

Editors: Meaghan Morris and Stephen Muecke
Administrator: Samantha Jennings
Cover Image: Courtesy Alphonso Lingis

The
UTS Review

CULTURAL STUDIES AND NEW WRITING

The UTS Review gratefully acknowledges the financial support of The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney, and the University of Technology, Sydney.

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2, NOVEMBER 1996

The UTS Review is a refereed journal. Unsolicited manuscripts should be submitted to the editors in triplicate, double-spaced and not exceeding 30 pages in length, in both hard copy and on disk (Macintosh Word or ASCII format). Submissions undergo peer review; allow 3 months for consideration. We welcome brief responses (up to 5 pages) to material published in the journal.

VISITATIONS

Editors: Meaghan Morris and Stephen Muecke

Administrator: Samantha Jennings

Editorial Address: Stephen Muecke, *The UTS Review*, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, UTS, PO Box 123, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.
Tel: +61 (0)2 9514 1960; Fax: +61 (0)2 9514 1595.
s.muecke@hum.uts.edu.au

Advisory Committee:

Publisher and distributor: John Libbey & Company Pty Ltd
15-17 Young Street
Sydney NSW 2000, Australia
Tel: +61 (0)2 9251 4099
Fax: +61 (0)2 9251 4428
e-mail: jlsydney@mpx.com.au

Martin Allor	Concordia University	Montreal
Ion Ang	University of Western Sydney	Nepean
Tony Bennett	Griffith University	Brisbane
Dipesh Chakrabarty	University of Chicago	Chicago
Kuan-Hsing Chen	National Tsing-Hua University	Hsinchu
Ann Curthoys	Australian National University	Canberra
John Frow	University of Queensland	Brisbane
Ghassan Hage	University of Sydney	Sydney
Vilsoni Hereniko	University of Hawai'i	Honolulu
Jane Jacobs	University of Melbourne	Melbourne
Liz Jacka	University of Technology, Sydney	Sydney
Marcia Langton	Northern Territory University	Darwin
Amanda Lohrey	Writer	Hobart
Jenna Mead	University of Tasmania	Hobart
Sudesh Mishra	University of the South Pacific	Suva
Jon Stratton	Curtin University	Perth
Paul Willeman	Napier University	Edinburgh

Printed by: Arena Printing, on acid free paper.

Copyright: © *The UTS Review* for the issue as a whole
© The Authors for individual contributions

ISSN: 1323 - 1677

Subscription Rates and Style Guide: See end pages.

WRITING AS A FOREIGNER

Chris Berry

Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography and Contemporary Chinese Cinema. Rey Chow. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 252 pp. ISBN 0 231 07683 5

Before undertaking this review, and I admit partly because I was daunted by the task, I decided to see what others have said about Rey Chow's previous writings and how her work gets deployed in their critical thought. The results surprised me. I found no shortage of glowing reviews in journals ranging across a wide variety of fields from visual anthropology to women's studies and even, on occasion, Asian studies. However, despite the speed with which her comet has risen since the release of *Woman and Chinese Modernity* and the frequent citation of her work as an exemplar of postcolonial critique, I found few extensive deployments of her work.¹ There were plenty of references in footnotes, mentions in lists of important new thinkers and so forth, but few detailed discussions or analyses.

In *Primitive Passions*, Chow tackles what is probably the most widely known body of texts she has written about to date. The contemporary Chinese films selected are mostly internationally circulated and recognised arthouse movies. Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (*Huang Tudi*) and *King of the Children* (*Haizi Wang*) feature particularly strongly along with Zhang Yimou's trilogy, *Judou*, *Red Sorghum* (*Hong Gaoliang*) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (*Da Hong Denglong Gao Gao Gua*). The result is certainly the most sophisticated, challenging and insightful collection of writing on these filmmakers so far. Furthermore, as the lengthy (and weighty) subtitle of the book indicates, its relevance extends far beyond

Cinema Studies to encompass a wide range of contemporary critical concerns.

As in her other writings, Chow turns texts into pretexts for her own spectacular discursive displays of erudition. She does not make a meal of them. She transforms them into an intellectual banquet, a feast of references and topics spun out across both Chinese and English language critical thought, rich in insights and often infuriating in provocations. Hence the central core of the text, which consists of two new and two previously-published but revised essays on specific films, is bookended by two longer and more general essays. The latter consider such topics as the role of cinematic visual culture and gender in the construction of Chinese modernity, and the re-imagining of Chinese ethnicity in a post-Mao era marked by disillusion with the models of the socialist heyday and the challenge of engagement with the globalising capitalist economy.

In the face of all this, it is difficult to know where to begin. Maybe this is part of what inhibits other writers from using her insights. But, I would suggest, maybe it is also the postcolonial challenge to existing epistemological frameworks issued by her work. Therefore, rather than attempt the impossible task of summarising all the arguments about particular films and concepts made in the book, it is these more general issues that I wish to focus on, taking one particular and central argument as my starting point. In this way, and in a manner that rhymes with Chow's own take on contemporary Chinese cinema, I hope to consider her writing and the resistances it seems to be encountering as manifestations of the very globalising, postcolonial culture she addresses.

Staring from the cover of the paperback edition of *Primitive Passions* is Gong Li. Established as China's only film actor with international box office pull, Gong Li is a veritable emblem of Chinese cultural participation in that globalising, postcolonial culture. Her image is also almost certainly what first comes to mind whenever Zhang Yimou's films are mentioned.

Yet, unlike the many other commentators she cites, Chow is not satisfied to see Zhang Yimou's images of Gong Li as merely further instances of male voyeurism upon objectified women, compounded by orientalist exoticism. Instead, she seeks to move beyond this, arguing that there is more to be said. She does so by drawing on her earlier work in *Woman and Chinese Modernity* and placing Zhang's films in a long heritage of Chinese popular fiction. Here, suffering women are not only objects of sympathy but also of identification by virtue of their admittedly problematic discursive deployment as symbols for China itself.

The particular still on the cover of *Primitive Passions* is taken from a scene in *Judou*, discussed at length in Chow's chapter on the trilogy of

Zhang Yimou films (142–172). Here Judou is not only spied upon by Tianqing, her lover-to-be, when she is bathing the wounds inflicted by her sadistic husband. Perceiving Tianqing's presence, she also turns to face him, defiantly displaying herself and her wounds to him.

Just as the character Judou perceives her own objectification and turns it back on her viewer, so Chow argues Zhang's film seizes all the sexist, patriarchal, orientalist baggage of China as a locally and globally circulating set of signifiers and displays it as an act of defiance. In so doing, in tactically taking on board these established signifiers but re-deploying them in what Bhabha might call an act of 'colonial mimicry', the very assumption of agency pulls the carpet out from under them, so to speak, reversing the poles of power and action they depend upon to maintain their established valencies and significations.² Voyeurism becomes exhibitionism, and objectification is answered with defiance. Yes, the image seems to say, I am that thing! And just as this act initiates Judou's agency within the world of the film, so Zhang's move has enabled his films and Chinese cinema to engage with and actively participate in the international cinema.

In *Primitive Passions*, Chow's discussion of this image is both the culmination of her argument and its linchpin. In the preceding chapters, she has covered a number of films which, like Zhang's, re-write China on the screen. Chow sees these texts as participating in a new ethnography, a new writing of Chinese self-conceptualisation in response to the crisis provoked by the loss of faith in Maoist socialism and the encounter with globalising capitalism.

However, what is at stake in her argument is not only the particular interpretations of the particular texts, but also the grounds upon which such interpretations should be undertaken. At the beginning of her chapter on Zhang's trilogy, she states:

I will ... use Zhang's films as a way to raise some issues in cross-cultural interpretative politics. This does not mean that I will neglect the specificities of Zhang's films. On the contrary, my argument is that these specificities can be fully appreciated only when we abandon certain modes and assumptions of interpretation (142).

What are the modes and assumptions that Chow's interpretation calls upon us to abandon? Who is the 'we' she is addressing? And what are the new modes to replace those abandoned? Perhaps most immediately clear to those engaged in English-language cultural studies from this example is the assumption that any display of a female character, especially by a male director, is always, already and only a sexist objectification. As Chow states, she is fully in sympathy with the 'feminist intent' of such an approach, but 'in criticising Zhang's "traditional" or "patriar-

chal" treatment of women, feminist criticism may unwittingly put itself at the service of a kind of conservatism ...' (152).

This conservatism is presumably that type of feminist framework which has reached a limit where it cannot see or facilitate any potential breaks with patriarchy, because its own legitimacy as a pure counter-discourse has become paradoxically dependent upon maintaining the enemy it simultaneously rails against. This argument is not in itself unfamiliar, and Chow's own interpretation of Judou provides an example of an alternative mode which sees oppression but places emphasis on the fact that, no matter how unbalanced the poles of power, there is always the possibility of response.

However, what is also at stake here is the politics of anti-colonialism. In the context of a Chinese popular fiction discourse where women carry symbolic status as China, Chow's refusal to take the line between male Subject and female Other as an unbreachable given simultaneously also constitutes a refusal to assume the impermeability of the line between First World Subject and Third World Other in the context of the globalised circulation of Zhang's films. In this, her particular postcolonial feminism is clear.

Her discussion of Judou, and indeed her work in general, should also be seen as an engagement with the critics of postcolonial criticism. It achieves this not so much through a direct engagement with them, but more through its status as an example of what politically engaged postcolonial criticism can be and entails. In particular, the critical discourse practised in *Primitive Passions* counters many of the allegations that have been levelled at postcolonial critique by the adherents of the three worlds discourse.

Ella Shohat's 'Notes on the "Post-Colonial"' is an oft-cited example of the criticism of postcolonial discourse, recently revised for inclusion in *Unthinking Eurocentrism*.³ The latter work maintains a three worlds perspective, but attempts to append various insights gained from post-colonial criticism. The main thrust of Shohat's article is to accuse postcolonial critical discourse of depoliticising the field. This is potentially a very serious charge, and it would be more convincing were it backed with more concrete instances drawn from postcolonial critique itself. For example, in common with many others, Shohat accuses post-colonial discourse of homogenising and blurring difference; 'As a descriptive catch-all term, "hybridity" fails to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity: colonial imposition, obligatory assimilation, political co-optation, cultural mimicry, and so forth'.⁴

However, a generalised and homogenised account of the dynamics of postcoloniality is precisely what Chow's work avoids. To return to the

example of her analysis of the shot of Judou on the cover of *Primitive Passions*, she locates it very carefully in a complex and specific matrix that simultaneously accommodates a legacy of melodramatic popular fiction centring on female characters, the internal Chinese cultural crisis of the mid-eighties, and the work's international circulation. To turn Shohat's criticism on its head, these simultaneous ambivalences are what hanging on to the three worlds discourse risks making invisible and cannot accommodate. Such approaches are limited to an either – or binarism, which makes it impossible to see both the complexity that Chow so carefully delineates and the political engagement in the deconstruction of colonial power dynamics she argues it enables. Unlike 'First World', 'Third World' and so forth, which function as pure, essential, ontological concepts, 'hybridity', 'syncretism', 'postcoloniality' and so forth do indeed function as descriptive categories. And this is what enables them to be specific and flexible in their usage, for each instance of their application is particular rather than an expression of an underlying pure concept.

Thus, the three worlds discourse also risks a conservatism that runs counter to the intentions of its proponents. As Chow details at some length (151–6), both inside and outside China Zhang, Chen Kaige and many other Chinese filmmakers successful overseas are accused of peddling exoticised images of Chinese backwardness to titillate Western viewers, of orientalism. This criticism is issued not only by critics following the Chinese government line, but also by those with a well-established independent stance. One of the best examples is the well-known cultural and political commentator Dai Qing, who went to prison following her support for the 1989 student Democracy Movement.

In an article translated into English and cited by Chow, Dai complains that Zhang's movies are made for foreigners and expresses her outrage at his tendency to invent apparently traditional decor, customs, costumes and so forth which never existed.⁵ For example, the whole business of hanging the red lanterns in *Raise the Red Lantern* has no basis in fact, there is no historical basis for the dyeing works architecture shown in *Judou*, and the liquor distilled from sorghum is red in *Red Sorghum* but clear in reality.

In this critique of Zhang and others, issues of authenticity and betrayal are linked by a discourse in which Chineseness is understood in terms of national identity. Reading this type of critique, it seems that not only is telling lies about China to please foreigners, but pleasing foreigners is always already to tell lies about China. For Chow, however, the highly stylised and foregrounded unauthenticity of Zhang's work is part of what appeals to her politics, for it displaces the concern with authenticity that underlies such discourses. Instead, the foregrounded fictitious quality of

Zhang's work emphasises that although his works are engaged in a Chinese ethnography, that ethnography is always already a mythology, one of many possible constructed discourses rather than a claim to authenticity. In this way, it can be mobilised to disrupt any attempt to base Chinese self-conceptualisation in a model of a singular, authentic, identity.

Yet, for Dai and the others who criticise Zhang in this way, Chow suggests it is precisely the obsessive belief that there is and must be a singular and authentic Chinese identity that risks conservatism and blunts their critique. The risk lies precisely in the ease with which these writings are co-opted into the government's own nationalistic attacks on Zhang and others. Possibly intended to divert attention from internal tensions, these were notably mobilised in the wake of the Tiananmen Square Massacre of 1989 and have most recently manifested themselves in the disputes over war exercises in the Taiwan Strait at the time of the Taiwanese presidential election in early 1996.⁶ Like the government line, these writings operate from a theoretical framework which makes no space for internal difference within Chineseness let alone the concept that Chineseness is constructed through its international as well as local circulation. Although few of these writers would see themselves as followers of a government line, the epistemological identity of their framework to that of the government makes it impossible for them to maintain adequate distance.

Perhaps we can get some further sense of what is at stake in Chow's resistance to the national identity that forms the basis for third world nationalism, not only in terms of the problems of the three worlds discourse but also in terms of who pays the price and the possibilities that are lost, by turning to one of her other essays, recently published in *UTS Review*: 'The Politics of Admittance: Female Sexual Agency, Miscegenation and the Formation of Community in Frantz Fanon'.⁷ Contrary to those who hold that Fanon has little to say about the 'coloured woman' in his writings, Chow finds that she is what troubles his vision of the anti-colonial nation. She haunts that vision as a sexual agent who poses the threat of miscegenation, itself a blurring of the clear line between the anti-colonial nation-in-formation and the First World at the same time as her own sexual difference disrupts that fantasy of a unified formation from within.⁸ As Chow writes:

The ultimate danger posed by the Negress and the mulatto is hence not their sexual behaviour *per se*, but the fact that their sexual agency carries with it a powerful (re)conceptualisation of community – of community as based on difference, heterogeneity, creolisation; of community as the 'illegitimate' mixings and crossings of colour,

pigmentation, physiognomy – that threateningly *vies with the male intellectual's* (21).

Likewise, for those who can only conceive of communities as pure, unified formations with clearly delineated borders, the display of Judou to Western viewers via the international circulation of Zhang Yimou's texts can only constitute an act of betrayal, a sort of virtual miscegenation. Chow writes:

... what makes the women's conscious or unconscious desires for miscegenation such a traumatic event in Fanon's theory is that such 'sexual' desires in fact share with the male intellectual's *race-conscious, anti-colonialist message a common goal – the goal of ending the compartmentalised, Manichean division of the world into coloniser and colonised, us and them, that is colonialism's chief ideological legacy* (19).

Returning to my opening curiosity about why Chow's work has not been more extensively deployed, it is clear from this passage and from the example she sets in *Primitive Passions* and her other work that politically engaged postcolonial criticism requires a wholesale theoretical and critical reorientation. It is more than just appending a few passages attempting to accommodate phenomena such as hybridity and syncretism within what is otherwise a three worlds discourse. This is what is done, of course with the best intentions, in Shohat and Stam's *Unthinking Eurocentrism*.

Furthermore, this wholesale reorientation involves not only a primary focus on phenomena that breach the defining categories that subtend colonialism and its legacy. It also involves the enunciatory location of the critic. This has also been a major issue in criticisms of postcolonial discourse. Perhaps the most extended example of this challenge can be found in Arif Dirlik's article, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism'.⁹

Dirlik has been a most insightful and innovative Marxist critic, but postcolonial discourse clearly sticks in his throat. In particular, in the article, he notes the failure of postcolonial critics to analyse the conditions of their own existence. Sticking to the three worlds discourse, for him, they are 'Third World intellectuals [who] have arrived in First World academe' as a result of the globalising forces of capitalism itself (329). Noting in a footnote with some disdain Gayatri Spivak's position at Yale (330), he concludes that:

To put it bluntly, postcoloniality is designed to *avoid making sense of the current crisis and, in the process, to cover up the origins of postcolonial intellectuals in a global capitalism of which they are not so much victims as beneficiaries* (353).

Coming from the Professor of History at esteemed Duke University and

a man who claims to be '(more or less) one of the Third World intellectuals in First World academe' (328), this borders on hypocrisy or, at a very minimum, hoisting oneself on one's own petard.

More important, however, it demonstrates once again the pertinence of Chow's remarks about the inability to see the subtleties and political possibilities of the current situation if one persists with interpretive modes and assumptions that exclude them. For Dirlik, it seems, intellectuals can only be *First World or Third World* (he acknowledges the demise of the *Second World* on p. 350). And those who term themselves postcolonial can only be accommodated into this epistemology as traitors from the Third World trying to be First World, much as the same framework can only see Zhang Yimou's films as pimping Gong Li as an orientalist titillation for Western viewers.

However, what the alternative position might be remains inadequately articulated in postcolonial discourse. This is not a matter of giving an individual, personal or psychological account of one's enunciatory position. Rather, it requires an explicit account of how the postcolonial intellectual locates herself or himself in relation to the reconfigured topography of globalising capitalism in order to remain politically engaged. As Stuart Hall notes in his sophisticated and penetrating account of the various challenges mounted against postcolonial critical discourse, for all the failings of Dirlik's article, in pointing out the absence of such an account he has indeed 'put his finger squarely, and convincingly, on a serious lacuna in the post-colonial episteme'.¹⁰

Chow does not answer this larger question directly in *Primitive Passions*. However, she does make a striking statement about her own position. She claims that 'I write about contemporary mainland Chinese cinema ... ultimately as a foreigner' (51). What are the implications of this remark? For Dirlik, this would presumably mean nothing more than a disavowal of her Third World roots. I doubt whether this is the case, nor do I think this is offered as any sort of apologia for a lack of authenticity. Although such a remark certainly cannot constitute the fully articulated analysis of the relationship between postcolonial criticism and global capitalism that Hall and Dirlik both call for, it does offer some clues about what is entailed.

For, in claiming to 'write ... as a foreigner', it seems to me that Chow is provocatively marking out both her rejection of the concept of the authentic voice and her rejection of the idea that Chinese culture is a self-enclosed entity that only those living in and belonging to a self-designated national community have a stake in (in other words, the Chinese government line that outsiders should not intervene in China's internal affairs). As her discussion of Fanon indicates, national communities are constituted in our world as patriarchal. For Chow, it is only possible to

be both a feminist and an anti-colonial intellectual by working in a post-colonial framework that admits multiplicities of difference. The very writing of *Primitive Passions* is an attempt to produce such an enabling framework.

Once again, the implications of this are daunting for other scholars who wish to write about cultures other than their own. For it requires a wholesale reorientation and rethinking of their enunciatory position. In a world where the line between First World and Third World is no longer impermeable, as the very existence of what Dirlik persists in calling 'Third World' intellectuals in the 'First World' itself illustrates, they cannot claim to be writing from an uninvolved distance anymore. In a situation where the former populations of the Third World cannot be seen as simply the objects of colonialist capitalism but also as agents within the societies of globalised capitalism, scholars need to rethink their relations to both the former First World and the former Third World. What exactly are their various interests and concerns in a world where the former Third World can, to greater or lesser degrees, choose to accept or reject their work with consequences not only for the former Third World but also for them? What do they hope to gain from engaging in the anti-colonialist struggle, other than a sense of their own nobility? How should this situation cause them to address their work and to attempt to engage politically?

Primitive Passions is addressed to both Chinese intellectuals, in and outside the People's Republic, and to other intellectuals interested in China. I interpret this to stem from Chow's understanding that all their various responses will impact upon her efforts to encourage and participate in carving out the kind of postcolonialist world and Chinese culture she requires for her own self-empowerment and that of other Chinese women. In other words, Chow's writings work from the assumption that Chinese intellectuals and intellectuals elsewhere in the postcolonial globe are located in a shared (but not undifferentiated) space.

By way of contrast, in *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Shohat and Stam seem to address their calls for a multicultural pedagogy to the intellectuals of the First World alone. Although I am sure that both authors are globally engaged in many aspects of their work and their own lives, the logical implication of this rhetorical address, intentional or not, is that First World intellectuals are still the only ones that really count, that can actually exert power, and of course this is one of the hidden assumptions of the three worlds discourse. Also as a result of this epistemological framework, their well-motivated calls for a multicultural pedagogy are not, as far as I can tell, grounded in an attempt to explain how this will benefit their (implicitly First World) readers and work for their political and material interests, because again the three worlds discourse assumes that the interests of

these First World readers can only be aligned with colonialism and neo-colonialism. Rather, the logic of this seems to come down to an appeal to self-sacrificing liberal fairness. In this sense, Shohat and Stam are disabled by their own epistemological framework. For, although they quite admirably call for solidarity with the Third World, it is impossible to see how this can be achieved with a thinking that cannot articulate the grounds of meaningful contact, mutual impact, common interests against other foes, and so forth.

In conclusion, then, I would argue that it is these larger challenges implicitly issued by Chow's critical practice in *Primitive Passions* and elsewhere that are daunting and yet most demand explicit articulation and consideration. This book is not a conventional study of a certain cinema. There is no attempt to discuss the institutional context of filmmaking in China at present. There are no tables indicating numbers of films produced in different studios. There is no discussion of major trends and general directions across the industry as a whole. Put simply, it is not a mapping exercise conducted from some external space.

Rather, *Primitive Passions* attempts to articulate another, engaged framework within which that cinema can be analysed, and this framework attempts to make visible what is at stake in the texts analysed for those engaged in such an interpretive project whether as writers or as readers. As such, it itself constitutes a part of and moves the reader into postcolonial Chinese culture as one which is challenging the remnant epistemology of the colonial order and demanding our attention as a space mobilised by a range of various empowered players. And in the case of Chinese filmmakers, as Chow rightly assumes, the very global circulation of their texts attests to the extension of that power well beyond the borders of the People's Republic itself.

Notes

1. Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity: The Politics of Reading Between East and West* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
2. Homi Bhabha, 'Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse', in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85–92.
3. Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the Post-Colonial', *Social Text* no.31/32 (1992), 99–113.
4. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the media* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 43. For a review of the book that takes a somewhat more generous approach, see Laleen Jayamanne, 'Unthinking Multiculturalism', *UTS Review* 1:2 (November 1995), 202–207.

5. Dai Qing, 'Raised Eyebrows for *Raise the Red Lantern*', *Public Culture*, 5:2 (1993), 333–337.
6. See, for example, Chris Berry, 'A Nation T(w/o)o: Chinese Cinema(s) and Nationhood(s)', in Wimal Dissanayake (ed.), *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 42–64.
7. Rey Chow, 'The Politics of Admittance: Female Agency, Miscegenation and the Formation of Community in Frantz Fanon', *UTS Review* 1:1 (August 1995), 5–29.
8. In her response to Chow's essay, Susan Schwartz finds evidence of other roles for female agency in the creation of new Algerian nation in those of Fanon's writings Chow does not use for her essay. However, in Schwartz's very account of Fanon's revolutionary woman who drops the veil and becomes a sister in the struggle, she concedes that this woman is masculinised and her difference is thus neutralised. This only supports Chow's arguments about the patriarchal quality of national formations and their oppression of those that disrupt them. Susan Schwartz, 'Fanon's Revolutionary Women', *UTS Review* 1:2 (November 1995), 197–201. Much recent work on Chinese women's experiences under Maoism indicates similar sacrifices. See, for example, Phyllis Andors, *The Unfinished Liberation of Chinese Women: 1949–1980* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983); Kay Ann Johnson, *Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Judith Stacey, *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); and Marjorie Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).
9. Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism', *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Winter 1994), 328–356.
10. Stuart Hall, 'When Was "the Post-Colonial?" Thinking at the Limit', in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 258.

ANTHROPOLOGY AFTER GEERTZ

Sarah Williams

After the Fact: Two Countries, Four Decades, One Anthropologist
Clifford Geertz. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, 198 pp.
ISBN: 0 674 00871 5

'S uppose, having entangled yourself every now and again over four decades or so in the goings-on in two provincial towns, one a Southeast Asian bend in the road, one a North African outpost and passage point, you wished to say something about how those goings-on had changed'. Suppose, in fact, that the reader must tacitly understand and participate in the symbolic economy of Clifford Geertz, this eminent American cultural anthropologist and Professor of Social Science at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study, in order to suppose the dilemma with which he begins this book: having something to say as an anthropologist, now, after the fact, about four decades of change in two countries. Suppose, dear reader, having entangled yourself within the 'we' of 'Clifford Geertz', you wished to say something about how such an ethnographic fiction did not embody change but, rather, maintained the status quo of his countries, his towns, his cultures, his hegemonies, his disciplines, his