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Book review

A biography in the strict sense of the term

Michael Young, *Malinowski: Odyssey of an Anthropologist 1884–1920*, vol. 1, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2004, xxx and 690 pp., £25.00, hardcover

“... he had an artist’s power to create with great integrative capacity a world of his own ... and he had the true scientist’s intuitive discrimination between relevant and adventitious fundamental and secondary issues” – the epitaph Malinowski formulated in his obituary for Sir James George Frazer a year before he himself died could equally apply to Malinowski, as *Raymond Firth (1981:137)* so rightly emphasized in one of his articles on his teacher and colleague. Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the most important anthropologists of the 20th century, is generally recognized as one of the founders of social anthropology, transforming 19th century speculative anthropology into a fieldwork-oriented science. Malinowski is principally associated with his field research of the Mailu and especially of the Trobriand Islanders in what is now Papua New Guinea, and his masterpieces on Trobriand ethnography continue “to enthrall each generation of anthropologists through [their] intensity, rich detail, and penetrating revelations” (*Weiner, 1987:xiv*; see also *Senft, 1999*).

In the first volume of his long awaited biography of Malinowski Michael Young provides the reader with a very detailed and comprehensive picture of the first 35 years of the life of the famous founding father of social anthropology. To write this authorized biography – “informally commissioned by Malinowski’s youngest daughter Helena Wayne with her sisters’ approval” (p. xii) – the author “conducted fieldwork” (p. xiv) in archives and libraries in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Europe, the U.S.A., and Mexico; moreover, Helena Wayne granted him unique access to family papers, her father’s early diaries, unpublished papers and his extensive correspondence. The outcome of the author’s field research is a “bulky biography” (p. xxii), an impressive volume of 690 pages.

To review such a comprehensive volume is problematic. Reviewers have to decide on whether they want to give a brief and general synopsis of the volume, or whether they write a review article that tries to reconstruct the structure of the book and to highlight the central information it presents. With this review article I have opted for the second alternative (and I would like to thank Ken Turner for his offer to do this). Despite the fact that the first volume of Michael Young’s biography does not provide much information on Malinowski’s linguistic research and ideas, I think that Malinowski is such an important pioneer of pragmatics and of anthropological linguistics (a discipline that is

now generally equated with pragmatics; see [Duranti, 1997](#); [Foley, 1997](#)) that a review of the authorized biography on this eminent scholar deserves its space. In what follows I will first summarize the chapters of the book and then present my general assessment of it.

After the table of contents, the list of illustrations and the author's acknowledgements Michael Young presents a note on orthography and pronunciation (pp. vii–xviii). These notes refer to Polish orthographic conventions and names and to Malinowski's Kiriwinian orthography and the pronunciation of Kilivila words. The last paragraph echoes Malinowski's linguistically quite naive "phonetic note" presented after the acknowledgements in the "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" ([Malinowski, 1922:xx](#)) and one wonders why Michael Young does not refer the reader to the phonology chapter in the grammar of Kilivila ([Senft, 1986:11–27](#)) that provides professional information on Kilivila pronunciation, stress rules, and orthography.

In his introduction to the volume under review (pp. xix–xxix) the author gives a brief personal assessment of Malinowski and the biography he has written on this "fascinating figure" (p. xix). Michael Young explicitly mentions his aims in the book and discusses its history and the reasons why he wrote it – also providing the reader with interesting autobiographical data. In this first volume of the biography Young "seeks to explain why, and how [Malinowski] became an anthropologist" (p. xxi). To achieve this aim the author describes the interplay of Malinowski's life and work starting from Malinowski's birth and ending at the moment when he left Australia to sail for England with his pregnant wife and his Trobriand Island field notes – "the ethnographic riches that would secure his legacy" (p. xxi). Young also attempts to "demystify Malinowski's achievements as a fieldworker" (p. xxi) – therefore the last eight chapters of the volume are devoted to his Papuan fieldwork. The author rightly characterizes his book not only as a "literary biography" – and in a number of chapters he manages to describe the sometimes 'Conradian' odyssey of the anthropologist in a Conradian style – but also as a "psychological biography" that attempts to present Malinowski's "point of view, his vision of his world" (p. xxiii; see [Malinowski, 1922:25](#)). This introduction is followed by a selective Łacki-Malinowski genealogy (p. xxx).

The book is divided into three parts and there are all in all 42 plates. The first part covers the years 1884–1910 and consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1, "Father and Son" (pp. 3–22) starts with one of the leitmotifs of the volume, namely with the question "Why did Bronislaw Malinowski become an anthropologist?" (p. 3). In a public declaration in 1925 Malinowski himself referred to the impact the first three volumes of [Frazer's \(1922\)](#) "The Golden Bough" had on him as a student; however, as Young points out, he never gave credit to his father for his career decision, despite the fact that Lucjan Malinowski, the founder of Polish dialectology, held the chair of Slavonic philology at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow and had a great interest in researching Polish folklore. This chapter tries to explore the motivation for this. But Young first informs us about Malinowski's ancestry, his father and his father's education, and the ideals, interests, and 'weltanschauung' principles Bronislaw (or Bronio, as his parents and his friends called him) may have inherited from the families of his parents. Then he points out that young Malinowski between the ages of four and eight led a 'double life' – living intermittently in Zakopane, a secluded Carpathian village, and in Cracow – thus being confronted with two

distinct cultural worlds – with two distinct languages – Polish and French – and a specific Polish dialect. Malinowski himself referred to this situation, implying that his early years may have been responsible for his later career. What Malinowski never mentioned was the fact that “he followed his father’s footsteps by becoming a methodologically astute, linguistically alert, text-gathering, fieldworking ethnographer” (p. 17) – and Young points out that there were indeed a number of other incredible parallels between the lives of father and son. Young interprets Malinowski’s silence with respect to his father as one of his strategies to create his “self-serving myth of the Great Ethnographer” who wanted to preserve the “premise of self-creation” (p. 17). His father died when Malinowski was 13 years old – so he was not old enough to regard him as a rival or a threat. Nevertheless, in an unpublished footnote to a draft of “Sex and Repression in Savage Society” (Malinowski, 1927) he confesses that he had the classic syndromes of the Oedipus complex (see p. 21). Young does not interpret Malinowski’s silence about his father as a form of repression; he rather points out that Lucjan as the personal father figure was simply forgotten. But the author emphasizes that the ‘father problem’ surfaces in Malinowski’s research, namely in his “keen attention to paternity in the abstract” and in his “strident claims that primitives were ignorant of biological paternity” (p. 22) – we will come to this point again later.

The second chapter “Mother Love” (pp. 23–41) introduces Malinowski’s mother Józefa, née Łącka, and describes the very close and quite special relationship between mother and son – most probably due to the fact that Malinowski’s “health was extremely delicate” (p. 27). However, the author emphasizes that Malinowski’s “wretched health was a determining factor in his life” and “he learned to use his ill-health strategically” to “explain a particular course of action or to excuse himself from some disagreeable task” (p. 37). In this chapter, the author also mentions family friends and colleagues of Malinowski’s father that may have contributed to Malinowski’s interests in philosophy, psychology, law, linguistics, folklore and ethnology. He describes Malinowski’s school career – mainly characterized by his many absences because of his bad health condition, and Young points out that it was during this period of Malinowski’s life that he developed his life-long hypochondria. In his diaries Malinowski characterizes his mother’s love for him as a ‘fanatical devotion’, and Young points out that Malinowski’s “maturity . . . was in part achieved despite his mother, with the help of secrets he kept from her – and . . . with much help from his friend Stás Witkiewicz” (p. 40f).

Chapter 3 (pp. 42–55) describes Malinowski’s “Early Travels” with his mother during which he developed his “cosmopolitan nature” (p. 55), his “enthusiasm for the exotic”, and where he became aware of his “practical gift for languages” (p. 43) and gained one of the most important insights for anthropologists: “No language, no penetration!” Or, as Malinowski elaborated this maxim for his students: “Three-quarters of the success in fieldwork depends on the right equipment and attitude to language” (p. 48). Young starts this chapter with a reference to Joseph Conrad (whom Malinowski met in England in 1913), establishing parallels between the two famous Poles Conrad and Malinowski as another leitmotif of the biography.

Chapter 4 – “Essential Friendships” (pp. 56–72) – introduces Malinowski’s friends, especially Stás Witkiewicz, and their relationship with the members of the “Young Poland” movement after Malinowski had finished his Gymnasium education and qualified for his academic education. Malinowski and his friends shared a broad input of political

and philosophical (especially Nietzschean) ideas, and became familiar with, and co-created, the neo-Romantic literary trends that reacted against the prevailing realism of the generation of Henryk Sienkiewicz. Contrary to his closest friend Stás Malinowski, after having experimented with writing a few Conradian short stories, did not fully immerse himself into the bohemian Young Poland movement – realizing that he was not really a modernist, that he did not have an artistic vocation, and that his talents lay elsewhere.

The fifth chapter introduces the “University Student” Malinowski, his professors and mentors, and the topics he studied (pp. 73–90). In 1902, Malinowski registered in the faculty of philosophy at the Jagiellonian University where he studied mathematics, physics, philosophy (including psychology), and humanities (i.e. Polish literature, Slavonic studies and modern history). Young points out that Malinowski’s devotion to mathematics had a strong influence on his concept of “function” and on his systematizing approach to ethnographic data – that became manifest in his well known “synoptic tables” (see below). Malinowski spent most time of his studies on philosophy – and Young emphasizes that this training “most significantly shaped his future thinking” (p. 81). It was especially Ernst Mach who became most influential for Malinowski’s philosophical views – this is manifest in Malinowski’s 1906 thesis “On the Principle of the Economy of Thought” in which he critically evaluates the epistemology of Mach and Avenarius. Michael Young notes that Mach’s view of science “provided the inspiration for Malinowski’s treatment of culture as a functionally integrated system” (p. 87) and was responsible for his scientific credo that “theory must precede description” and that explanations are “secondary to descriptions” (p. 88). In 1919, Malinowski referred to himself as a “naïve empiricist” who – after many “nagging epistemological doubts during his fieldwork” was convinced that “truth means quality of perception” and that therefore “the quality of his own perceptions was an essential ingredient of his success as an ethnographer” (p. 90).

Chapter six – “Decadents” (pp. 91–106) – presents another side of the many-faceted protagonist and his friend Stás – a side that is described in Witkiewicz’s autobiographical novel “The 622 Downfalls of Bungo; or, The Demonic Woman”. The two protagonists of the Bildungsroman, Bungo and Edgar, Duke of Nevermore, are complementary to Stás and Malinowski; the novel describes Bungo’s struggle to become an artist and his relationship with his more or less decadent contemporaries. Bungo finally commits suicide (as Stás did in 1939), and the Duke of Nevermore “... was deported to New Guinea for certain unheard-of crimes he committed ... with a pair of lords and while he was there wrote such a brilliant work about the perversions of those supposedly savage people contemptuously called Papuans ... that he returned to England as a Member of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and a fellow of the Royal Society...” (p. 106) – (note that 10 years later Malinowski indeed published his monograph “The Sexual Life of Savages in Northwestern Melanesia”). In this final paragraph of his novel Stás alludes to a one-time homosexual experience the two friends had; note that Stás’ father perceived a “homoeoteric ingredient in the relationship between his son and Malinowski” (p. 103). The ‘decadents’ Stás and Malinowski also had a triangular relationship with Zofia Dembowska; with this observation Young introduces another recurrent theme in the life of his protagonist, namely Malinowski’s involvement in messy triangles.

Chapter 7 contrasts the decadent and relaxed hedonist Malinowski with “An Ascetic in the Canaries” (pp. 107–127). After his oral examination for his Ph.D. Malinowski and his

mother left Cracow for an 18 months stay on Tenerife. During this time Malinowski kept a personal diary for 4 months – for Young this diary “opens a window onto the inner self of a terrifyingly earnest young man embarked upon a punishing regime of self-transformation” (p. 109). During these months Malinowski tried to answer the ‘fundamental question of life: What to do?’ He realizes that he has creative powers and that he is inclined to do research – and he realizes that he has to improve his personality to not be distracted by “impure impulses” (p. 124). Michael Young describes the outcome of this ‘autoanalysis’ as follows: “. . . he has defined himself as a seeker for the subjective Truth of his own individual being . . . he believes passionately in his unique individuality, and he believes with equal sincerity that it is his life’s mission to strengthen and realize it. To that end he is prepared to endure, and bitterly enjoy, solitude and a degree of self-imposed misery” (p. 124) – it is obvious that this transformation of the hedonist to the ascetic is influenced by Nietzsche and it somehow reminds Young of Freud’s (1930) ideas, I suppose especially of those expressed in “Civilization and its Discontents”. During his stay on Tenerife Malinowski also wrote a letter (in German) to the emperor Franz Josef in which he “sought approval for his doctorate to be granted under the royal seal, *sub auspiciis Imperatoris*” (p. 125) – and in 1908 he was awarded his summa cum laude doctorate and an “imperial delegate presented the new doctor of philosophy with the emperor’s keepsake, the jewelled ring” (p. 127). Young points out that this pompous ceremony impressed Malinowski very much, that it enhanced his self-esteem, and that it was responsible for his “lifelong taste for dignified rites of passage”.

Having returned from Tenerife to Cracow Malinowski had a brief but unhappy affair which might have been the reason for him to leave Cracow immediately after his graduation to study in Leipzig. He intended to pursue research in physics and physical chemistry. However, he was also interested in the physiology and psychology of perception, culture history and “Völkerpsychologie”, but these were second interests. Nevertheless, the economic historian Karl Bücher as well as Wilhelm Wundt had some influence on his thinking, but Young points out that this influence has been overestimated so far, despite the fact that Malinowski actually began a dissertation on “Völkerpsychologie” in autumn 1909. This dissertation “would transmogrify into his first book, *The family among the Australian Aborigines*” (p. 141) – but the book showed no traces whatsoever of Wundt’s teaching (see also p. 147). The Leipzig of Malinowski’s days was known not only for its excellent university and eminent scholars, but also as “a unique centre of musical culture” (p. 129). Chapter 8 – “The Music of Love in Leipzig” (pp. 128–148) – summarizes Malinowski’s time in Leipzig and the start of his love affair with Annie Jane Brunton, a widowed pianist from South Africa 10 years older than Malinowski (this affair constituted another love triangle involving another man). Young emphasizes that during the two semesters of Malinowski’s studies in Leipzig he realized that “his true vocation lay in ethnology rather than physics, in primitive sociology rather than physical chemistry” (p. 130). According to Young, Malinowski’s Leipzig days and especially Annie were responsible for the fact that he combined the art of social anthropology with science, that he “injected scientific principles into an anthropology grounded in field-work-based ethnography” (p. 130). In Leipzig Malinowski again kept diaries which reveal another important gift of the ethnographer-to-be, his “ability to observe human conduct in an alien setting in a fresh and meticulous manner, joined with a stylistic capacity to write

unhackneyed sentences” (p. 134). Annie Brunton finally gave up her affair with the other man in her life and departed for England in December 1909. By then Malinowski had decided to follow her and to finish his dissertation in London. However, his plan to go to England depended on receiving a grant from his university in Cracow. When this fellowship was awarded him, he left Leipzig for London in March 1910. For Young the English Channel was Malinowski’s Rubicon: “the dice of his career were cast” (p. 148).

The second part of the volume covers the years 1910–1914 and consists of six chapters. Chapter 9 – “A London Spring” (pp. 151–167) – describes Malinowski’s (and Annie’s) first months in England. Young points out Malinowski’s general fascination with islands and the sea – which he felt when he left the Continent for Britain – and Malinowski’s “highly developed Anglomania” as well as “his fascination with British culture and the English character” (p. 152). At the age of 26 he had not only “embarked for . . . a totally new course of scholarly activity” but also “begun writing in English” (p. 153). He determinedly worked on his career and managed to “made himself known to most of the leading British anthropologists” (p. 156) within his first months of his stay in London. Young gives an excellent synopsis of the anthropological scene in England – with the “triumvirate” Haddon, Rivers and Seligman (p. 157), as well as Frazer, Freire-Marecco, Radcliffe-Brown, and Westermarck. The biographer mentions that Malinowski, on the basis of a number of by now classic publications that appeared in 1910, “nominated this year as a turning point in the development of anthropology” (p. 166).

Chapter 10 – “Finnish Connections” (pp. 168–191) – first outlines why Malinowski studied at the London School of Economics (LSE). Haddon suggested to Malinowski that his sociological interests might better be served there than in Cambridge. Malinowski attended courses by Hobhouse, the LSE chair of sociology, Seligman and the Finnish-born anthropologist and moral philosopher Westermarck, with whom Malinowski made his most important academic friendship in his first year at the LSE. Through Westermarck he also made friends with his pupils Wheeler, Czaplicka, and Borenius, probably Malinowski’s closest friend at that time. Influenced by Westermarck’s research and views Malinowski wrote his first book, “The Family among the Australian Aborigines” which he completed and submitted in 1911. In this book, Malinowski also discusses (among many other things) Aboriginal beliefs about conception, and he concludes “that throughout the continent the role of the father in procreation was unknown” (p. 180). Young – in a note in brackets – continues his report on Malinowski’s book as follows: “Three years later his own conviction that such ignorance was universal among ‘primitive’ people was fortuitously confirmed by the Trobriand Islanders”. The author then points out that this “issue has provided one of the hoariest debates in social anthropology” (p. 180) – I am afraid I have to take up this debate below when I summarize Chapter 21. Anyway, Malinowski’s book, rejected by CUP but accepted by the University of London Press, was highly praised in a review by Radcliffe-Brown in the journal “Man” and it became “a modest but significant milestone in his career” (p. 181). After he had finished his book he was working on a number of papers dealing with Aboriginal male age-classes and the sociology of the family and he intended to return to the study of magic and religion. Moreover, Seligman encouraged him to learn Arabic (because he planned to send Malinowski to the Sudan to do fieldwork there). In 1911 Malinowski delivered his first

paper on “the economic function of ritual acts and religious beliefs” which was influenced by Karl Bücher’s views to the congress of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Anthropology’s Section H) in Portsmouth (see p. 184). This talk was his contribution to Westermarck’s festschrift, and Raymond Firth later pointed out that “the essay is contra-Frazer” (p. 187). At the same conference Rivers announced that he had abandoned the evolutionary school of anthropology and converted to diffusionism, pointing out that “the analysis of culture must precede speculations concerning the evolution of institutions” (p. 188). Moreover, being primarily a psychologist, he postulated that “[s]ide by side with ethnological analysis, there must go the attempt to fathom the modes of thought of different peoples to understand their ways of regarding and classifying the facts of the universe” (p. 188). This postulate foreshadows Malinowski’s famous statements on how to approach the goal of ethnographic fieldwork in the introduction to the “Argonauts” (Malinowski, 1922:24f).

Chapter 11 – “Ženia” (pp. 192–224) – introduces another woman in Malinowski’s life. When Malinowski returned from a brief holiday in Zakopane in January 1912 he experienced “another year of indecision and uncertainty concerning his future”. Annie left London for a trip to South Africa, and soon after Malinowski went back to Poland because of a family crisis in which he and his mother lost about £1200. Before Malinowski left for Poland he expressed his interest in accompanying the Seligmans to do field research with nomadic Arabs of the Sudan. Seligman requested from the LSE a rather modest grant for Malinowski, but the School declined the request. Nevertheless, informing him about the School’s decision Seligman hinted to Malinowski that his chances of obtaining funds for anthropological fieldwork might well improve in the near future. In Poland, Malinowski kept another diary again, and this diary documents his affair with the married painter Ženia Zielińska. Young characterises the 1912 diary as “a nakedly honest document of [Malinowski’s] attempts to reconcile love and ambition, sex and work” (p. 195). The biographer justifies his relatively detailed reports about Malinowski’s affairs here, before, and later in the book with the remark that the “love life of the author of *The Sexual Life of Savages* must engage our interest” (Malinowski, 1929:195). During his affair with Ženia and under the influence of Ernest Crawley’s (1902) book “The Mystic Rose” that is full of pre-Freudian overtones Malinowski came to the conclusion that “sex really is dangerous” (p. 205). Following a proposal by Stás, Malinowski started to record his dreams, compared them with his friend’s dreams and even consulted a psychoanalyst. Young compares these months in Zakopane with the “Kula”¹: “Malinowski’s life was a search for achievement through restless wandering – an analogue of the Trobriand Islander’s interminable quest for eroticized wealth objects: the symbolically gendered shell valuables of Kula” (p. 209). However, during all these months dominated by his rather painful and gradually diminishing love to Ženia Malinowski also continued his ethnographic studies. He worked

¹ This is the first of many times that Michael Young refers to the “Kula”; he obviously presupposes that all readers of his biography know about the “Kula” because he never explains what the “Kula” is. In the “Argonauts” Malinowski (1922:81ff) describes the “Kula” as “a form of exchange . . . carried out by communities inhabiting a wide ring of islands, which form a closed circuit. . . . articles of two kinds . . . are constantly travelling in opposite directions. In the direction of the hands of a clock, moves constantly one of these kinds – long necklaces of red shell, called soulava In the other direction moves the other kind – bracelet of white shell called mwali . . .”.

on totemism and on Frazer's "The Golden Bough", sketching a critique of Frazer's theories of magic and religion; he would take up these issues in his 1925 essay on "Magic, Science and Religion". At the end of the year he ended his affair with Żenia, left Zakopane for Warsaw from where he made a quick trip to London, returned to Poland again and started a brief affair with Karola Zagórska (whose cousin was Joseph Conrad). At the end of January 1913 he returned to London again.

Chapter 12 – "Totems, Teachers and Patron Saints" (pp. 225–246) – describes how Malinowski consolidated "his intellectual and institutional position with respect to British anthropology" (p. 226). His book, his book reviews, and his conference papers were well-received and in November 1913 the LSE appointed him as a special lecturer. In 1913, Malinowski also finished his Polish book on "Primitive Beliefs and Forms of Social Organisation" (which was never translated into English) and during a visit to Cracow he read a paper to his former teachers there in which he briefly outlined the future of ethnology. Malinowski also completed an eighty-page review-essay of Frazer's "Totemism and Exogamy" which he published in Polish in the Polish journal "Lud". Despite the fact that Malinowski had a "quasi-filial relationship to James George Frazer" (p. 228) Young points out that he wrote this essay "for Lud to bury Frazer not to praise him" (p. 229). Malinowski especially criticized Frazer because of the "lack of a clearly formulated, purposeful method", his failure "to separate fact from theory" and because of "his complete arbitrariness" (p. 230). The review turned out to be "an assault on all speculative evolutionary theories" in anthropology (p. 232); however, as Young points out, this campaign was in Polish, and therefore behind Frazer's back, so to speak (see p. 229). Nevertheless, Young regards Malinowski's "demolition of Frazer's theories and methods in *Lud*" as "an Oedipal conquest of a powerful patriarch – the very one . . . who had fathered his anthropological vocation" (p. 246). In 1913, Malinowski also turned on Rivers. He mainly disagreed with him over "issues such as the priority of monogamy and the individual family over group marriage and the clan" (p. 233). He especially attacked Rivers "doctrine of survivals . . . the persistence of a custom . . . only intelligible through past history". Moreover, contrary to Rivers Malinowski argued that anthropology needs to involve both sociology and psychology to come up with sound scientific explanations. However, Rivers' plea for intensive fieldwork made him Malinowski's "patron saint in fieldwork" (p. 236). The last prominent opponent Malinowski attacked in this year was Emile Durkheim in a review of his book "Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: le système totémique en Australie" published in 1912. He criticized Durkheim's methods and his conclusion and dismissed his postulate "of a collective consciousness as 'barren and absolutely useless for an ethnographical observer'" (p. 240). In the meantime Haddon, Seligman, Marrett and Rivers lobbied for Malinowski to find him funding for fieldwork. With the industrialist Robert Mond and through a Constance Hutchinson Scholarship, Seligman raised £450 for him to do field research in Melanesia. Seligman wanted Malinowski to do a "follow-up study to fill some of the gaps left by his own 1903–1904 expedition to British New Guinea", and Malinowski expressed his enthusiasm for this idea (p. 245). Marrett employed Malinowski as his secretary for the 1914 congress of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in Australia – and the Australian government agreed to pay for his travel expenses. But 1913 was not only an important year with respect to Malinowski's career; in March Annie Brunton had returned from South Africa, and in

mid-April Malinowski started yet another love affair with a married woman who, at the end of this rather turbulent year, took him to visit Joseph Conrad.

Chapter 13 (pp. 247–269) introduces this 24-year-old Polish woman that Malinowski called “Tośka”. This married woman was his “erotic ideal”. Malinowski “pursued a clandestine affair” with Otolia (“Tola”) Retinger “in London, Cracow and Zakopane, broke it off at least twice and finally parted in June 1914” (p. 247). In February 1914, after one of these breaks, Annie Brunton left London and sailed home to South Africa to look after her ailing mother; this was the end of her intimate relationship with Malinowski; however, she remained his close and caring friend. During Easter Malinowski had his last holiday with his mother on the Isle of Wight. Having returned from this trip he found a letter from Staś informing him that Staś’s fiancée had committed suicide. After hearing this Annie suggested in a letter from South Africa that Malinowski should persuade Staś to accompany him to Australia as his “photographer and draftsman” (p. 258), and Staś accepted Malinowski’s proposal when he visited Cracow in April; Malinowski would not return to his homeland for 8 years. Back in England he prepared his trip to Australia and his fieldwork in New Guinea – and Young carefully lists all the items of the future fieldworker’s equipment. On the 8th of June, at the eve of his departure, he said farewell to Tośka – who was for him at the same time the “symbol of the beauty and pleasure of life” as well as “just a whore” (p. 268) – and he spent the last evening together with his mother.

On the 9th of June Malinowski left London and travelled via Paris to Toulon where he and Staś boarded the steamer “Orsovo” 2 days later. Chapter 14 – “A Passage to Ceylon” (pp. 270–286) – describes their trip with this ship to Colombo. During the 17 days of their journey Malinowski began to work on Motu, the Austronesian language spoken in the vicinity of Port Moresby, then the administrative centre and seat of the Governor of Papua. In Colombo Staś and Malinowski first did some sightseeing; then they travelled to Kandy and Matale getting first impressions of an entirely new culture, an unknown country and religion. For Malinowski it was a first test with respect to “his tolerance for the tropics” (p. 279); given his delicate constitution this test was not too promising. Moreover, Staś was still terribly depressed because of his fiancée’s suicide and close to committing suicide himself. However, during these 2 weeks Malinowski realized that one had to know the local language to get something out of all the ceremonies and rituals he had witnessed. On the 10th of July the two friends boarded the steamer “Orontes” and – together with other members of the British Association including Haddon and his daughter – travelled across the Indian Ocean to Australia. During the 10 days of this voyage Young points out that Malinowski “pored over Sydney Ray’s Melanesian grammar” (p. 286). Unfortunately it remains unclear to which of Ray’s many publications Young refers here (even a look at the otherwise quite comprehensive bibliography does not help). I assume the biographer refers to the third volume of the “Reports on the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits” on “Linguistics” edited by Ray and published in 1907.

The third and final part of the volume covers the years 1914–1920 and consists of 14 chapters. Chapter 15 – “An Alien in Australia” (pp. 289–308) – describes Malinowski’s arrival in Perth. The 84th “meeting of the British Association was scheduled to be held sequentially in the state capitals of Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane” (p. 289). In Perth Malinowski encountered his first Aborigines – representatives of the people about whom he wrote his book in London. Soon after Malinowski’s and Staś’s arrival

World War I broke out, but the meetings of the British Association proceeded as scheduled. A number of foreign guests – like the German Felix von Luschan and the Austrian Poles Malinowski and Staś – suddenly found themselves to be enemy subjects for the British and the Australians. However, David Orme Masson, chairman of the conference organizing committee in Melbourne, informed them in Adelaide that the “Commonwealth’s obligation of hospitality would be honoured and there would be no question of imprisonment” (p. 295). This was most probably the first time Malinowski met his future father-in-law. At the same time Malinowski also made the acquaintance of a number of people: Edward Charles Stirling, director of the state museum, who did much to steady Malinowski’s career (despite the fact that he betrayed his trust, see below); Baldwin Spencer, Australia’s internationally most distinguished anthropologist; and the permanent secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Atlee Hunt, the “gatekeeper to Papua” (p. 298). Spencer’s and Hunt’s “combined patronage laid the very foundation of his future work” (p. 297). Despite the fact that Malinowski was officially an ‘enemy alien’, Hunt supported his plans to do fieldwork in Papua. He even gave him a letter for Hubert Murray, the lieutenant-governor of the Colony of Papua, informing him that Malinowski intended to do fieldwork in Mailu and that it was in the Minister’s interest that Malinowski and his research were supported by Australian Government representatives. In Sydney, after having presented his conference paper on “A Fundamental Problem of Religious Sociology”, Malinowski decided not to go back to Poland but to pursue his fieldwork plans in New Guinea. Staś, however, decided a few days later in Brisbane to return to Poland to fight against the Germans. Malinowski took his friend’s decision as a severe form of betrayal, and the former friends “departed on the worst of terms” (p. 303). Four days later, on the 5th of September 1914 Malinowski boarded the Burns Philp boat “Matunga” and, after a brief stop in Cairns, “he finally approached the humid shores of New Guinea” (p. 307).

Chapter 16 – “The Promised Land” (pp. 309–328) – describes Governor ‘Murray’s Papua’ (p. 313), the colonial society and Malinowski’s first impressions of Port Moresby and the acquaintances he made there. The positive opinion Hubert Murray had of Malinowski soon changed into a distinct antipathy towards him, not only because of Murray’s general prejudice against scientists, but also because he suspected Malinowski “of pro-German sympathies and moral turpitude” (p. 312). Having arrived in Moresby Malinowski first read the “Papua Annual Reports” that not only gave him a general picture about the colony, but also linguistic and ethnographic information, and then “tried his hand at fieldwork among the Motu and the Koita people living in the immediate vicinity of Port Moresby” (p. 318). Young points out that Malinowski’s notebooks show that “he grasped the importance of representing ‘the native’s point of view’ ” (p. 320). During this first period of fieldwork he also complained about the “defects” of his research, pointing out that he had little to do with the people, that he did not observe them enough and that he did not speak their language. While he was waiting for an opportunity to go to Mailu, he hired the Motuan ‘cookboy’ Igua Pipi “who would also be his interpreter in Mailu” (p. 323) and participated in an expedition to the Laloki river. Moreover, he had to take care of his finances; his own money was inaccessible for him because of the war. Therefore he sent a letter to Atlee Hunt in which he confessed his financial embarrassment and asked for Australian support of his research. Hunt managed to arrange for a grant of £250 for him to

cover the year 1915; however, Murray found out that Hunt charged Malinowski's 'salary' against the Papuan budget – an insight which certainly did not improve Murray's feelings towards the 'government anthropologist'. On the 13th of October Malinowski boarded the "Wakefield" and after 3 days of sailing he disembarked on Mailu Island. He was welcomed by the village constable Omega and by the missionary William Saville and his wife.

Chapter 17 – "Mailu" (pp. 329–352) – reports on Malinowski's life and work in his first Melanesian fieldsite and his relationship with the missionary who "presided over Mailu" (p. 328). Malinowski, who had an ideological antipathy for missionaries, "depended on Saville for introductions to local informants and guidance in local ways" (p. 333). Contrary to Haddon, Rivers and Seligman Malinowski did not want the assistance of missionaries in his actual research, and Young points out that Malinowski "effectively brought the historical partnership between British anthropologists and missionaries to an end" (p. 333). In the first days on Mailu Malinowski experienced the tedious and boring aspects of fieldwork and his 'culture shock'. He realized that the success of fieldwork depended on patient, honest and cooperative consultants. Fighting his culture shock by reading novels and retreating into memories of the past, he managed to report 2 weeks after his arrival in a first letter to Seligman on Mailu "house structure, family life, kin terms, clans, gardens, men's houses . . . canoe trading" and a feast (p. 336). However, he also confessed that he was a poor photographer and phonographic recorder. During his stay in Mailu Haddon, "the greatest living authority on Melanesian ethnology" (p. 337) visited Malinowski for a few days. Haddon wanted to collect data on canoe-building, and his daughter, who accompanied him, was collecting string figures. Young briefly elaborates on that "fortuitous juxtaposition of old and new anthropology" pointing out the contrasts of "cats cradles versus household censuses, canoe technology versus the economics of trade – in a nutshell, Haddon's peripatetic prospecting surveys versus Malinowski's methodological impulse to stay in one place and excavate deeply" (p. 338). Back in Cambridge Haddon was full of praise with respect to Malinowski's work in Port Moresby and on Mailu and prophesied that "he will make an excellent field worker" (p. 339). During his stay on Mailu Malinowski also travelled to Samarai, then an important port and government centre and Malinowski's gate to his future field, the Trobriand Islands. There he worked together with Saville on Mailu texts for a week and interviewed Papuan prisoners in the Samarai jail. On his way back to Mailu Malinowski experienced the annual feasting season in several Suau villages along the coast. Murray briefly visited the island before Christmas, Malinowski invited himself aboard his boat "Elevala", got his mail and had a conversation with the governor. In December and January, Malinowski collected additional data on kinship terms and relations and on taboos and documented the preparation for another big feast, using photography as one of his tools of documentation. But briefly before this feast reached its climax, Malinowski left the island. On the 24th of January the 'Elevala' called at Mailu again on its way from Samarai back to Port Moresby. Malinowski hastily gathered his things, said farewell to his Mailu hosts, paddled out in a canoe and invited himself and Igua aboard for the passage back to Moresby, despite the fact that he "was greeted by the governor 'with a distinct blunt, cold reserve'" (p. 352). This was the end of his first 3 months of proper field research in Melanesia. That Malinowski was looking forward to leaving his field is documented in a letter to Atlee Hunt, which he sent him after the first 5 weeks of his stay in Mailu. He informed Hunt that he intended to come back to Australia for

February and March of 1915 to “write up [his] results, digest [his] experience and . . . to look at [his] work from a distance” (p. 341). He also expressed his wish to study the Papuan collections in the Australian museums, offering help in properly identifying and describing many of the specimens there. And Young points out that Hunt was “sympathetic to this request” (p. 342).

Back in Port Moresby Malinowski reported to the resident magistrate, visited some local villages and had a meeting with the Government Secretary who hinted that financial support would be forthcoming. On the 2nd of February 1915 Malinowski sailed aboard the “Puliuli” to Rigo, a government station 40 miles to the southeast of Moresby. Seligman advised him to also investigate the Sinaugolo, the eastern neighbours of the Koita and the Motu. Chapter 18 – “Sinaugolo” (pp. 353–363) – briefly reports on this trip. The Sinaugolo claimed “to have originated the *dubu*, the large, ceremonial men’s houses with carved posts so characteristic of this part of the Papuan coast” (p. 355). In Rigo, Malinowski inspected the ruins of a “*dubu*” and collected data on land tenure, gardening, hunting, social organization, magic, courtship, sex and marriage. Malinowski also continued to work with his consultant Ahuia, who accompanied him as a translator to Rigo, on the Koita, the Koiari and on the Eastern Motu. However, he never published the material he collected there. Back in Port Moresby he finished his work with Ahuia and on the 16th of February he sailed to Samarai. From there he sailed to Woodlark Island and stayed for 2 days in the village Dikoyas where he witnessed his first Kula transaction. After this brief field trip Malinowski sailed back to Port Moresby again. With this trip he ended the first phase of his field research – he was absolutely satisfied with what he had accomplished during this time. Young points out that “[f]or the first time in his life [Malinowski] had been thrown entirely upon his own resources and he had found himself equal to the challenge” (p. 361). After this positive experience he planned for 1916 “more ambitious expeditions to the heart of the jungle” (p. 362). During his various stays in Port Moresby Malinowski also met the members of the broader colonial society. One of them, Herbert Champion, the governor’s secretary wrote down that Leonard Murray, the governor’s nephew, told him that Malinowski pointed out in a conversation he had with him “that for sexual satisfaction a boy was to be preferred to a female” (p. 358). As it turned out, this injudicious comment – even if it was meant jocularly – severely aggravated Malinowski’s relationship with the Governor Hubert Murray.

At the end of February 1915, Malinowski sailed via Cairns to Brisbane. From there he travelled to Sydney and then to Adelaide. Chapter 19 – “Autumn in Adelaide” (pp. 364–382) – covers the time he spent there. Because he forgot to report to the authorities in Melbourne he was arrested and was almost interned when he arrived there, but his host, Sir Edward Stirling, rescued him, phoning the district commander and pleading for his release. In an ironic aside Young points out that the “Australian talent for bureaucratic efficiency had yet to flower, and it was partly administrative ineptitude that allowed Malinowski to remain at large” (p. 366). In Adelaide Malinowski wrote his monograph “The Natives of Mailu”, a book that Young assesses as “a door closing on the recent past, recalling the kind of reportage typical of Haddon and Seligman” (p. 368). As in his later research on the Trobriands Malinowski’s ethnography is represented in three kinds of document, namely his personal diary, his field notebooks, and the formal published document. In his “Mailu” book he deals with topics that he also pursued later on the Trobriands. Young points out that

he “seemed determined to find the Mailu ignorant of physiological paternity” (p. 371). Moreover, he also started to present himself as “the probing Ethnographer” as “the urbane gentleman traveller” and as “the linguistic adept” (p. 372). At the end of his stay in Mailu Malinowski had managed to speak Police Motu almost fluently, and he refers in his monograph with great pride to his linguistic abilities. Moreover, he also shows the tendency to exaggerate the length of the time he spent in the field. He also propagated ‘participant observation’ as the most appropriate ethnographic style, although he had done little of it during “the seventy-odd days he spent among the Mailu” (p. 372). Nevertheless, “[m]indful of Rivers’s first rule that ‘the abstract should always be approached through the concrete’, Malinowski would make the recording of ‘concrete occurrences’ and ‘actual cases’ another cornerstone of his ethnographic method” (p. 373). “The Natives of Mailu” helped to earn Malinowski a doctor of science degree from the University of London; however, the book “went unnoticed by anthropology journals in metropolitan Britain” and it “received no reviews at all in its birthplace, Australia” (p. 374). His generous host Edward Stirling edited Malinowski’s manuscript and also suggested to Malinowski to publish it locally in “The Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia”. This meant a speedy publication; moreover, it also acknowledged the Australian support of Malinowski’s research – and opened up the possibility to get new funds for another year of research. And indeed Atlee Hunt recommended to grant Malinowski’s request for £200, however, he told Malinowski that “his investigations must include ‘the system of native ownership of lands’ and that his writings should be published in Australia or Papua” (p. 376). When the book was published in December 1915, Malinowski did not send a copy to Hubert Murray, but to the government secretary; again, this did not help at all to improve his relationship with the governor of Papua. During his last weeks in Adelaide Malinowski had begun a love affair with Nina, one of his host’s daughters. It was the first love affair that did not involve a third party, but it almost cost him his career. Although he only spent about 4 weeks in her presence in 1915 and 1 week in 1917, “he dreamed and agonized about her for over four years”. Malinowski left Adelaide for Papua in May and sailed via Port Moresby to Samarai. He intended to go to the Mambare River to do his fieldwork there, but because Baldwin Spencer had asked him to collect artefacts and because of what was known about the Trobriand Islanders he decided to go to the Trobriands first and stay there for about a month. On his way to the Trobriands he visited the missionary Matthew Gilmour and his wife, who stayed there for several years and who introduced cricket to the Trobrianders in 1903. Gilmour informed Malinowski about death, burial rites, and the belief in witches on the Trobriands and he told the anthropologist a lengthy version of the “Tudava” myth, “which in his later challenge to Freud Malinowski would deploy with an inverted Oedipal message” (p. 381). Moreover, Malinowski was familiar with Gilmour’s published notes on the Kula expeditions and he discussed with him possible cooperation that should result in the publication of a grammar of Kilivila (or ‘Kiriwina’, as Malinowski and the speakers of the “biga besagala” variety (see [Senft, 1986:6ff](#)) on Kiriwina Island refer to their language). Young points out that “it was by no means onto terra incognita that Malinowski set his booted foot, but onto the missionized and well-patrolled domain of Assistant Resident Magistrate ‘Doctor’ Bellamy, who did more than anyone to set the colonial scene and establish the conditions of Malinowski’s fieldwork there” (p. 382).

Chapter 20 – “Kiriwina” (pp. 383–414) – reports on Malinowski’s first period of field research on the Trobriands. The missionary schooner ‘Saragigi’ brought Malinowski to Losuia, the government station on Kiriwina Island, and on June 17th, 1915 “the anthropologist was set down with all his gear” – all in all 60 boxes and cases – “on the timbered landing stage of a broad coral jetty” (p. 383). After having served there for 10 years Bellamy was to leave the Trobriands to join the war in October. Besides him 9 European traders and four white missionaries lived on the Trobriands. During his early days on Kiriwina island Malinowski took notes from the traders Cyril Cameron (‘King Cam’ of Kitava) and Sam Brudo and asked two missionary sisters to translate some Kilivila texts for him. Malinowski’s (1916) essay on the Trobriand Islander’s eschatological beliefs was actually inspired by Cameron’s notes on the origin of the harvest festival “milamala”. Malinowski also met Raphael Brudo and Billy Hancock, a trader living in Gusaweta, who became Malinowski’s close friends. The relationship between Bellamy and Malinowski, however, soon deteriorated. “Bellamy developed a profound dislike for Malinowski” and Malinowski “never acknowledged the magistrate’s help and hospitality . . . and . . . never mentioned Bellamy’s role in creating the largely favourable conditions . . . under which he conducted his fieldwork” (p. 389). Malinowski’s relation with Bellamy’s successor John Campbell was not unproblematic either. Soon after his arrival Malinowski “was drawn as by a magnet to Omarakana” (p. 390), the paramount chief Touluwa’s village of residence on Kiriwina and thus the centre of power on the Trobriands. Young points out that Malinowski with “his aristocratic pretensions . . . felt a natural affinity for the chiefly sub-clan of Tabalu, the highest ranking Trobrianders” (p. 391); however, he also mentions that the paramount chief would have been offended if Malinowski would not have chosen his village as the base for his field research. Malinowski developed very good relationships with Touluwa and his sons and with the Omarakana garden magician Bagidou and his brothers Towesei and Mitakata (who should become Touluwa’s successor as paramount chief). They all were high ranking and important personalities in Omarakana, and it was among them that Malinowski spent most time during his first fieldtrip. As a kind of special guest Malinowski “was directed to pitch his tent . . . just a few yards behind Touluwa’s large dwelling” (p. 393) and he lived there for 6 months. The spot where he lived is still marked in Omarakana today. Malinowski started to learn Kilivila and to collect concrete data, i.e., a village census, genealogies, kinship terms and kin relations. He paid for information and for his hosts’ hospitality with tobacco, which played a fundamental role in his fieldwork, as Young points out. Tobacco was the common currency on the islands, and Malinowski spent 20% of his fieldwork budget on tobacco! With the help of tobacco he collected data encompassing the “kaleidoscope of tribal life” (p. 397) and almost 3000 items of local artefacts (for Baldwin Spencer and the British Museum). However, Young points out that Malinowski’s “interest in arts and crafts . . . was principally in their economic and social aspects” (p. 398) because he was much more interested in ‘primitive sociology’ than in traditional ‘ethnology’. Soon after his arrival he made the first notes on the Kula exchange, in July he witnessed his first mourning ceremony, in early September he already wrote down Kilivila phrases and short texts in one of his notebooks, and in December he experienced the expulsion from Omarakana of the chief’s favourite son because of a case of adultery (which he describes in detail in his 1926 and 1927 publications). Between June 1915 and February 1916 Malinowski filled 13 notebooks with

his fieldnotes – almost none of his observations were too trivial to not find their way into these notes; however, his broad topics were magic and religion, gardening, the Kula trade, and sex. The last topic, of course, was rather delicate for a lonely man surrounded by pretty girls “gloriously bare-breasted, scantily skirted and sweetly scented with mint and fragrant blossoms” in a “land of sexual freedom” (p. 404f). But Young points out that Malinowski’s “residual Catholic conscience, a fear of racial or caste pollution, and a horror of physical disease . . . enabled him to keep the nubile sirens of Oamrakana at arm’s length, despite recurrent surges of lust for them” (p. 405). In these moments Nina Stirling was the desirable woman he kept in mind to endure “the inner solitude of the field” (p. 412). From Oamrakana Malinowski also visited villages in the north of Kiriwina, he spent a few weeks at Billy Hancock’s place and worked in the nearby villages Teyava and Tukwaukwa, and he also visited the low ranking villages Bwetalu and Bau. On the basis of his notebooks Young reconstructed that Malinowski spent almost 6 months of his 8 months stay on Kiriwina in Oamrakana – “rather fewer than he later claimed” (p. 399). After his first month on the Trobriands Malinowski wrote a letter to Seligman, who had spent a week on Kiriwina himself. In this letter he announced that he soon wants to go to the Mambare district, as planned initially; however, because of transport problems and because the missionary in Mambare was transferred to Dogura, Malinowski decided to stay on the Trobriands, at least until November. In a later letter he apologized for working on a field that Seligman ‘had done’ before, informed him about his research results so far and promised to do research on Misima, Sudest and Rossel Island in 1916. Young points out that “Seligman was especially keen for him to visit Rossel, the main island of the Louisiade Archipelago” (p. 407) because no ethnographer had worked there before. Seligman was not worried at all that Malinowski worked in a place where he had briefly stayed before, but he encouraged him to realize his plans with respect to doing research on Rossel in 1916, after a break in Australia to overcome the stress of fieldwork. Malinowski left the Trobriands at the beginning of March 1916 and sailed via Port Moresby to Sydney. With his first period of field research on the Trobriands he had acquired “ethnographic authority . . . he had been there” (p. 414). During his time in the field Malinowski also received news about the war – especially from his mother. In these letters he learned that many of his family’s possessions were either destroyed, stolen, or burnt – including his doctor’s diploma.

Malinowski arrived in Sydney on the 15th of March and worked there for some days in the Mitchell Library and with Charles Hedley at the Australian Museum. Then he gained permission to travel to Melbourne, where he arrived on the 29th of March. He stayed there for the next 30 months – “a longer period than he would spend in total in Papua, and a period every bit as important for his future as his time mining the material for his monographs at the Kiriwina coalface” (p. 415) – as Young points out. Chapter 21 – “Melbourne Maladies” (pp. 415–448) – reports on this period that included what Malinowski later called “the worst year of his life” (p. 419). During the first week in Melbourne the traveller was invited by the Spencers, the Pecks, and the Massons. However, with the ongoing war the “Melbournian were increasingly reluctant to invite ‘enemy aliens’ into their homes” (p. 419). Moreover, Edward Stirling send him a letter in which he asked him not to correspond with his daughter Nina too frequently. He obviously could not cope with the idea of a Polish son-in-law. Malinowski suffered from this rejection. He rented a room in East Melbourne, close to the museum library, settled down to work and

made some new friends, among them Ernest Pitt, Robert Broinowski, the Peck sisters, and Mim Weigall with whom he had a kind of “intellectual love affair” (p. 423). Her best friend was [Elsie Rosalie Masson](#). The Massons continued to invite Malinowski, who was impressed by reading Elsie’s book on childhood experiences in the Northern Territory and by hearing her story about her fiancé who had been killed at Gallipoli in August 1914. Elsie took the initiative for their relationship to develop and organised a meeting in the library. But Malinowski “did not measure up to her image of Charles” (p. 425), her deceased fiancé – and Malinowski, respecting her feelings, “kept himself at a respectful distance” (p. 427). About the time of their first meetings Malinowski had a brief affair with “a mysterious Mrs. Cummings” (p. 427). Having arrived in Melbourne Malinowski also started to write the article he promised Seligman for the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. Not “deterred by the question of length . . . he decided to write a treatise on the sociology of Trobriand belief” (p. 428). The result – “Baloma: The spirits of the Dead in the Trobriand Islands” published in 1916 – was a 77 page essay “which did more for [his] reputation as an ambitious, up-and-coming theoretical anthropologist than anything he had published hitherto” (p. 428). Young points out that this text dealt with topics dear to Frazer, but that it subverted Frazer’s methods, initiating a new style of ethnographic analysis. The essay was “a brilliant performance” and in writing it “Malinowski had found his ethnographic voice” (p. 428). In “Baloma” Malinowski documents variations in belief systems within the same culture – thus rejecting and falsifying Durkheim’s claim of a ‘collective soul’ (see p. 433f). He propagates to ask ‘leading questions’ and the necessity of doing ‘participant observation’. He also emphasizes that facts only exist if theories can vouch for them. One of the central parts of the essay was the description of the Trobriand Islanders belief with respect to the role the ‘baloma’, the ‘spirits of the dead’, played in and for human reproduction. On the basis of this belief Malinowski claimed “that the Trobriand Islanders were ignorant of physiological paternity” (p. 431) – like Bellamy, who made this claim already in 1906. Malinowski argued that this observation was not special at all and referred to Frazer who claimed that “such ignorance was universal among early mankind” (p. 431). Young takes Malinowski’s claim absolutely seriously. The topic is mentioned throughout the biography (see pp. 180, 231, 371, 387, 428, 431f, p. 436) and Young claims that “recent ethnographers in the Trobriands have found no reason to contradict this general statement” (p. 432). However, this is extremely misleading!² All more recent ethnographers (and an anthropological linguist, if I may add) agree that the Trobrianders still believe in the reincarnation of the “baloma” who is said to slip into the vagina of a woman when she is bathing in the sea. But Anna Weiner and the author of this review have published clear challenges to the claim that the Trobriand Islanders are ignorant of the role of the ‘pater’ as ‘genitor’. In my essay on Malinowski for the “*Handbook of Pragmatics*” ([Senft, 1999:15ff](#)) I take up the controversy over Trobriand “virgin birth”. In what follows I briefly summarize the argument I put forward there. In 1983, the women of Tauwema told

² I was surprised to read this, because I sent Michael Young an offprint of my 1999 article and we even briefly corresponded about my argument against the “virgin birth” myth. Of course Michael seriously disagreed with my interpretation and my nasty imputation (which he refutes as an “absurd suggestion” – in his e-mail of September 27th, 2001).

my wife that they had been using a specific form of contraception, based on a mixture of herbs with a little bit of water added. There are two modes of application for this contraceptive: Either, before the coitus the woman drips the fluid on a small sponge and then inserts it into her vagina placing it in front of her os uteri – the herbal composition is spermocidal and thus prevents conception. Or, the woman drinks the herbal composition in a more hydrous solution. The problem with this second mode of application is that the ratio between the herbal mixture and the water is rather delicate: the contraceptive effect of the drink may either last for a few days only or for years. If the herbal mixture is too highly concentrated it may even cause sterility. The fact that the Trobriand Islanders know about natural contraceptives and that this knowledge is traditional is – to my mind – clear and convincing counter-evidence to Malinowski's claim which he first made in his 1916 essay, which he used like a beat of a drum to introduce his “sex book” (as he himself and his first wife called it, see [Weiner, 1987:xxxii](#)), and which he elaborates in Chapter 7 of “The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia”.

Given Malinowski's excellent command of Kilivila and the incredible amount of magical formulae he managed to collect and translate, it is very hard for me to understand why the master of Trobriand ethnography did not hit upon the fact of Trobriand natural contraceptives, but took the Trobriand “myth” of conception and “virgin birth” not as a kind of ideology with the function (!) to diminish discrimination of extramarital births and to allow obviously cuckolded men to save face (see [Weiner, 1976:122](#), [Sprenger, 1997:61ff](#)). By the way, the incident Weiner reports about a man who returns after his year-long absence to his village and to his wife and who reacts with extreme jealousy when his wife presents him with a newborn child, is just another confirmation of the fact that this man obviously knew about physical paternity.

I can only explain this – for me a rather blunt – mistake of Malinowski's in two ways. Either he became the victim of the Trobriand Islanders' love to make fun of people – and they really took him for a ride, or (but this alternative has a nasty imputation) he exploited this “exotic” claim for career promotion. In her introduction to the 1987 edition of “The Sexual Life of Savages” [Weiner \(1987:xxvii\)](#) discusses Malinowski's relation to psychoanalysis in detail and refers to [Stocking \(1986\)](#) with a footnote, in which she states:

“According to Stocking (pp. 32–33) Malinowski's response to psychoanalysis may have been more than intellectual. Rivers, the most eminent figure at the British anthropology, died suddenly in 1922, leaving a vacuum in leadership. Stocking suggests that because Rivers had a long interest in psychoanalysis, Malinowski in taking up psychoanalytic debates, strengthened his bid against the diffusionists William Perry and Elliot Smith, to become Rivers's successor.” ([Weiner, 1987:xliv](#), fn. 19)

The claim in ‘the sex book’ could then be interpreted as the final culmination of such a strategic move within academic politics. However, I want to emphasize that this assumption is nothing but a nasty imputation. An even nastier imputation would be to accuse Malinowski of having taken his peer group for a ride with this ‘exotic fact’ – but Young himself points out that “a certain fondness for tricks lingered in Malinowski's mature personality” (p. 103; see also pp. 142, 176, 229, but also p. 542!). Be that as it may,

Young emphasizes rightly that the essay was very well received by the leading anthropologists in Great Britain. Even Frazer congratulated Malinowski for his achievement with this publication, despite the fact that it “had demolished his comparative method” (though it confirmed “his own pet theory concerning ignorance of physiological paternity” (p. 436) of course). In Australia, however, the fact that Malinowski had “come up against the Authorities” and had “made somewhat of a nuisance of himself” (p. 437) caused problems for the ‘enemy alien’ ethnographer. The difficulties he had with Hubert Murray and the rumours about “certain views “ of his – like the one he expressed in his conversation with Leonard Murray which was documented by Hubert Champion (see Chapter 18, p. 358 and above) – made the Government withdraw its allowance for him. However, they did not forbid him further research in Papua. In Britain Seligman managed to raise another £150 with Robert Mond – expecting Malinowski to use this money “‘to make every attempt to get to Rossel’, which he regarded as ‘the most important thing to be now done in New Guinea’ ” (p. 439). In Australia Baldwin Spencer tried to change the Government’s decision, appealing directly to the Minister of External Affairs, praising Malinowski’s work and asked for a new grant of £100 for him. The minister invited Murray to comment on this appeal. The comment was hostile, although Murray did not object to Malinowski’s possible return to Papua. However, the governor considered that if Malinowski would return to New Guinea, he should “be confined to the Trobriands, and the term of his stay should be limited” (p. 441). The minister – conferring with Atlee Hunt – granted the fund for Malinowski, but based on Murray’s note he also decided that this grant “would be conditional on [Malinowski’s] continuing to work within the limits of the Trobriand Group and on the assumption that his further stay in Papua will not exceed 12 months” (p. 441). Thus, Malinowski was not allowed to go to Rossel. He did, however, manage to get the permit from Murray to also visit Dobu, Sanaroa and the Amphlett Islands which all participated in the Kula exchange which he had started to study already. Young points out that “by restricting Malinowski’s movements, Hubert Murray did social anthropology a singular favour”. Malinowski wanted to return to Papua by March 1917, but his health condition did not allow it. He suffered from influenza and he had long periods of depression with headaches and eye pain. His situation changed slightly when Seligman submitted [Malinowski’s 1913 and 1915 monographs](#) to the University of London which awarded him on the basis of these publications his doctor of science degree. Moreover, Spencer who had gone to England to be knighted by the king met Robert Mond and encouraged him to grant Malinowski another £250 per annum for the next 2 years. In December, Malinowski spent a few weeks in the country on his doctor’s advice, and his condition slightly improved.

The most important person for Malinowski during his stay in Melbourne was Elsie Rosalie Masson – and Chapter 22 “Elsie Rosalie” (pp. 449–473) – describes the development of the relationship between the anthropologist and his wife-to-be. Young briefly introduces the Masson family and sketches out Elsie’s political leftist ideas. She worked as a nurse, and on the wards her nickname was ‘Trotsky’. Then he briefly describes the “protracted and hesitant start” (p. 457) of their love affair. Their courtship was facilitated by their friendship with Paul and Hedwig Khuner, in whose house they met regularly together with Mim Weigall (with whom Malinowski already had a “eroticized friendship” (p. 460)) and some other friends. Malinowski had to had half his teeth extracted

before he went to Papua again; after his first and second operation Elsie visited him and their relationship slowly developed, Elsie discussed with him his Trobriand materials and Malinowski helped her with her speeches for the socialists. But Malinowski noticed that he was once again involved in a triangle – this time the third party was “the ghostly presence of Elsie’s dead sweetheart” (p. 461). In June Malinowski received a letter from Nina Stirling who was ill with tuberculosis. She invited him to Mt. Lofty to visit her. He had told Elsie about his confused relationship with Nina a month earlier, and they realized “that they each had secret pasts . . . – a sick woman in Malinowski’s case and a dead man in Elsie’s” (p. 465). Malinowski visited Nina, and although he was determined to end his relationship with her, he realized that she was too ill to be confronted with the truth, and thus “their correspondence would pursue its false course until the inevitable day when she discovered his betrayal” (p. 467). He informed Elsie about this, and although she decided before that “if things remained the same she must part from him” (p. 466) she could not do that. For Malinowski Elsie’s attachment to her dead fiancé Charles put her under a kind of taboo, and he was afraid “that by making love to her he would be trespassing or committing a sacrilege” (p. 465). However, when he first made love to her a few days after he had returned from Adelaide, the chain of Charles’s medallion which Elsie was wearing broke. Afterwards Elsie did not wear it again and Malinowski took this as a token that the taboo was broken, that “Charles would be forgotten” and that Elsie would become his lover. During August Malinowski’s health improved again, he finished cataloguing the Trobriand artefacts which he later presented to the Melbourne Museum, and he started to write an article for “The Australian Encyclopedia” on “the Papuo-Melanesians” – a “concise account of Trobriand ethnology” (p. 467f). Elsie edited this article, and it was for the first time that Elsie’s advice helped him to write in such a way that his books and articles were also accessible to lay readers. Since 1916 Malinowski had also been working on the synopsis of a book on “Kiriwina: A Monograph on the Natives of the Trobriand Islands (Robert Mond Ethnographical Research Work in British New Guinea)” – which should be “a monumental work . . . of at least a thousand pages” (p. 468). It should contain everything he had learned about the Trobriand Islanders, its methodological introduction should become a field-worker’s manifesto and it should consider ongoing social and cultural changes due to the colonial contact. However, the book was never written, and Malinowski himself emphasized that the fact that he never realized his project to present a systematic account of contact-induced change on the Trobriands was probably the “most serious shortcoming of his field research” (p. 470). But the planning of this publication resulted in long lists of questions that served Malinowski as an explicit guide for his research during his second field trip. He also had started to sketch a grammar and to compile a lexicon, but admitted that he failed in his attempts to analyse Kilivila. Nevertheless, he was able to follow conversations easily and could take down notes in Kilivila. Young points out that this was the basis for the main achievement of Malinowski’s fieldwork: “the depth as well as the breadth of coverage and its consummate documentation made possible by mastery of the vernacular” (p. 471f). On September 27th Malinowski left Melbourne for Sydney to travel to Papua; however, he had forgot to book a berth, and when he arrived the ‘Marsina’ was fully booked. He returned to Melbourne. When Atlee Hunt learned from Baldwin Spencer that Malinowski had missed the boat, he summoned him to an interview: the “noble Polish anthropologist was in the

ludicrous position of being ordered back into the field by an Australian bureaucrat" (p. 472). His extra weeks in Melbourne allowed him to intensify his courtship of Elsie. Spencer strongly disapproved of this relationship and also insisted on a quick departure. Malinowski left Melbourne on the 20th of October. Elsie had gone to his apartment directly after her nightshift. This became known to her boss and this 'scandal' was "the talk for the hospital for days" (p. 473). After his departure Malinowski's name was a taboo now not only at the Masson's, but also at the Spencer's.

Malinowski sailed on board of the "Makambo" via Brisbane and Cairns to Port Moresby and from there to Samarai, where he arrived on the 6th of November 1917. Chapter 23 – "Samarai" (pp. 474–493) – reports on the time he spent there, waiting for a boat to continue his field research on the Trobriands. During his voyage Malinowski wrote a letter to Frazer in which he acknowledged Frazer's inspiration for his ethnography and his ethnographic writing. In this letter he also presents Frazer with his participant observation method and points out that he is "most interested in the mental life of the natives, in their beliefs and their ideas of the Universe". Young emphasizes that this interest in "what people thought in the here and now, and, to pursue the empirical question, the effects of what they thought on what they *did* in the here and now" was the prerequisite for Malinowski to "develop a fresh approach to primitive economics" (p. 476). The biographer also emphasizes that Malinowski was committed to "the psychological method" which he derived from Wundt and Westermarck, but that he eventually dropped "the phrase and disguise[d] his Continental theoretical roots". Young interprets this – in a nice analogy to the leitmotif of "The Golden Bough" – as one of Malinowski's means "to overthrow the old regime: not only Haddon, Rivers and Elliot Smith, but Divine King Frazer himself". For Young, Malinowski's letter to Frazer marks the beginning of the "palace revolution" in which "the pretender to the throne giving covert warning to the incumbent as he resumed his search for the ethnographic riches that would confer upon him the mantle of supreme anthropological authority. Jason would return with his Golden Fleece" (p. 476f). Young continues to present the object of his study in yet two other similes: He compares Malinowski with the Kula hero Tokosikuna setting out on an expedition with the aim to find the magical flute which would help him "to defeat his rivals and win women, wealth and fame" (p. 478), and with Odysseus, quoting Malinowski's phrase that he had started his "Odyssey in the savage and dangerous island of New Guinea" (p. 479) (note that it is this simile that is taken up by the subtitle of the first volume of the biography). In Samarai – waiting for his boat to the Trobriands – Malinowski started two important projects: First, he developed his famous 'synoptic charts'. These charts represent "one of the most significant innovations of his fieldwork method", helping him to integrate "fragmenting themes into higher syntheses of comprehension" (p. 416, see also p. 417). Young points out that Malinowski's "creative act lay in the manner of synthesis: 'functionalism' was a synthetic way of viewing his experience as well as his anthropological data" (p. 416). Second, on the 10th of November he started "A diary in the strict sense of the term" (Malinowski, 1967) – and Young gives an excellent assessment of the role the diary played not only for Malinowski and his personality, but also for his ethnography. Before he left Samarai for the Trobriands Malinowski also met Hubert Murray and Will Saville, the missionary from Mailu and his wife, he visited the islands Rogea – where he did some work on canoes – and Saliba – where he recruited Derusira,

later nicknamed “Ginger”, as his butler, cook, and personal attendant. On the 29th of November Malinowski finally sailed aboard the “Ithaca” (!) from Samarai via the D’Entrecasteaux and the Amphlett Islands to Kiriwina, where he landed at Sinaketa.

Chapter 24 – “Return to the Islands” (pp. 494–530) reports on the first months of Malinowski’s second stay on the Trobriands. He later confessed to Elsie that he believed he would never see Kiriwina again and that he did not want very much to go there (see p. 492). Reluctant to begin his research he first stayed a week with Billy Hancock. Young points out that Hancock was a great help for Malinowski, especially during his second fieldtrip. He helped the ethnographer with his photography (see Young, 1998; see also Senft, 2001), offered him generous hospitality and provided him with a mail service, free passages on his cutter, food, tobacco, etc. Moreover, Hancock as well as Raphael Brudo, another trader on the Trobriands, shared their ethnographic observations with Malinowski. However, probably with the exception of Billy, Malinowski “felt uncomfortable in the company of his own kind” (p. 497). He especially avoided the missionaries and other whites in authority like the government officer. Nevertheless, Young found that in 1917–1918 Malinowski spent more than 16 weeks with Billy and the Brudos and “dwelt in his tent ‘right among the natives’ for only twenty-two of the forty-one weeks” (p. 502) of his stay in Kiriwina! On the 13th of December Malinowski went to the lagoon village Oburaku where he would live for almost 3 months. He wanted to compare a non-ranked village with Omarakana, study a lagoon village reliant on fishing and explore the differences between Oburaku and Omarakana with respect to their horticultural and magical systems. Young describes Malinowski’s routine life in the village, discusses his ideas about religion, pointing out that he was convinced that magic formulae “were the royal road to the Melanesian mind” (p. 507), and describes how Malinowski worked with his synoptic charts with which he managed to “integrate the infinitely small imponderable facts of daily life into convincing sociological generalization” (p. 508). Young emphasizes that during his second stay on the Islands Malinowski was “fully aware of the pioneering nature of his own fieldwork” (p. 509) and that he clearly aimed with his research to not only present “the native’s point of view” but also to formulate “laws of social psychology that would accurately describe the human condition in whatever cultural guise it appeared” (p. 508f). It was during his stay in Oburaku on January 24th – after he had experienced several deaths and investigated mortuary rites and rituals there – that his mother died in Poland. He would learn about her death only 5 months later (see below). Soon after he had set foot on Trobriand soil again he had sent a letter to Atlee Hunt and Herbert Champion asking for an extension of his research permit in Papua to properly complete his research on the Trobriands and in the Massim area – and in January Murray granted him this extension. At that time Malinowski had problems with his health again and he told Elsie in a letter that he “could hardly bear the prospect of another eight months’ fieldwork” (p. 519). Nevertheless he continued his work on magic and sorcery and disease and death, realizing once again how important his knowledge of Kilivila was for his research. The monotony of his life in the field was broken by irregular mail deliveries. And the letters from his mother, from the Seligman’s, from his friends in Melbourne, and especially from Nina and Elsie (with whom he exchanged over 500 pages of correspondence) brought him news from the world that was, of course, weeks and sometimes months out of date. Young points out that he must have felt stranded in Oburaku and wonders whether his concept of functionalism was

actually “grounded in his dislocating experience of time suspended”. The biographer argues that

“[s]ynchrony was the atemporal condition . . . of his functionalism. Time present, not time past, was of the essence in his here-and-now ethnography . . . Functionalism subordinated history to sociology. So his sense of being out of time in the field surely enabled his understanding of the perfect scientific ethnography as one grounded empirically in the ethnographic present, a timeless sociological construct rather than a conjectural historical sequence.” (p. 523)

On the 11th of March 1918 Malinowski left Oburaku and went to Billy Hancock in Gusaweta. Malinowski left the village without any sentimental feelings. At the end of this chapter, Young presents some interesting stories that are told in Oburaku about the ethnographer (documented by Young’s former student Linus Digim’Rina). These clearly reveal the legendary status Malinowski has acquired on the Trobriands 80 years after his field research there.

Chapter 25 – “Fear, Love and Loathing” (pp. 531–552) – reports on the next period of Malinowski’s field research. Two days after he had left the lagoon village Malinowski sailed to the Amphletts. His boat – the ‘Kayona’ – got into heavy seas and was driven south of the Amphletts close to Sanaroa Island, almost halfway to Dobu. On Sanaroa Malinowski observed sago-making and preparations for a Kula expedition to the Trobriands. On the 19th of March the Kayona finally reached the Amphletts, Malinowski landed at Nuagasi and did a survey study on local technology, settlement patterns, kinship and marriage, the Amphlett Islanders role in the Kula and their religious beliefs and mortuary practices. During his stay there six Trobriand Islanders arrived in Gumasila and initiated Kula interactions. He also heard that some men on the nearby island Nabwageta prepared for a Kula expedition to the Trobriands, and he went there to observe these preparations. Because it was the 13th day of his sojourn in the Amphletts he declined an invitation to sail back to the Trobriands with the Kayona. Malinowski’s superstition was so great that he even risked missing the convergence of the Dobuan and the Nabwageta Kula fleet on Sinaketa. However, just by coincidence the Ithaca called into Nabwageta the next day and offered him transport back to the Trobs. He had spent 2 weeks on the Amphletts and had learned much about the Kula, especially from the Dobuan perspective on it. Malinowski sailed with the Ithaca first to Losuia to pick up his mail and then to Kiribi and Sinaketa “where the Kula fleets from the south and from Kitava were about to converge” (p. 540). On the 5th of April almost 2000 men landed at Sinaketa – and Malinowski was to witness a Kula expedition that was certainly “one of the highlights of his fieldwork” (p. 540). He worked furiously, he even took photographs, he sketched canoe carvings, but he could not understand much of what people talked about because they spoke the lingua franca of Dobu. After the Dobuans had left again Malinowski went to Gusaweta to develop his photographs there and then sailed back to Sinaketa again. He stayed in Billy Hancock’s house, but dined each evening with the Brudos. Young points out that in Sinaketa “he enjoyed the best of both worlds”. He stayed there for 7 weeks. On the 14th of April he left the village for a week’s visit to Vakuta island where he stayed at the mission compound. Vakuta was an important centre of canoe-building and wood-carving, and Malinowski documented the carving patterns on the canoe prowboards and splashboards by sketches,

rubbings and photographs and noted the comments people made on them. However, he realized that he did not find the “ideological key to their art” (p. 546) and he never published the material he gathered there. When he tried to leave Vakuta again the crew and the boat he had hired to sail him back to Sinaketa refused to go. He had to spend another day on the island, being extremely angry and furious about “the niggers” (p. 549). Young uses this incident to briefly discuss Malinowski’s “blatant racism” (p. 550) and his “mischievous desire to shock” (p. 551). Back in Sinaketa Malinowski worked for a week or two on Kilivila grammar, especially on the classifiers; he hoped that his linguistic work may “make a hit in ethnographic linguistics and possibly in linguistic theory in general” (p. 552). Malinowski sketched out a rough grammar, but unfortunately he never published a full-fledged grammar of the language of the Trobriand Islanders.³

Chapter 26 – “A Most Damnable Lack of Character” (pp. 553–572) – deals with Malinowski’s last period of his second field trip. In May Malinowski stayed for a month with Billy Hancock in Gusaweta. He had 5 more months to go, and during this time he spent about a month in Omarakana and a few weeks in Sinaketa. Although he planned to also visit the islands Kaile’una and Kitava, he could not do that. While staying in Gusaweta he studied the games children played in the nearby villages Tukwaukwa and especially Teyava. In the letters he wrote to Elsie during this time he mused about his personality, his character, his ambitions in life, his academic future and his future life with Elsie. On the 7th of June he left Gusaweta for Omarakana, where the yams harvest was in full swing. Four days later he received two letters from his aunt Eleonora that informed him about the death of his mother. These news caused “his worst emotional crisis for many years” (p. 561); he was unable to work for several days. However, this shock also “broke the impasse with respect to Nina Stirling” (p. 562) and he wrote a letter to Nina’s parents informing them about his real feelings for their daughter and about Elsie Masson. Because of his two-timing, his ‘betrayal’ of Nina, he feared that Baldwin Spencer would discredit him and endanger his research. Elsie indeed had to defend him “in a series of angry confrontations with Spencer” (p. 565); but Spencer did not do Malinowski any harm. On the 1st of July he received a letter by Nina in which she terminated their friendship – he reacted with “a week of anguished mourning” (p. 567) full of self-criticism because of his “most damnable lack of character” (p. 566), but then he resumed his work again. It rounded up. On July 19th he left Omarakana for Gusaweta and then went to Sinaketa again where he spent another 5 weeks working on the Kula and on garden magic. On the 30th of August he returned to Gusaweta – and there he decided to leave the Trobriands earlier than planned – in the middle of September.

After saying good bye to Campbell, the missionaries, his favourite informants, the traders and especially Billy Hancock, Malinowski left the Trobriands on the 16th of September on board of the “Kayona” (the Kilivila name of the ship means “farewell”). He arrived in Sydney on the 11th of October and the next day he was in Melbourne. Chapter 27 – “Marriage” (pp. 573–593) – reports on Malinowski’s life in Melbourne after his field research and on his marriage with Elsie. Five days after his arrival he sent a letter to Elsie’s father, asking for Elsie’s hand in marriage, and David Orme Masson reluctantly agreed.

³ For an assessment of Malinowski’s role for linguistics, especially for pragmatics, see Senft (1996a, 1999, 2005).

During the first weeks in Melbourne Malinowski had another personal crisis because he paranoidly suspected Elsie of having an affair with Paul Khuner. World War I ended on December 2nd, and Seligman inquired whether Malinowski wanted to do further fieldwork in New Guinea. Malinowski informed him about his plans to marry and about his decision to not return to the field but to write up his results for publication. He wanted to return to England as soon as practicable – but he needed money to do so. Being now absolutely confident about the quality, the value and the importance of his work he wrote to Robert Mond and asked him to fund his work for another 2 years – and Mond agreed to do so. On the 6th of March 1919 Malinowski married Elsie Masson in Melbourne; “on the eve, if not the very day, of his wedding” (p. 589) Malinowski sent Nina his last letter in which he apologised for his conduct. Nina’s prompt reply was “a bitter reproach”; Young assumes that its “wounded innocence must have lacerated him; but he kept this letter, perhaps as a prickly reminder of his perfidy” (p. 589). After their marriage Malinowski started to work on his planned opus magnum “Kiriwina”. He also started “a kind of seminar for the airing of views, philosophical, psychological, and sociological” (p. 591) that was attended by Elsie, the Khuners, Mim and some other local friends. During these seminars Malinowski outlined his thinking on sociology, the essence of what later should grow into his “scientific theory of culture”. In the seminars Malinowski discussed the idea of an “Ideal Ethnographer” (p. 591), he outlined the framework of his psychobiological functionalism, and he discussed the “relationship of history to ethnology and sociology” (p. 593).

The 28th and last chapter of this volume – “Country Retreats” (pp. 594–610) – describes the last months of Bronislaw and Elsie in Australia. In June 1919 they both suffered from the Spanish influenza. Having recovered they decided to leave Melbourne and travelled to Wangaratta, a farming town on the Ovens River where they found accommodation. There they worked together on Malinowski’s Kilivila texts – his *corpus inscriptionum*. In 1917 Malinowski had started to correspond with Alan Gardiner, Britain’s leading Egyptologist, who emphasized how important it is for the ethnographer and his research to have “the *ipsissima verba* of the original statement in all its obscurity and vagueness, since that is the way that people think” (p. 599). Gardiner and Malinowski became friends and “significantly influenced one another’s thinking about the pragmatics of speech and language” (p. 598). They inspired John Rupert Firth and the London School of Linguistics. Like Malinowski Gardiner was extremely dissatisfied with the position of semantics within linguistics and “held that language was the product of acts of speech and that it was the context of an utterance that provided its meaning” (p. 599). For Malinowski’s understanding of ethnolinguistics a “context theory” of meaning should be essential – and it actually became “the cornerstone of the pragmatic theory that characterized the London School of Linguistics” (p. 605). In Wangaratta – and later in Whitfield – Malinowski “transcribed, translated and commented upon at least 125 numbered texts” (p. 599). Malinowski interrupted his work at the end of July to nurse Paul Khuner who fell ill. When it turned out that he was out of danger, Malinowski returned to Wangaratta after having visited a number of consulates to obtain a Polish passport. These efforts were all in vain and in the end it was Seligman once more “who somehow secured a Polish passport for Malinowski in London and posted it to him by registered mail” (p. 602). In August Elsie and Bronislaw left Wangaratta and went to Whitfield, a “more elevated and scenic spot” (p. 602). The Khuners, who were to sail back to Europe in November, joined

them. Young points out that it “was a happy springtime for the Malinowskis . . . Bronio was in the pink of health and Elsie had shaken off her fevers. In November she conceived” (p. 603). Here the biographer hastens to point out that it “was a fertile period for Malinowski, too”. He studied economics and psychology together with Paul Khuner and “having discovered that ‘most branches of linguistics and classical philology [were] useless to the anthropologist’ he set himself the task for formulating an ethnographic theory of language. Young points out that Malinowski started with Sidney Ray’s principle that “a scientific study of language is essential to a full ethnographic description” and that he was convinced that ethnographers have to study the language of the ethnical group they research in order to “grasp the social psychology of the tribe, i.e., their manner of thinking, in so far as it is conditioned by the peculiarities of their culture” (p. 603). His central interest in meaning is already documented in the first linguistic paper he wrote on the “Classificatory particles in the language of Kiriwina” (Malinowski, 1920). Discussing this paper Young refers to other studies on the Kilivila classifiers and tries to explain the difference with respect to the number of types of classifiers listed in Malinowski’s (42 types), Baldwin’s (75 types), Lawton’s (147 types) and Senft’s (177 types) publications as a difference based on the different definitions of what kind of formative can be called a classifier. I am afraid but this is incorrect. Some of the classifiers that I have described, for example, are rather rarely used, belong to very specific technical vocabularies, or are markers of high social standing (see Senft, 1996b). Moreover, Malinowski’s excellent contribution to the study of classifiers does not need such a ‘defense’ at all (see Senft, 1996b:200f). Malinowski finished his article in December. It was rejected by the “Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute” – “as if to prove Malinowski’s contention that anthropologists did not take linguistics seriously enough” (p. 605) – and appeared in 1920 (not in 1922, as Young has it) in the “Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies”. In November the Malinowskis returned to Melbourne. Malinowski had to select and catalogue the collection of artefacts commissioned by Baldwin Spencer in 1915. Malinowski proposed to donate the 282 items he had selected to the National Museum of Victoria in Seligman’s name (p. 606), but Seligman responded that the collection should commemorate Robert Mond. The greater part of the selection was later shipped to the British Museum. The artefacts selected for the Museum were exhibited in a large display case at the museum in Victoria – and Young points out that this “was the first and last museum display Malinowski curated” (p. 607). On January 10th, 1920 the Malinowskis returned to Whitfield for another 3 weeks. They then returned to Melbourne again and left Australia on the 25th of February on board of the “Borda”. The Seligmans had invited Bronislaw and Elsie to stay with them at Thame near Oxford. Seligman also advised Malinowski to write a letter to William Beveridge, the new director of the LSE, to arrange for a room at the University. The last document in Malinowski’s government file is a letter he wrote to Atlee Hunt a day before his departure in which he thanked him for his support, mentioned his achievements – his publications, his DSc award and “The Robert Mond Collection” – and announced that within 2 years he will have published his materials “as one treatise” (p. 610). Young assumes that it was during the 2 months voyage to England that Malinowski abandoned the idea of writing the “Kiriwina” treatise and that he decided to “extract from its voluminous bulk a more essential monograph” (p. 610). It is not clear why he chose the Kula as the topic for this book – Young hypothesizes that Malinowski may have been inspired by the ocean voyage

“with its romantic Conradian associations” (p. 610). He ends the first volume of his biography with the remark that in his luggage were a handful of pearls from the Trobriands and “a priceless Kula trophy”, a “soulava” shell necklace – gifts from Billy Hancock. “But more precious by far” – adds the biographer – were the ethnographic riches contained with his notebooks. Jason was returning with his fleece, Tokosikuna with his magic flute” (p. 610).

The book ends with a list of abbreviations, endnotes, a bibliography and a very useful index.

The detailed and comprehensive first volume of Michael Young’s biography of Malinowski offers a bonanza of facts on and insights into the personality of its protagonist and the people that played a role in his life. It is very well written and the biographer reaches all its aims listed in the Introduction. I would like to emphasize that Michael Young really achieved a literary biography in the best sense of the term. There are a few typos (like, e.g., p. 160 read “towards” (for: “to wards”), p. 239 read “overemphasis (for: “overem-phasis”), p. 350 read “memorandum” (for: “memo-randum”), p. 420 read “sympathizing” (for: “sym-pathizing”), p. 496 read “photographs” (for: “photo-graphs”), p. 582 read “To put it crudely” (for: “to put to put it crudely”)), on page 554 Young refers to “Kaduwaga” as an island, however, Kaduwaga is the name of a village on Kaile’una island. Not all books mentioned in the text (see e.g. p. 171) are listed in the bibliography, the bibliographic references are in part incomplete and inaccurate, and it would have been nice to find references in the text to the photographs presented in the two plates sections. Finally, the reviewer as linguist also wonders whether Young is not familiar with the (anthropological–) linguistic work done on Kilivila – he refers to my monograph on classifiers, but references to the linguistic work of, e.g., Baldwin (n.d.), Lawton (1980), and Scoditti (1996) are not given in the bibliography. However, all this criticism is carping.

To sum up: Michael Young has written an extremely detailed and rich biography on the first 35 years of Malinowski. It is fascinating to read this literary biography and to see how the biographer manages to present his readership Malinowski’s “point of view, *his* vision of *his* world”. Young has to be congratulated for this “biography in the strict sense of the term” – and I am sure that I am not the only one who is impatiently waiting for the publication of the second volume of his Malinowski biography.

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