence: neither 'whole,' nor 'parts.' Moving beyond a certain methodological fetishism which anthropology has always shown for the whole and surpassing the 'metonymic freeze' which usually 'imprisons' the 'parts' in submitting them to the 'whole,' we can assume the pleasure and risk which the methodological rigours would possibly condemn (Loroux in Abensour 1987: 157), invited by the autonomy of Clastres's *gai savoir*. It is possible to reason non-dialectically, and there are no motives for giving way to the ruses of the tedious and worn out pendular movement which drags us from 'structure' to 'history,' from 'permanence' to 'change,' from 'synchrony' to 'diachrony,' from 'culture' to 'nature,' from 'male' to 'female,' from 'complex' to 'native,' from 'society' to 'individual.' There will always be something 'native' in 'us,' and something of 'us' in the 'native', and this indeed seems to be the *condition of possibility* of an anthropology that does not rid itself of the destabilizing potential of difference, which – by itself providing the evidence that everything can be and also is, and at the same time is so in another way – boldly reveals freedom to us. This already works against the crystallization of the principle of identity, which wishes a 'native' to always and only ever be a 'native,' satisfying the academic (and other) needs for exoticism: here difference ends up domesticated and in the eternal service of identity, reflecting back to Narcissus the (inverted) image he so much needs. But what is the principle of identity? On this point, we return once again to the

savages – for sure, since it is always ourselves involved – and avail ourselves of Guarani metaphysics. What does it teach us in its genealogy of unhappiness? That things, in their totality, are one and, for us, who do not wish this, they are bad (Clastres 1972-1973: 147). Humans inhabit an imperfect world, and the Guarani were never good savages. They reside on this earth, true, but they never ceased dreaming of *ywy mara-ey*, the Land-without-Evil, the place of the non-One, ‘where maize grows alone, arrows bring their prey to those who no longer need to hunt, the careful flow of marriages is unknown, and men, forever young, live eternally’ (ibid.: 150). The inhabitants of *ywy mara-ey* are still men, but not just men: they are also already gods. The imperfect land, where things in their totality are one, thus reveals itself to be a field of the finite, of the incomplete, the place of the rigorous application of the principle of identity: ‘For to say that $A = A$, that this is this, and that a man is a man, is to declare at the same time that A is not- A , that this is not that, and that men are not gods. Naming the unity in things, naming things according to their unity, is also to mark them as the limit, the finite, the incomplete’ (ibid.: 149). What is the One, then? ‘I believe we can discern, under the metaphysical equation that equates Evil with the One, another more secret equation, which says that the One is the State’ (Clastres 1974a: 184-5).

If so, what powers has anthropology cultivated in its search, forever renewed and almost obsessive, for the principle of identity? What illusionist effects – though full of concrete repercussions – have ensued as a result, and what will be the future of this illusion? Again, the *refrain*, and, one last time, we return to the Indians – because it continues to involve ourselves – who, in the eloquence of their silence, reveal to us a tautology: however, one which seems not to be so self-evident, namely that a mirror is a mirror:

We had distributed to the Indians, who had never seen them before, small mirrors which they called *chaã*.... Half an hour, sometimes even hours on end, they looked at themselves (especially the men), the mirror now on the tip of the arm, now under the nose, stunned into silence as they saw this face which belonged to them, yet only offered them, when they tried to touch it with the tip of the fingers, nothing more than the cold and hard surface of the *chaã*. (Clastres 1972: 101)

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COMPLICATIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS: VOLUNTEERING IN ATHENS

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Abstract. This paper presents a brief ethnographic portrait of a solidarity group in Athens. It attempts to explore some of the difficulties and contradictions of the solidarity movement and the moral labour in which volunteers engage.

Introduction

In a drama unfolding over nearly a decade, the Greek debt crisis shows no signs of abating. Repeated meetings, negotiations, elections, referendums and agreements occupy the headlines until these tensions fade, only to flare up again months or years later. But what is the reality beyond these headlines, what of the small, everyday dramas that are equally part of this story? These were the questions I posed to myself two years ago, viewing events from afar prior to my fieldwork in Athens. At the time, some early studies of the emerging solidarity movement were being published, and with only one full monograph (Knight 2015) to date, more ethnography was needed. Furthermore, as it emerged more than five years ago, what is the reality of the solidarity movement after so much time has passed? Is it possible to approach ‘the crisis’ more critically, to look beyond the immediate reforms of austerity to see how these policies are reshaping life in Greece indirectly, as they engender new organizational forms which try to resist them? Attempting to shed light on these questions, I will sketch a brief portrait of the ‘Δίκτυο Αλληλεγγύης Βύρωνα or the Byronas Solidarity Network’, based on a year and half of fieldwork conducted there working as a volunteer.

The Δίκτυο

The δίκτυο was formed in August 2012 by a group of volunteers in response to a perceived need in the community following the onset of the Greek debt crisis. Literally meaning ‘net’ or ‘network’, it is, indeed, part of larger network of other δίκτυα common not only in Athens but across Greece, as well as a broader solidarity movement encompassing a variety of informal and formal groups. The δίκτυο exclusively helps those residing within the municipality of Byronas, principally in the form of food provisions, but also by providing clothes and, more rarely, other household items. The food is collected by volunteers outside supermarkets, bought with funds they have raised or received from other solidarity groups and donors.

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Byronas itself is a suburb in central-east Athens with a population of some 60,000 people. Originally settled by refugees during the Asia Minor crisis, it has since been transformed into a solidly upper working-class/lower middle-class neighbourhood that resembles many of the other central suburbs in Athens, but still maintains a strong sense of character and collective identity according to its residents.

Located in the basement of a residential apartment building not far from Pangrati, the space has been leased to the volunteers for free by the owner. The δίκτυο is open weekdays in the morning and the morning only. On a typical day as I arrive, a few older gentlemen are settled on the steps of a neighbouring building, chatting amongst themselves. As I pass they greet me: ‘Καλημέρα – Good morning!’ ‘Καλημέρα’, I reply, stepping down the white marble steps to enter the δίκτυο. Going inside, I greet the other volunteers: ‘Καλημέρα’. They call back with replies of ‘Καλώς τον – Welcome’, ‘Για σου, τι κάνεις – Hi, how are you?’, ‘Καλημέρα’. These greetings are important and will punctuate the day as people are coming and going. Officially the δίκτυο opens at ten, but before this time the volunteers are already waiting, gossiping and smoking. They chat about personal matters, make jokes and exchange stories, about an inherited Anatolian carpet that will not fit anywhere, but also important happenings in the δίκτυο: things did not go well the day before – it was ‘χάος – chaos’, and the issue needs to be raised at the weekly general meeting. They talk of how much money was raised at the last bazaar or how the bi-weekly collection of food at the local supermarkets went. In this way, through gossip and chit-chat, key information is circulated among the members. Although in a basement, the δίκτυο is fronted by large glass windows and doors so that it is always bright inside, and some of the walls are painted cheerfully in orange. Looking outside, more people are gathering, and they too appear to be gossiping, but we cannot hear what they say.

Sometime before ten, one of the volunteers will arrive in a car, with the boot and back seat filled with sacks of thick brown paper stuffed with bread. It is the unsold bread from yesterday collected from bakeries in the neighbourhood. A movement in the people above indicates the car has arrived, as some of them rush to help bring the sacks down into the δίκτυο – whether to be helpful or because they hope to take some bread before ten, it is not clear. A couple of the volunteers inside are helping them, and there is some scuffling as they put down the sacks: ‘όχι εκεί, εδώ – not there, here’ someone shouts. By now there is a small crowd outside, and they fill the steps leading down to the δίκτυο. One of the volunteers arriving, who will work ‘in the back’ preparing food parcels, struggles to push past them.

Someone asks, ‘Θα ανοίγουμε την πόρτα; – shall we open the door?’, but another person replies, ‘όχι, όλοι θα μπουν, πρέπει να μάθουν – no, they will all come in, they have to learn’. Another volunteer and I begin putting the bread on a table, she behind taking the bread from the sacks, and me in front trying to sort it broadly into kinds. At ten, a third volunteer opens the door and admits around five or six people at a time, until the crowd grows smaller. In each wave, the people come quickly and stand all around me so that I must decide whom to give bread to first. My fellow volunteers tell me to give them one or two loaves depending on how much bread we have. This is the challenge – the amount of bread changes, nor do we know how many people will come or when. Not all the people are happy: ‘είμαστε πέντε άτομα – we are five people’, one of them tells me when I offer two loaves. Another: ‘είστε κλειστοί αύριο, τι θα κάνουμε – you are closed tomorrow, what will we do?’. ‘Δεν έχει ψωμί – there isn’t (a lot of) bread’, my partner tells them. ‘Έχει ψωμί – there is bread’, they say, and I try to explain that other people will come later in the day, and we must try to save bread for all of them. Some accept it, others go away angry. Some even try to take the bread themselves, and my partner says to them loudly, ‘μην το πιάνετε εσείς – don’t touch it yourself!’ But if they ask enough, we will often give them more – it is hard to say no. Joking about it with the other volunteers, I tell them it is hard for me to be strict, and they tell me that I must be.

On another set of tables, piles of clothes are laid out. Some of the people who took bread wander over and start looking through them. This provokes cries from some of the volunteers, ‘παιδιά, μετά της ένδεκα θα ανοίγουμε τα ρούχα’ – guys, after eleven we will open the clothes’, but the people ignore these remarks. One of the volunteers gets up to shoo them away, asking them, ‘ξέρετε ελληνικά; – do you know Greek?’ – a reprimand that aligns civility with a particular kind of Greekness. As many of them are, in fact, not Greek, there is some tension in this statement. The volunteers continue to insist that everybody waits until eleven to take clothes, and some of them sit on a couch, while others stand around and chat. As the time draws near, although it is not eleven yet, the tide turns, and the people start looking through the clothes in a flurry of activity. In a little while, the volunteers are commenting on what a mess the clothes are now in, strewn all over the place: it was ‘χαμός – a frenzy’, someone mutters. In response, a few people begin folding the clothes until everything is back in order. As they leave, they call back that they have tidied the clothes, and the volunteers thank them enthusiastically.

While some are taking bread and clothes, others come intermittently to another set of tables piled with large folders labelled alphabetically. They contain the names and records of those

in the neighbourhood 'signed up' to the δίκτυο. On a large poster behind the desk, it states in bold letters that the δίκτυο helps around 750 families in Byronas. Unlike the bread and clothes, which anyone is free to take, in order to sign up people must first bring tax statements and unemployment cards issued by the Greek state. Then every few weeks, depending on the size of the household, they can come to collect a shopping bag filled with pasta, rice, flour, canned milk, conserved tomatoes, sometimes also lentils or a bag of sugar, and occasionally accompanied by a bottle of oil or other foods like chicken or fruits, when the δίκτυο can acquire them. Mostly this is a smooth process but sometimes there are problems. One person has an out-of-date statement. Another has forgotten the card which helps the volunteers keep track of his collections. One volunteer berates him, as it's the second time in a row; another jokes that he is 'άτακτος – mischievous'. He apologizes, laughing and smiling, and tells them people won't forget the good they do here, but the volunteer who chastised him looks sceptical.

Other people come to sign up, but if they are not from the neighbourhood they are directed to other δίκτυα, otherwise they are asked to return to go through the sign-up process on a Wednesday evening. A volunteer is explaining this process and is quick to correct an implication about the δίκτυο: 'δεν δουλεύουμε εδώ, είμαστε εθελοντές – we don't work here, we are volunteers'. It echoes things that have been said before, 'είμαστε εθελοντές, όχι δημόσιοι υπάλληλοι – we're volunteers, not public employees'. Inevitably disputes arise: a man is shouting and banging his hand on the table, 'δεν είσαστε αλληλέγγυοι – you are not in solidarity'. He is Greek, he says; how can they refuse to help him but can still help foreigners? The volunteer dealing with him tries to keep her patience, but it is difficult. However, this is the exception: most of the people coming to collect their food parcels come and go saying little more than casual greetings. One man wants to exchange the flour in his bag for lentils. He is told no, there are rules, but in the end he is still given the lentils regardless. Sometimes they are interrupted by people from the neighbourhood who have come to leave donations of clothes. A volunteer springs up to take the bags and puts them in the back: 'ευχαριστούμε πάρα πολύ – we thank you very much!' he says. A woman who was looking through the clothes on the table follows him to the door leading into the back. Starting to peer in, she is promptly stopped by the returning volunteer – she is only allowed to take clothes from the tables. Afterwards the door is kept closed, but later, when a mother comes looking for shoes for her child, someone goes into the back trying to find some. Meanwhile, one of the volunteers might stop by to collect a food parcel because some are also signed up to the δίκτυο themselves, just as they also sometimes take bread and clothes.

As it draws closer to closing time, there is little to left to do. A volunteer who has come to clean the δίκτυο is usually mopping the floor. Others who were preparing food parcels and sorting clothes in the back have already left, and most of the bread is gone. The volunteers sit and chat, and, from time to time, someone who is not on their shift might stop by. Sometimes they share a warmed savoury pastry with a few shots of *tsipouro*, especially if a former volunteer has come or there is a reason to celebrate. Just after one, a person comes in to take their food parcel. The volunteers remind her that the δίκτυο closes at one, but still serve her anyway.

Reflections

In this portrait, I have tried to give a sense of the daily rhythm of work at the δίκτυο. But what kind of work is it if volunteers themselves dispute this term? More properly, they would call it an ‘offering’ of their time and energy. On their website, they describe themselves as finding solutions ‘εκεί όπου αδυνατεί το κράτος – where the state is unable’. Yet it is a paradox that a left-wing government, which grew in tandem with grassroots movements like the δίκτυο, is implementing austerity policies to actively reduce state welfare. In this context, the volunteers struggle to support the community around them through their considerable efforts. However, simultaneously, one might say that they also seek to impose discipline as they order the social space around them. While state welfare, development and charitable work² have all been critiqued in the anthropological literature, the contradictions of the solidarity movement in Greece are only just being explored.³ But in truth, power collects in all organisational forms – advantaging some and disadvantaging others. To pose a question, could it be that solidarity is, in part, an expression of governmentality, in that austerity policy has provoked an independent, self-organizing citizen ready to substitute for state welfare? Certainly, volunteers must not only order the people and space around them, but also learn to reorder themselves. Building character, resistance and firmness, ‘να μιλήσω όμορφα – to speak properly’, are essential elements of good volunteering at the δίκτυο. To arrive on time, to be reliable, not to shout but remain calm amid pressure are ways to show respect to those around you. Aside from themselves, this disciplining extends to those around them, as volunteers encourage people to come and go in an orderly fashion. They cannot enter the δίκτυο before ten, they must form a line to take bread and take what they are given, come on

² For examples, see Bornstein (2012), Dubois (2014), Ferguson (1990) and Han (2012).

³ See Cabot (2016), Douzina-Bakalaki (2017), Papataxiarchis (2016), Rozakou (2016) and Theodosopoulos (2016).

a set day to take their food parcel, can only take clothes at designated times, must not make a mess and must respect the δίκτυο as a space. The volunteers work quickly because, as I was told, they are so few. Yet this is also an opportunity to demonstrate one's effectiveness, to take responsibility for problems as they arise. In this way, in the act of offering, the volunteers become efficient, disciplined and self-organizing. Here the 'good' work of the δίκτυο sits in contrast to the ineffective, lazy and corrupt public sphere. However, the irony that they have become substitute workers for the state is not lost upon them.

Concurrently, the kind of power accruing there is rooted in ethical acts, in the kind of moral labour that volunteers pursue, as they might say, with their 'hearts' or 'spirits'. Appealing to a notion of service, volunteers emphasised the act of giving without taking back, or more precisely, without expecting anything in return. In reality, the volunteers do take from the δίκτυο in the self-worth they gain from undertaking meaningful work, but also being able to pick freely from among the donations of clothes, or taking extra and better kinds of bread. Sweets and pastries are often reserved for them, especially as an expression of gratitude for those working 'μέσα – inside'. At the same time, you should know how much to give and how much to take. One volunteer, who would come but offer nothing to the δίκτυο, was silently ridiculed with knowing looks and glances. The actions of another who took bread when little remained were discussed afterwards. Despite this, volunteering cannot be quantified so simply. All volunteers are entitled to extras, even those, such as myself, who are able to make only relatively limited contributions. Rather, it is the willingness, the offer you make of yourself as a volunteer, which matters.

Who is free to make this offer, however? Of the core members, the majority are retired, giving them the means to occupy themselves at the δίκτυο, unlike those in work, who generally play a smaller role. Otherwise, the volunteers are likely to be unemployed. As someone described to me, he became a volunteer precisely because he was ashamed to take food without offering anything in return. Shame was thus subverted through voluntary work and transformed into 'αξιοπρέπεια – dignity', a buzzword in the solidarity movement, and written on many of the δίκτυο's signs and posters. While the members would insist that there is no shame in taking food, what to make of the greater respect accorded to those who do offer something back? The contradiction is telling: this respect can only be realized in relation to others who are dependent on the work of the δίκτυο, on the distinction between those who offer something back and those who do not. Thus, despite the aesthetic of solidarity, a hierarchy emerges premised on the ability to offer, as unemployed and retired volunteers transform their free time into moral authority in the community.

Conclusions

I would argue that, at this intersection between austerity policy and volunteering, new expressions of authority are emerging founded in the moral ownership of welfare. But I have also tried to show how these ethical acts are mired in, and derive from, morally ambiguous situations. Muehlebach (2007) has suggested that although the ethical may widely be perceived as a counterpoint to neoliberal attitudes, it never entirely escapes them. At the δίκτυο, this can be seen in the desire to do ‘good work’. Yet in doing so volunteers engender new, morally fraught interdependencies, just as they unintentionally participate in the neoliberal values they oppose. In sum, the members of the δίκτυο have become custodians for the welfare of others, and in this responsibility they actively struggle with the systems of patronage and hierarchy against which they define themselves. Apart from the state but also supporting it, insisting on rules but also bending them, to be a volunteer but also a recipient, to harden your heart but also to offer it – these are the contradictions of volunteering at the δίκτυο.

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VINCENT DEBAENE, *Far afield: French anthropology between science and literature* (transl. Justin Izzo). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2014, xv, 398 pp. ISBN 978-0-2261-0706-6.

Far afield traces the interactions between anthropological writing and literature in France from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the 1970s, with an emphasis on the tension between ‘science’ and ‘literature’. Written by a literary scholar, Vincent Debaene, the book is remarkable in its detailed concern with the rhetoric of French anthropological writing until the 1970s and its depth of investigation into the historical links between anthropology, humanistic scholarship, social science, cultural critique and fiction. Originally published in French as *L’Adieu au voyage* (Gallimard, 2010), the book also translates a different history of anthropology to that traced in the Anglo-American canon, which offers valuable comparative insights to the historian of anthropology as well as the social anthropologist.

The book’s central object is the phenomenon of ‘second books’ peculiar to French anthropologists in the lineage of Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss. Marcel Griaule, Michel Leiris, Alfred Métraux, Claude Lévi-Strauss – all these authors have tended to produce two books based on their fieldwork experiences: an initial, ‘scientific’ monograph, and a second, more literary work to complement the initial one (or in some cases, to anticipate the upcoming monograph). Lévi-Strauss’s *Tristes tropiques* and Leiris’s *L’Afrique fantôme* are well-known exemplars of this trend, but Debaene surveys many more works in the same genre, extricating in the process some common ground between these works, and explaining how the boundary between science and literature is reframed through them.

Far afield is structured around this ‘second book’ phenomenon and is broadly divided into three parts. The first part defines the historical and rhetorical specificity of interwar French anthropology; the second part delves into detailed case studies of well-known ‘second books’ (including *Tristes tropiques* and *L’Afrique fantôme*); and the last part explores ‘disputes over territory’ (p. 249) between the social sciences and the literary field in France, with some attention to the shifting position of anthropology in these disputes. The reader with an interest in the history and theory of anthropology will find the first two parts most directly relevant, although the third part contains some valuable passages as well, including a clarification of the difference between Lévi-Straussian and Barthesian structuralism (pp. 296-307).

More specifically, and without undervaluing the book’s overall merit, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 seem to present the most original insights. Chapter 3 examines the tension between

‘document’ and ‘atmosphere’ in interwar French anthropology. While the former designates the basic data on a given society gathered and classified by anthropologists, the latter designates the society’s ineffable life, which cannot be grasped by the dead document. The recurring yet insoluble tension between document and atmosphere in the writing of interwar French anthropologists explains, in part, why they sought to write ‘second books’ to describe this atmosphere and compensate for the document’s lack of liveliness. Yet, the document remains a powerful epistemological category in so far as the notion still inflects the ostensibly more literary style of ‘second books’, some of which have sought to become ‘evocative’ or ‘living’ documents (pp. 71-3).

Chapters 4 and 5 examine anthropological rhetoric in more detail. Chapter 4 explores how indigenous texts were incorporated by French anthropologists into their ‘second books’, arguing that this incorporation attempted to evoke the society’s atmosphere in a documentary spirit (with limited success, given the absence of common ground between the text and the reader). Chapter 5, for its part, situates ethnographic writing in relation to travel writing, arguing that the rhetoric of distinction adopted by anthropologists against travel writers is similar, in some respects, to the rhetoric adopted by these writers against one another. Debaene thereby illustrates how the anthropologist’s disdain of travel writing might obscure the common ground between these two discursive fields in France.

Setting aside their own substantive merits, these chapters bring into perspective how anthropology’s insertion in – and interaction with – broader discursive fields varies across national contexts. The French case is interesting in this sense, because there were numerous interactions, if not borrowings, across the divide between science and literature in the course of the twentieth century, whereas in the English-speaking world this boundary has been less porous, in terms of both institutional contact and stylistic influence. One should notice, moreover, how the very terms ‘*science*’ and ‘*littérature*’ did not cover the same discursive fields in France as they did in the English-speaking world (see Debaene’s preface to the English edition, pp. ix-xv). This illustrates how histories of anthropology, just as much as the anthropologist’s own work, need some cultural translation to convey how different historical contexts shape the discipline’s discourses and institutions in different ways.

This translation, moreover, enriches assumptions about the discursive fields within and across which anthropology has been situated. The circumstances in which French anthropology was written and received until the 1970s contrast heavily with the British or American cases since WWII. In the latter contexts, the professionalization of social anthropology has created an insular institutional and discursive space where anthropologists

talk to one another, without being integral to social scientific or literary circles, as they have been in France. Thus, the contrast between the way in which anthropology is written and practised today is more remarkable when one considers the discipline's earlier phases or, better yet, its earlier phases across national borders. This is arguably the great benefit in reading the history of anthropology as a contemporary anthropologist, and *Far afield* affords this possibility in a dense but well-written volume.

Overall, *Far afield* is an excellent contribution to the history of anthropology and specifically, the history of anthropological writing in France. Given the breadth of the book's scope, it would be too harsh to criticize it for including too little detail on the institutional politics of French anthropology, or for reducing the French anthropological tradition to the canonical lineage of 'Durkheim-Mauss-Lévi-Strauss-Bourdieu' (p. xii). The book is well researched, well translated, and will interest all scholars with a keen interest in the French anthropological tradition or the history of anthropology more broadly.

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MARK FLANDREAU, *Anthropologists in the stock exchange: a financial history of Victorian science*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press 2016, xix, 421 pp. ISBN 978-0-2263-6044-7.

Scientific research has always been used and abused by its own practitioners. In *Anthropologists in the stock exchange*, Marc Flandreau explores the dark side of the growth of anthropology in the nineteenth century and shows how that growth fuelled personal ambitions and nationalistic goals.

Flandreau delves into the murky history of the beginnings of the Anthropological Society and its connections with the imperial ambitions of Great Britain under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. He describes the symbiotic, if fraught, relationship between the Anthropological and Ethnological Societies and their opposite places in the political divisions of the times.

In Chapter Two Flandreau describes the ascent of an 'alpha male' clique within the Anthropological Society, known as 'the cannibals', whose collective racism and sexism was in

full view in the minutes of the Anthropological Institute. Flandreau takes great pains to point out the differences between the ethnologists and anthropologists and comes down squarely on the side of the Ethnological Institute, accusing the Anthropological Institute of racism and condemning its zeal in supporting Britain's imperial policies of the time.

In support of his thesis, Flandreau details an episode known as the 'Abyssinian Affair'. This tempest in a teapot began in 1864 with the capture of several Protestant missionaries and a British counsel by the Abyssinian ruler, Emperor Tewodros II. Following a series of unsuccessful rescue missions and the fall of Lord John Russell's government, the situation festered, growing beyond the normal parameters of a minor international incident and taking on a life of its own. Thus, in 1868 Prime Minister Disraeli dispatched soldiers from India on a military campaign along with 25,000 camels, elephants, horses and donkeys to resolve the hostage crisis by force. In the end the men were rescued and Emperor Tewodros II committed suicide. Despite the obvious overkill, Prime Minister Disraeli was praised for 'saving the Empire'.

Flandreau discusses the role played by learned societies in this crisis, particularly the Anthropological Institute. In the chapter entitled 'The violence of science' he describes the rise of a new understanding of the influence of anthropology in the political sphere. For the first time, anthropologists were consulted and relied upon for their scholarship and guidance regarding foreign cultures and the decision-making processes of key leaders in foreign cultures and states.

Flandreau goes on to question the timidity of the Ethnological Society in the Abyssinian Affair. He accurately points out that the only learned voices to be raised in the affair came from the clique of cannibals, the group's overt racism playing an instrumental role in the strong-arm resolution of the crisis.

Through the Abyssinian Affair and several other imperial entanglements, Flandreau eventually brings the reader to the heart his work, namely anthropologists and the City of London. The stock market in Victorian Britain embodied all that was associated with a sprawling empire, one nearing the zenith of its preeminent century. This was a time when the British Empire reached not only economically but also socially around the globe. In describing how British dominance was secured in this far-flung empire, Flandreau peels back the social and economic layers to reveal the involvement of anthropologists in the economic empire-building of Disraeli's government.

Flandreau highlights one scheme, the case of the Miskito Indians, an indigenous people who lived on the east coast of Nicaragua. Their territory included an area which had been selected for a proposed railroad to the Pacific shore. Through the personage of anthropology promoter Beford Clapperton Pim, the Anthropological Institute became the British Empire's point man,

negotiating with the Miskito Indians, using his academic knowledge and expertise to obtain permission from a relatively unsophisticated indigenous people to build the railway. This, in turn, paved the way for the financing of a lucrative railroad project, seamlessly attaching the science of anthropology and anthropologists to the London stock market and, ultimately, to British colonial ambitions.

Flandreau makes it clear that anthropology was ‘at the elbow’ of colonial entrepreneurs in nineteenth-century Britain. In many ways the Anthropological Institute became a victim of its own success, as it tied itself to more and more colonial adventures that, although financially and politically successful, ended up tainting the Institute’s independent academic profile.

Flandreau concludes: ‘Anthropology was one of the techniques of globalization that developed in an age when the control of the West expanded and operated through the capital market’. This suspect financial–academic symbiosis came up as recently as 2008 when the American Anthropological Association condemned the US Army’s Human Terrain System for employing anthropologists in Afghanistan. Although there were significant differences between the mission in Afghanistan and the cases cited in Flandreau’s book, *Anthropologists in the stock exchange* reminds the anthropological community that acceptance of the discipline by society at large can come at a cost.

Flandreau points out that scientists and financiers have overlapping requirements. The political/financial community needed the veneer of respectability from the learned societies and the learned societies needed the funding of the financial community. A common ground to be sure, but at what cost?

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N.C. KAWA, *Amazonia in the Anthropocene: people, soils, plants, forests*, Austin: University of Texas Press 2016, xiii, 186 pp. ISBN 978-1-4773-0844-8.

Nicolas Kawa has carefully crafted what to my knowledge is the first ethnographic account dedicated to bringing to light important questions and discussions regarding our currently Eurocentric approach to the Anthropocene, a term he examines as filled with paradoxes. Throughout each argument, Kawa creatively metamorphoses his personal experiences of Amazonian rural life during his fieldwork in the municipality of Borba into gripping text and imagery, supported by academic resources and historical accounts specific to the region. This

makes for an accessible, intriguing and convincing read, one that is able to shift the reader's perception the next time they engage with the term and the implications of a quickly changing and adapting environment.

Kawa's argument is that the term 'Anthropocene' illuminates an age dominated by humans and the capacity of humans, mainly in industrial societies, to permanently alter the environment. This view results in a complete blindness to other powerful elements that have agency in this process. The understanding *as-is* not only continues to suppress the major roles of rural Amazonian peoples – or *caboclos* – essentially as 'mediators' between the root of the resources and the growth of modernity, while they reap none of the benefits, it also ignores the agency of the environment itself and the deeper non-human movements, impacts and powerful dimensions that can resist human control.

While including interesting historical accounts, lesser known facts, and addressing widespread fallacies, the ethnography importantly conveys in detail what has so commonly been exoticised and stereotyped among Western perceptions of life in the Amazon and people's lives within it. Kawa's research provides the reader with a more profound awareness of the complex scope of human–environment relationships in Amazonia, as well as pointing out flaws regarding the Eurocentric way of looking at nature and culture as divided, so commonly discussed in anthropological literature, yet still foreign to Western knowledge.

Through this, the book engages in material that delves into Amazonian people's relations with and contributions to modernity and the market economy; agriculture and surrounding fertile anthropogenic soils; the agency, influence and powerful properties of 'Amazonian' plants; and the resistance and socialization of forests, as well as other-than-human explanations for occurrences within it, mythological or other. This ethnography will make foggy readers' present understandings of human relationships with others, but in a way that could bring us back to the drawing table to properly re-conceptualize and advance what we know about global climate change. As Kawa concludes, these 'crises of ecological thinking' (131), which prioritize the human, and avoiding incorporating our relations with other elements will only hurt humanity and the future of the region.

This book is well written and enjoyable to read. It would have been interesting if Kawa had expanded more on Amazonian peoples' relationships with spirit beings, which are fundamental to maintaining social stability and equilibrium in many communities of the Amazon. Kawa expands on the significance of both the Cobra Grande and the Curupira, which are often addressed as explanations for certain landscape and environmental conditions and transformations. As already stated, both mythological subjects are embedded within

moral parameters, which will not go unpunished if humans disobey them. In an example provided for the Curupira or ‘the mother of the forest’, hunters can be punished if they greedily hunt more than their fair share of game (107). Going beyond this, and engaging in more literature that highlights Amazonian peoples’ exchange relationships with spirit others to maintain societal and environmental balance, would have contributed to the argument centered on non-human agency and impact. Nevertheless, Kawa’s ethnography provides valuable insights for anyone interested in ‘the world of the Anthropocene’, and it is certainly an important read for those engaged in work or research in or about the Amazonian region and its peoples.

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