The World in Creolisation

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> A people is judged by history according to its contribution to the culture of other peoples flourishing at the same time and according to its contribution to the cultures which arise afterwards. [T. S. Eliot (1948/1962): 56]

> I'd given myself a nickname just for fun: 'Simon Templar'. But before that I'd called myself 'El Paso Kid', a real colonial nickname. Then one day I changed it to 'Simon Templar'. You see, at this time I had read this novel—*The Saint*—whose main character was named Simon Templar. This guy was very, very clever. In fact, he impressed me as being so clever that one day I went into the classroom, straight to the blackboard and wrote, 'Don't call me El Paso Kid any more. I'm now Simon Templar,' Ohhhhh, can you imagine how stupid I was then, man? [Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, in Moore (1982): 48]

From the time when I first became entangled with the Third World, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, I have been fascinated by those contemporary ways of life and thought which keep growing out of the interplay between imported and indigenous cultures.[1] They are the cultures on display in market places, shanty towns, beer halls, night clubs, missionary book stores, railway waiting rooms, boarding schools, newspapers and television stations. Nigeria, the country I have been most closely in touch with in an on-and-off way for some time, because of its large size, perhaps, offers particular scope for such cultural development, with several very large cities and hundreds if not thousands of small and middle-size towns. It has a lively if rather erratic press, a popular music scene dominated at different times by such genres as highlife, juju and Afro-beat, about as many universities as breweries (approximately one to every state in the federal republic), dozens of authors published at home and abroad, schoolhouses in just about every village, and an enormous fleet of interurban taxicabs which with great speed can convey you practically from anywhere to anywhere, at some risk to your life.

During my stays in Kafanchan, a multi-ethnic, polyglot town close to the geographical centre of Nigeria, I have often found myself somewhat irritated and embarrassed as various townspeople have seen me as a possible resource in implausible schemes for going abroad or getting into some lucrative import–export business (often import rather than export, really). To begin with, I only saw this as a distraction from my purpose of finding out what town life was actually like. With time, I came to realise that these schemes were indeed one part of what it was all about. Such hunches about the good life belonged with the popular tunes about the life styles of the rich and famous, with the hole-in-the-wall commercial school where adolescents may pick up typing, book-keeping and other skills designed to take them from the village to the city, and with the star system of urban folk lore, the tales told in beer bars in which politicians, high military officers and business tycoons become the new tricksters and hero figures.

Contemporary Nigerian culture may seem almost overwhelmingly rich and varied in its manifestations. Even so, it is of a kind that practically every

anthropologist who has been working in the Third World is well acquainted with. Most of us, on the other hand, seem to choose not to write about it; not about the kinds of phenomena I have just enumerated. Or at least not in cultural terms.

A considerable number of anthropologists, of course, have indeed become preoccupied with the fact that many people in Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America are nowadays not hunters and gatherers or swidden cultivators but work on plantations or in mines or microelectronic assembly plants, or eke out a living in some urban 'informal sector'. In the last two decades or so, anthropologists with such interests have focused on issues of development and underdevelopment, metropolis–satellite relations, dependence and the contemporary world system. But, on the whole, they have been more concerned with bodies than with souls. There has been more of an economic and political anthropology here than an anthropology of structures of meaning.[2] Meanwhile, many of the anthropologists concerned with ideas-and-symbols, with culture in the stricter sense of the term, have tended to retreat deeper into the hinterland, to the villages and the forest dwellers—as far from 59th Street as you can get. Their anthropology is sharply defined as a study of the Other, an Other as different as possible from a modern, urban, post-industrial, capitalist self.

Consequently the kinds of things I exemplified from Nigeria have been mostly neglected. There is surprisingly little of a post-colonial ethnography of how Third World people see themselves and their society, its past, present and future, and its place in the world; a cultural analysis of their fantasies and of what they know for a fact. A major historical change has been taking place here, beginning long ago, for sure, but proceeding with particular intensity in the twentieth century; Third World cultures have been radically changed, and more than ever they must be seen as involved in an intercontinental traffic in meaning. 'Galton's problem' keeps getting more difficult to solve. T. S. Eliot, Fanon, Naipaul and Said have addressed themselves to the problems of this new cultural order, in their different ways. Yet as anthropologists we seem to have made no great progress even in developing a vocabulary for talking about such things in an acceptably subtle, well informed way. So, when called upon to say something about them, we may speak piously of living in an interconnected world or even a global village, or we may lapse (with or without embarrassment) into the simple rhetoric of denouncing cultural imperialism, or we come up with one more improvisations on the 'between two cultures' theme; all of which, we probably realise, are rather limited intellectual resources for actually making much sense of these things. A macro-anthropology of culture is apparently required, to provide us with an improved overall understanding of how ideas and their public manifestations are organised, in those social structures of considerable scale and complexity which now encompass Third World lives just as certainly as they encompass our own. And it is required also because no entirely coherent and credible macro-oriented perspective in cultural studies seems to have developed anywhere else in the human sciences, either.

To begin with, two contrasting pictures of Nigerian society and culture may give an idea of what shape such a macro-anthropology could take— Nigeria will serve generally to provide my ethnographic corpus. I will just

sketch one of these pictures very briefly, and develop the other more fully.

When 'serious journalism' in North American and Western Europe is called upon to provide a background to the tumultuous events of Nigerian politics, it draws the picture of an entity made up of some 250 tribes, with about as many languages. Nigeria comes across as an artefact of British colonialism, with inevitable conflicts among its heterogeneous population. A similar view seems to be reflected in the conventional format for writing Nigerian anthropology, the monograph about some particular ethnic group—Yoruba or Hausa, Nupe or Tiv. Where there is no cultural homogeneity, no shared indigenous language, it may appear that there is no such thing as a Nigerian culture to study.

Yet Nigeria is a reality, of a certain kind. Countries like it are the results of the expansion of the present world system into non-Western, non-northern areas, and they have developed cumulatively through interactions within the world system, in its political and economic as well as its cultural dimensions. Their emerging social structures have provided the matrices within which an international flow of culture has continuously entered into varying combinations and syntheses with local culture. In this manner pre-colonial cultures have turned into colonial cultures, and colonial cultures into post-colonial cultures. The entire process must be viewed in historical terms, where the present is also part of history.

The second view of Nigerian culture, and others more or less like it, then, places it in a world system framework, and its emphases are rather different from that of the ethnic mosaic. First of all, it is true that as they moved into Africa a hundred years ago or more the colonial powers may have drawn boundaries which were at the time entirely arbitrary from the point of view of local life. And countries like Nigeria may have inherited some of the arbitrariness at independence. It is also a fact, however, that, these days, the creation of a State tends, to some degree at least, to be a self-fulfilling prophecy of the development of a nation. Even if it has been an uphill struggle in many cases, including that of Nigeria, and in the end an unsuccessful one in some of them, the former colonies have continuously accumulated more common history, and each one of them now has an overarching apparatus of administration, education and media power. Gradually, if still quite incompletely, they have become more nation-like, and at least some of the varied currents of meaning flowing through their social structures, and hardly insignificant ones, can now well be described as national, rather than local, regional or ethnic in their circumscription. One could only ignore this by bracketing a century or more of history.

At the same time, from the very beginning and continuously since, these national cultures have been parts of a wider whole. The world system as an international order, according to the view which came to the forefront in the social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s, is integrated through largely asymmetrical links between centres and peripheries, with Third World countries like Nigeria at the peripheries. And the system of centres and peripheries also continues into the national society, to order it internally. In broad terms, the national culture becomes similarly organised. It may in fact seem to begin already outside the national boundaries, with the migratory flux between metropolitan and Third World countries. Asians, Africans, Latin Americans

and West Indians in Europe and North America are usually considered in social science research only as immigrants to the metropoles. Simultaneously, however, they form extensions of their home societies, of which they often remain active members. In this way London, Paris, Brussels and Miami are among the major Third World cities, and a varied cultural flow passes from them through the networks of migrant workers, students, exiles, international petty entrepreneurs and tourists. In the late colonial period the 'been-to', who had been to England, became a conspicuous social type in Nigeria, portrayed, for example, in Cyprian Ekwensi's novel *Jagua Nana* (1961). By now the passenger load capacity of air traffic between, say, Western Europe and Lagos in a week would probably be large enough to hold several entire highland New Guinea ethnic groups. And a rather large part of media production specifically for the Third World, such as books and news magazines, to no small extent created by Third Worlders, is also based in London and Paris.

   Looking at things within the territorial boundaries in simple spatial terms, there is a cultural spectrum where the capital, and perhaps some small number of other large cities, are at one end; in Nigeria places like Lagos or Ibadan, Kano or Kaduna. The concentration of certain entities within the institutional and occupational structures in these centres turn them into bridgeheads for the penetration of metropolitan cultural influences into Third World national cultures. I have in mind here, for example, the occupational subcultures as well as the general life styles of certain groups of peoples who are at home in metropolitan culture as any European or American, who may have spent a considerable part of their lives abroad, and who may continue to constitute the national jet set. (And who, furthermore, may potentially be a part of the brain drain from the Third World to metropolitan countries.) Academics belong here, as well as people in the professions and the media, and management staff in large, often trans-national, enterprises (see, e.g., Sauvant, 1976; Golding, 1977). On the national scene they may serve as cultural models of metropolitanism, manifested in their styles of housing, food and drink, clothing, cars and other consumption patterns, as well as—at least in some contexts—in their modes of speech.

   At the other end of the cultural spectrum we may find a remote rural village. If international cultural influences reach at least some of the people in the large city quite massively and directly, they perhaps make their way to that village in fragments, and indirectly. But between the city and the village a relatively open network of relationships is stretched out, including, for instance, such provincial towns as Kafanchan. Meanings are made available in one way or another not only within small, self-encapsulating segments of society, and not only intentionally. So people can develop a certain awareness of, and familiarity with, cultural forms which are not primarily theirs, at least not at the given moment; even if these forms are out of reach, not quite relevant to one's present situation, or not actually well understood. One stands to lose many insights into the dynamic of this totality by looking at only one of its parts. As the people of different communities and regions become more entangled with one another, what were previously more self-contained cultures (not least in the eyes of ethnographers) turn in-

creasingly into subcultures within the national culture. And at the same time, the national culture is much more than a mosaic of such subcultures; for the flow of meaning and the construction of perspectives within it organise themselves in such a way as to create much cross-cutting and overlap between clusters of meaning of varied derivation and salience.

The two pictures of what sort of entity Nigeria is should of course not just be placed side by side; they should be merged. An analysis of Nigeria which leaves out ethnicity and ethnic cultures cannot make much sense. The emphasis on a developing, internally diverse national culture, with some cohesion of its own and at the same time a part of world culture, on the other hand contributes a great deal to an understanding of what Nigeria is now, and of the way Nigerians in Kafanchan and elsewhere look at life. But here, and for the purpose of synthesising the two views, a reconsideration of our assumptions about culture seems necessary. Some of what I have to say about this relates to anthropological thinking about culture generally, while some of it has more to do with what kinds of understandings we can evolve about the working of the world system.

What most of our textbooks say about culture in their opening pages does not help us much in the study of complex societies and their cultures. This should not lead us to ignore the realities but to re-examine our conceptual conventions. 'A culture' need not be homogeneous, or even particularly coherent. Instead of assuming far-reaching cultural sharing, a 'replication of uniformity', we should take a distributive view of cultures as systems of meaning.[3] The social organisation of culture always depends both on the communicative flow and on the differentiation of experiences and interests in society. In the complex society, the latter differentiation is by definition considerable. It also tends to have a more uneven communicative flow—that is, different messages reach different people. The combined effect of both the uneven flow of communications and the diversity of experiences and interests is a differentiation of perspectives among the members of the society. Here and there these can be collectivised into subcultures, so that cultural sharing recurs at a lower level of organisation. But in a differentiated society people are also to some extent in contact with (or at least aware of) others whose perspectives they do not share, and know they do not share. In other words, there are perspectives towards perspectives; and one may indeed see the social organisation of a complex culture as a network of perspectives. I would also argue that we need to see cultures generally, but perhaps especially complex cultures, in more processual terms. There is a 'management of meaning' by which culture is generated and maintained, transmitted and received, applied, exhibited, remembered, scrutinised and experimented with. Often this is something much more than just a routine maintenance of culture. Where there is strain between received meanings on the one hand and personal experiences and interests on the other, and where diverse perspectives confront one another, cultures can perhaps never be completely worked out as stable, coherent systems; they are for ever cultural 'work in progress'.[4]

So much for fairly general considerations of cultural analysis. A little more specifically, with what intellectual tools may we best be able to grasp the nature of cultural organisation and process under circumstances like those of

present-day Nigeria? Over the years anthropologists and their neighbours in related disciplines have tried different approaches to complexity and change in the Third World. At one time—let us say, between the 1930s and 1950s—a great many anthropologists, especially in the USA, were doing acculturation studies. One problem with these was that they usually involved a rather weak sense of social structure, of the overwhelming power of Western expansion and of the material bases of change. They were also inclined to conceptualise situations of culture contact as if they were new or at least recent. It is questionable whether this was often realistic then; certainly there are not too many such situations around now. A little later, in the 1950s and early 1960s, 'modernisation' was a key concept, although anthropologists were probably never quite as enthusiastic about it as some other social scientists. The overtones of ethnocentrism and unilinearism were, after all, fairly noticeable. For our purposes, furthermore, it is noteworthy that modernisation theorists often dwelt on social psychology and patterns of social organisation, stripping culture away. A very different framework was that dealing with the notion of plural societies, drawing especially on research experience in colonial planta- tion societies with conspicuously heterogeneous populations in South East Asia and the Caribbean. Here the emphasis was strongly on institutionalised cultural separateness, an ethnic or racial division of labour, and the domi- nance of a single group in the polity. This remains one of the few macro-anthropological approaches to the overall organisation of cultural complexity, but at the present stage there are probably in most Third World countries considerably wider areas of the social structure which are relatively open, not the restricted territory of any particular group. There is also usually a more developed overarching cultural apparatus, forcefully breaking down some of the barriers to a society-wide flow of meaning. Such tendencies create rather different conditions for the development of more intricately organised national cultures.

I may have left out one or two other formulae, frameworks or orientations dealing with similar problems. Clearly enough, however, it is not that we have no past of attempting to understand large-scale cultural systems and their change. It is rather that much of this past does not now seem very usable.

So cultural studies could well benefit from a fresh start in this area, one that sees the world as it is in the late twentieth century. Scattered here and there in anthropology recently, there have been intimations that this world of movement and mixture is a world in creolisation; that a concept of creole culture with its congeners may be our most promising root metaphor. Moving from the social and cultural history of particular colonial societies (where they have tended to apply especially to particular racial or ethnic categories) to the discourse of linguists, creole concepts have become more general in their applications.[5] And it is with a usage along such lines that they are now being retrieved. Drummond (1980; see also 1978) thus moves from a consideration of internal variability and change in the symbolic processes of ethnicity in Guyana to a general view that there are now no distinct cultures, only intersystemically connected, creolising Culture. Fabian (1978: 317) suggests that the colonial system in Africa—'frequently disjointed, hastily thrown together for the purpose of establishing political footholds'—

produced pidgin contact cultures. In the following period there was creolisation, the emergence of viable new syntheses. In Zaire he finds this represented in popular painting, such as in the *mamba muntu* genre of mermaid images; in the Jamaa religious movement, based on a Belgian missionary's interpretation of Bantu philosophy; and in Congo jazz. Graburn (1984: 402 ff.) sees new creole art forms, anchored in the reformulated consciousness of Third and Fourth World peoples, expanding beyond the restricted codes of tourist art.

Current creolist linguistics probably has enough theoretical diversity and controversy to allow for rather varied borrowings into cultural theory. As I see it myself, creole cultures like creole languages are those which draw in some way on two or more historical sources, often originally widely different. They have had some time to develop and integrate, and to become elaborate and pervasive. People are formed from birth by these systems of meaning and largely live their lives in contexts shaped by them. There is that sense of a continuous spectrum of interacting forms, in which the various contributing sources of the culture are differentially visible and active. And, in relation to this, there is a built-in political economy of culture, as social power and material resources are matched with the spectrum of cultural forms. A number of important points seem to come together here.

If the 'Standard', the officially approved language of the metropolis, stands at one end of the creole continuum of language, metropolitan culture in some prestige variant occupies the corresponding position on the cultural spectrum. But what are the mechanisms which place it there, on the range of variations of a national culture, and how do the members of the society come to be arranged in some fashion along that range on the basis of their personal cultural repertoires? I sketched such a spectrum above in spatial terms, from city to village, but this tends not to explain much in itself. If we should look for the mechanisms which are more directly involved in the distributive ordering of culture, we must note first of all that in Third World societies, as elsewhere, the division of labour now plays a major part in generating cultural complexity. Anthropological thinking about culture seems too often to disregard this fact. On the one hand, the division of labour entails a division of knowledge, bringing people into interaction precisely because they do not share all understandings. By not sharing, of course, they can increase their collective cultural inventory. On the other hand, as people are differently placed within the division of labour, they develop varied perspectives going beyond that knowledge which is in some sense commoditised, involved in material transactions.

Within the division of labour one set of specialisations make up what, with a term from C. Wright Mills (1963: 405 ff.), we may describe as the cultural apparatus, where a relative few control a largely asymmetrical flow of meanings to a great many more people. The cultural apparatus encompasses, for example, formal education, the mass media, the arts, spectator sports, organised religion, and a large part of secular ritual life. Some segments of the cultural apparatus reach out to everybody in society. Others have more differentiated audiences.

This cultural apparatus contributes a great deal to the centre–periphery organisation of national cultures, and to the channelling of the international

cultural flow into them. The role of education is particularly significant here. Education is cultural process, an organised way of giving individuals cultural shape. At the same time, in much of the Third World, the growth of formal education is a facet of its penetration by the world system (see, e.g., Ramirez and Meyer, 1980). Many Third World societies have also become intensely meritocratic; their critics suggest that they are afflicted with a 'diploma disease' (see Dore, 1976).

I would like to insert some Nigerian evidence here. Those at all aware of the political history of Nigeria know that it has been intensely ethnicised, with a major divide between the north and the south of the country. This may seem to fit the notion of Nigeria as a collection of tribes, united mostly in conflict. A major political figure in the years around independence was Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto, premier of the Northern region, and leader of the dominant political party. The image of Ahmadu Bello, among politicised southern Nigerians and among many expatriate observers, was that of a Muslim feudal aristocrat, an emirate man, a spokesman of the old order. Yet a recent biography by the political scientist John Paden (1986) presents a rather different picture. Ahmadu Bello was indeed a northerner and a Muslim, but at least as much an intense moderniser, deeply concerned with the problem of bringing the people of his region into the emergent national structure on acceptable terms. So one of his major fields of activity was the rapid expansion of northern Nigerian education, including crash programmes to establish northerners in the new meritocracy.

Relate this to an inside account of that first military *putsch* in 1966 in which Ahmadu Bello was killed. The author, Captain Ben Gbulie (1981: 12–19), was one of the young southern officers engaged in the conspiracy. It turns out that, apart from everything else that was going wrong in Nigeria in the mid-1960s, one of the things they found most scandalous was the rapid promotion of northern officers. The northerners had been sent to what Gbulie and his friends saw as inferior British training institutions:

> The implications were quite clear—and most disturbing. Not only had these Northerners become commissioned officers before we were half-way through our first year at Sandhurst, they had all risen to the enviable rank of Captain before we could even appear at the sovereign's parade which served essentially as a pre-requisite for our passing out as Second Lieutenants . . . A *coup d'état*, then, I was fully convinced, would go a long way to remedy the whole situation.

The conclusion, it would seem, is that the emphasis on ethnicity in analysing Nigerian national society contains no more than half the story. Contests may repeatedly be defined in ethnic terms; but the prizes are defined in terms of the new, world system-oriented national culture and the social structure predicated on it.

Education, to reiterate, becomes a key factor in sorting people into the division of labour and determining their life situations, and thereby both directly and indirectly their perspectives—Peel (1978, 1983) and Berry (1985: 30 ff.) have recently written perceptively about local understandings of this among the south-western Nigerian Yoruba. I believe anthropologists would do well to take more interest in education in the Third World, as a part of the endeavour of understanding the social organisation of culture.[6] Not least is

this important because schools tend to impart something more than the knowledge and skills they are officially expected to teach. The notion of a 'hidden curriculum' is now common currency in debates over education in the metropolitan countries. It is hardly any less relevant for an understanding of Third World education and its place in national cultures. And this hidden curriculum often appears to involve, centrally, one orientation or other to metropolitan cultural influences. More classroom ethnography, of a type hitherto carried out mostly in the metropolitan countries, would allow us to examine not only what is formally taught and learned but also the workings of the hidden curriculum. My Nigerian experience suggests that not least boarding schools at the secondary level have often been virtual hothouses for the development of metropolitan orientations (see also Masemann, 1974).

At one end of the national cultural spectrum we thus usually find the people with a greater degree of formal education, which has also probably served them as a passport to social power and material affluence. Occupational and status group subcultures are constructed around their perspectives. Further along the spectrum other groups and subcultures come into being, again to a greater or lesser extent on the basis of shared levels of educational capital. Observers of many Third World societies are familiar with 'the problem of school leavers', mostly young people who may have finished primary schooling, or who have not quite completed it, or who have dropped out at a fairly early point in secondary schooling. They also often form distinct subcultures—at times, of a disreputable sort: they are the 'rascals', or 'sons of the wind'. That formal cultural capital they have acquired does not take them very far. At the same time they may have been strongly influenced by the hidden curriculum; the modelling of consumption patterns by school teachers, attitudes to manual work, to rural life, and so forth.

With the school leavers the world system in its cultural dimensions may reach the remote village; in their sunglasses and ragged T shirts they are at its tail end, as it were. But they are also pioneer consumers of the products of another part of the cultural apparatus—popular culture. We have already seen that at least in Nigeria it is all there; music, fashion, television, a popular press. It has intense reflexive qualities, telling us how producers as well as consumers see themselves, and the directions in which they would like their lives to move. Clearly it also helps order the continuum of creole culture. And, like education, it has mostly been ignored in the anthropology of the Third World.[7]

Much of the popular culture of the Third World is certainly in some way dependent on international influences. Its technology, its symbolic modalities and its genres are often not entirely indigenous. We may even think of the concept of popular culture itself as an import to Third World studies from a metropolitan vocabulary. As we cannot be sure that it is easily transplanted, it may require some critical examination.

In the analysis of contemporary metropolitan cultures we contrast popular culture especially with some more refined 'high culture', produced and largely consumed within a cultural elite. Such a contrast may have some relevance in many Third World contexts as well. It is also important to recognise, however, that the involvement with popular culture often seems to be less precisely a cultural expression of a system of social stratification, and

more directly a reflection of the centre–periphery relationships in the world system of culture. In Nigeria popular culture appears above all to be a manifestation of a metropolis-oriented sophistication and modernity, contrasting not so much with 'high culture' as with 'bush', the derogatory term for anything rustic, uncouth, at least by implication connected with the idiocy of rural life. In some ways popular culture here may even be more like what it was in early modern Europe, as described by the historian Peter Burke (1978); a field of activity more or less uniting elites and masses in shared pastimes and pleasures.

Popular culture engages people in fantasy and play; but to whom do the games belong? Especially in the debate over the impact of the media, the view is often strongly expressed that through radio and television, mass journalism and advertising, and other related information technologies and cultural forms, the cultures of North America and Western Europe threaten other cultures in the world with extinction, a sort of deadly diffusion.[8] Indeed, it is true that 'Dallas' and 'Charlie's Angels' may be seen on Nigerian television, and that hawkers in Kafanchan sell pirate tapes of metropolitan pop music from the back of their bikes. But the more popular sit-coms are made in Nigeria (see Oreh, 1985). And Michael Jackson, Abba and Jimmy Cliff have certainly not destroyed the popular music market for Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Sunny Ade or Victor Uwaifo.

I believe there is room for a more optimistic view of the vitality of popular expressive forms in the Third World, at least if the Nigerian example is anything at all to go by. But, of course, these forms are by no means pure traditional Nigerian culture. The world system, rather than creating massive cultural homogeneity on a global scale, is replacing one diversity with another; and the new diversity is based relatively more on interrelations and less on autonomy. Yet meanings and modes of expressing them can be born in the interrelations. We must be aware that openness to foreign cultural influences need not involve only an impoverishment of local and national culture. It may give people access to technological and symbolic resources for dealing with their own ideas, managing their own culture, in new ways. Very briefly, what is needed to understand the transforming power of media technology, from print to electronics, on cultures generally is a subtle understanding of the interplay between ideas, symbolic modalities with their varied potentialities, and the ability of the media to create new social relationships and contexts (as well as to alter old ones). Of that subtle understanding there is as yet little in the anthropology of complex cultures, at least in any systematic form.

Along the entire creolising spectrum, from First World metropolis to Third World village, through education and popular culture, by way of missionaries, consultants, critical intellectuals and small-town storytellers, a conversation between cultures goes on. One of the advantages of a creolist view of contemporary Third World cultural organisation, it seems to me, is that it suggests that the different cultural streams engaging one another in creolisation may all be actively involved in shaping the resultant forms; and that the merger of quite different streams can create a particular intensity in cultural processes. The active handling of meanings of various local and foreign derivations can allow them to work as commentaries on one another,

through never-ending intermingling and counterpoint. Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, or Fela for short, the creator of Afro beat music, political radical and hero of Nigerian popular culture, tells his biographer that he was Africanised by a black American girlfriend in California who gave him a consciousness-raising working-over (Moore, 1982: 85). Third World intellectuals generally—writers, artists or academics—may be close to the point of entry of the international flow of meaning into national cultures, but, like intellectuals in most places, they are to some extent counter-cultural, carriers of an adversary culture. While far from immune to the charms of the metropolis, they respond to them critically as well, self-consciously making themselves the spokesmen and guardians of Third World cultures (at least some of the time). What they may broadcast about metropolitan culture through the channels of communication reaching into their society, then, is not necessarily that culture itself, in either a pure or a somehow diluted form. It is their report on the dialogue between the metropolitan culture and themselves—as they have heard it. Back in the provincial town a schoolteacher may speak admiringly of the classic ethnography of his people, from the heyday of colonialism, although he may be critical at points on the basis of the oral history he has collected himself. Receding into the past, the 'serial polyandry' of their forefathers and foremothers now seems as titillating to the sophisticates in Kafanchan as Mormon polygamy may be to many Americans. They cannot take the subject as seriously as the missionaries and the first generation of Christian converts did.

   The dominant varieties of world system thought which have developed in recent times seem mostly to leave anthropologists uninterested, ambivalent or hostile. This may in part be due to the tradition of anthropological practice, with its preference for the small-scale, the face-to-face, the authentically alien. Another reason, however, would seem to be our distrust of approaches which seem too determined not to let small facts get in the way of large issues, too sure that the dominant is totally dominant, too little concerned with what the peripheries do both for themselves and to the centre. World system thought sometimes indeed breeds its own rhetorical oversimplifications, its own vulgarities. It seems a little too ready to forget that the influences of any one centre on the peripheries may not be wholly monolithic, but may be varied, unco-ordinated and possibly contradictory. In its typical figures of speech there may be no room for recognizing that there may be several centres, conflicting or complementary, and that certain of them may not be the products of colonial or post-colonial periods. (For Ahmadu Bello, the northern Nigerian politician, the real Mecca was not London; Mecca was Mecca.) And, last but not least, too often in world system thinking there simply seems to be no room for culture.[9]

   A macro-anthropology of culture which takes into account the world system and its centre–periphery relation appears to be well served by a creolist point of view. It could even be the most distinctive contribution anthropology can make to world system studies. It identifies diversity itself as a source of cultural vitality; it demands of us that we see complexity and fluidity as an intellectual challenge rather than as something to escape from. It should point us to ways of looking at systems of meaning which do not hide their connections with the facts of power and material life.

We can perhaps benefit from it, too, because an understanding of the world system in cultural terms can be enlightening not only in Third World studies but also as we try to make of anthropology a truly general and comparative study of culture. Creole cultures are not necessarily only colonial and post-colonial cultures. I spend most of my time in a small country which for the last half-millennium or so has been nobody's colony, at least not as far as politics goes. Yet we are also drawn into the world system and its centre–periphery relations, and the terms of debate in these 1980s seem to be those of creolisation. What is really Swedish culture? In an era of population movements and communication satellites will it survive, or will it be enriched? And the questions are perhaps just slightly changed in the real centres of the world. What would life be like there without swamis and without reggae, without Olympic Games and 'the Japanese model'? In the end, it seems, we are all being creolised.

NOTES

¹ This article was first presented in the Centennial Lecture series of the Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, in March 1986. Parts of it have been adapted from a paper presented in colloquia in the Departments of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley, Stanford University and the University of California, Santa Cruz, April and May 1985. I am grateful for comments made on those occasions. I have also benefited from discussions with my colleagues in the World System of Culture project in the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Stockholm, Stefan Molund, Helena Wulff, and C. Bawa Yamba.

² Nash (1981) has reviewed this body of anthropology, using the notion of a world system.

³ My interest in distributive models of culture has been inspired by the writings in this area of Wallace (1961: 26 ff.), Goodenough (1971) and Schwartz (1978a, b), although it has taken a rather different direction. Sperber's (1985) notion of an 'epidemiology of representations' is another recent expression of a concern with the distribution of culture.

⁴ Although most of Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People without History* is not directly concerned with cultural analysis in a stricter sense, his 'Afterword' in its own way offers this kind of more processual understanding of culture (Wolf, 1982: 387–91).

⁵ For discussions of regionally restricted conceptions of creolism, in the New World context, see, e.g. Adams (1959) and Brathwaite (1971: xiii ff.).

⁶ Cf. Eickelman (1978: 485): 'the study of education can be to complex societies what the study of religion has been to societies variously characterized by anthropologists as "simple", "cold" or "elementary".'

⁷ On the neglect of popular culture in African anthropology see Fabian (1978: 315) and Hart (1985: 254–5). For one brief comment on Nigerian popular culture see Rubenstein (1978).

⁸ Schiller (1971) and Hamelink (1983) exemplify writings in this vein.

⁹ In the work of Immanuel Wallerstein, with whom the world system concept is at present most closely associated, attention to culture is very limited, as some commentators have pointed out (e.g. Collins, 1981: 45 ff.; Chirot and Hall, 1982). To the extent that he does discuss the topic, he sees the differentiation of national cultures largely as the outcome of ideological manoeuvring on the part of dominant strata in both the core countries of the world system and the peripheral areas (Wallerstein, 1974: 349 ff., 1984: 170 ff.).

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Résumé

Le monde en créolisation

L'étude des cultures contemporaines du Tiers Monde, et pas des moindres en Afrique, a encore à tenir compte de la réorganisation et de la transformation des structures de sens et des formes significatives qui ont résulté de leur incorporation dans un système mondial. En se basant particulièrement sur des exemples nigériens, on dénote ici que l'image conventionnelle d'une mosaïque de cultures ethniques qui continue de prédominer à la fois dans le domaine des connaissances anthropologiques et du journalisme est peu satisfaisante et que la diversité culturelle doit être maintenant comprise dans un vaste cadre de relations centre-périphérie, où les cultures nationales émergent historiquement grâce à une interaction entre les courants culturels transnationaux et les cultures locales et régionales. Le système de l'enseigne-ment, la culture populaire et les média sont marqués comme étant des domaines où les influences culturelles transnationales jouent un rôle important dans la formation des nouvelles cultures nationales. Il est également suggéré que l'étude des transformations culturelles du Tiers Monde dans un contexte global bénéficierait d'une perspective de créolisation qui permettrait de reconnaître de façon adéquate les réactions culturelles créatives des sociétés du Tiers Monde aux influences métropolitaines.