
Introduction

Edwin Ardener, whose major recent papers are gathered here, died unexpectedly while this volume was in preparation. The volume was never intended to signify that a totality of work had been achieved, with a beginning and an end. On the contrary, this was no more than a rough tidying-up exercise, a bundle bound up with string – it would allow the past to be carried lightly, and put no obstacle in the way of all the work that the future might hold.

Ardener's death, however, has changed matters. This volume has become, in spite of itself, biographical in a rather keen sense. It seems, therefore, appropriate to accept this part, and to sketch in, however briefly, some details of his life and work. It is also perhaps worth suggesting, at the very beginning, that the greater implications of his work are many, and still largely unexploited. The reader will of course form his, or her, own opinion on this matter. In order to suggest, however, that Ardener's papers constitute a work which can profitably be kept open, I have asked two anthropologists who were close to him to contribute a final chapter. Professor Kirsten Hastrup and Dr Maryon McDonald, writing at the end of the volume, open it out, as Ardener would have wished, to 'work in progress . . .'

Edwin William Ardener was born on 21 September 1927. His adolescence was spent in wartime England, after which, in October 1945, he went to the London School of Economics (LSE). He had early interests in language, archaeology and Egyptology, which led him to Malinowski's former department, where he read anthropology, with psychology as a supporting subject. He attended the seminars over which Malinowski's shadow still loomed, then being run by Raymond Firth, and came into contact with other senior figures in the subject, including Darryl Forde. Audrey Richards was, perhaps, the teacher who most influenced him at this time, although Major Edmund Leach taught the young Ardener a course in 'material culture', and Phyllis Kaberry was also an important figure. Ardener was, beginning in 1945 at the age of eighteen, one of the very

youngest of the post-war recruits to the anthropological profession, and he became the first from the LSE to take final examinations in anthropology since 1938. Much of his later work might be seen as an intellectual rendering of this demographic singularity – an attempt to work out a relationship between the orthodoxies of older social anthropology, the contemporary post-war situation in Africa, and developments coming in to social anthropology since the 1960s.

After graduating in 1948, he went to Nigeria in May 1949, thus beginning a lifelong involvement with West Africa. He spent thirty months in Nigeria, among the Ibo of Mba-Ise, which gave rise to his first ethnographic writing, *A Socio-Economic Survey of Mba-Ise*. Several other reports and publications came from this fieldwork, and material from this period was regularly drawn upon in later works (see 1954a, 1954b, 1959b, 1972a).

In 1952 he became a research fellow (later senior research fellow) of the West African (later Nigerian) Institute of Social and Economic Research (WA/NISER), and went to Cameroon, where he spent most of the next eleven years. He carried out extensive fieldwork, statistical and linguistic studies, in village and in plantation, particularly among the Bakwéri, but also among the Esu and more generally, and lengthy reports from this work were submitted, through the NISER, to the government of the Southern (later West) Cameroons. A large body of published ethnographic writing came out of this long stay in Cameroon (for the complete bibliography, see appendix): the major works for which Ardener was solely responsible were *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons* (1956), 'Social and Demographic Problems of the Southern Cameroons Plantation Area' (in Southall (ed.) 1961), and *Divorce and Fertility* (1962a). Much of Ardener's work was assisted by his wife Shirley: in particular, a collaborative study of the social and economic effects of the plantation system in what was then the Southern Cameroons, which resulted in the volume co-authored by the Ardeners and W. A. Warmington, *Plantation and Village in the Cameroons* (1960).

In the Cameroons, the Ardeners were involved in many projects, often in connection with the concerns of its people and their government and administration. Together they were personally responsible, with official encouragement and backing, for setting up the Buea (West Cameroon) state, later provincial, archives. The difficulties faced in this enterprise are described by the historian Martin Njeuma, who speaks of the modern archives as 'living testimony to Ardener's story of success' (Njeuma 1987: 1964). The achievement has also been described by another Cameroonian scholar, Simon Epale, who speaks of the Ardeners as:

this couple who painstakingly gathered bits and pieces of weatherbeaten German and English files from the moth-infested attic of the old German-built secretariat in Buea and set up the present provincial archives in Buea, which today is crowded with young Cameroonians either preparing for higher degrees at overseas or Yaounde Universities, or trying to develop the history of their country in order to rediscover their cultural heritage and build up new values that are in keeping with the present realities of their country . . . the country owed the Ardeners a great debt

for bequeathing to it this storehouse of information about its past (Epale 1985: xviii).

Ardener became not only Adviser on Archives to the West Cameroonian government, but also Adviser on Antiquities, roles he played both for their intrinsic worth, and for the sustained fieldwork opportunities that they afforded him at all levels of Cameroon society. He encouraged scholarship and discussion among Cameroonian students, running an occasional seminar series in his home in Buea. As Njeuma puts it, in an obituary in *West Africa*, 'at a time when no one thought of it, he directed his efforts to encourage local intellectuals to take up research as a profession' (Njeuma 1987: 1964). Ardener also established and edited a small series of government publications on the Cameroons, two of which he wrote (see, for example, Chilver and Kaberry 1967; Ardener, S. 1968; Ardener, E. 1965a). He produced many shorter pieces of ethnographic and political analysis and comment, particularly for the journals *Nigeria* and *West Africa*. Of these earlier short pieces, 'The "Kamerun" Idea' (1958), and 'The Political History of Cameroon' (1962) have been of particular influence. The importance of the Ardeners' work for Cameroonian life and scholarship is recognized by all reference works on the subject. Le Vine and Nye, in reviewing West Cameroonian historical and political literature, say that 'pride of place must go . . . to the indefatigable Ardeners' (Le Vine and Nye 1974: 142), and continue, 'needless to say, all scholars of the Cameroons have relied heavily on their efforts' (*ibid.*: 143). The judgement is echoed in other works (see, for example, Delancey and Schraeder 1986: 17, 69, 76). Njeuma says:

history will remember Ardener as one of the very few English men who fully integrated himself among Cameroonians with a sense of humanity, free from racial or class bigotry . . . by encouraging many graduates to do research at a time when this was not popular and was not a gateway to high status and influence, especially by organizing a National Archives with provision for public use, Ardener deserves to be called one of the fathers of modern scientific studies in Cameroon (Njeuma 1987: 1965).

Later works added to this impressive body of historical, political and linguistic work, among them 'The Nature of the Reunification of Cameroon' (in Hazelwood (ed.) 1967), 'Documentary and Linguistic Evidence for the Rise of the Trading Polities between Rio del Rey and Cameroon 1500–1650' (in Lewis, I. M. (ed.) 1968), 'Kingdom on Mount Cameroon: Documents for the History of Buea, 1844–1898' (forthcoming in *Facing Mount Cameroon*; see below), and 'Witchcraft, Economics, and the Continuity of belief' (in Douglas (ed.) 1970b).

During the early 1960s, the constitutional rearrangements that brought about 'the re-unification of Cameroon' (see Ardener, E. 1967a) took Ardener's area of principal fieldwork interest out of Nigeria; the Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, of which Ardener had long been a

fellow, temporarily closed down, and Nigerian funding for research in Cameroon also stopped. The year 1963 saw Ardener in Oxford, as an Oppenheimer student, experiencing one of those awkward gaps in fieldwork research-funding which were then, and are once again, so typical a feature of the anthropological scene. It was at this delicate moment that E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Professor of Social Anthropology in Oxford from 1946 to 1970, invited Ardener to take up a post as university lecturer in social anthropology. Ardener accepted this, on condition that he be allowed time for a further nine-month visit to the Cameroons. After this, he took up the position at Oxford, which he held until his death. He returned to Cameroon, however, every summer (with the exception of 1967) for the three months of the long vacation, until his last visit in 1969. During this last visit the West Cameroon Archive building, which he had been instrumental in establishing, organizing, designing and staffing, was officially opened.

The yearly commute between Oxford and Cameroon, between 1963 and 1969, meant that the Ardeners spent the winter in Oxford and the rainy season in Cameroon, and so saw much less of the sun than might have been desirable. Ardener was able, however, by means of these yearly visits, to maintain most of the appearances of a continued presence in Cameroon. As he pointed out, and as anyone who makes regular return visits to a well-established fieldwork location will appreciate, if you are away for nine months, and then return, most people do not know, and have no reason to suppose, that you have been in another country for the best part of the year. They will simply suppose that, for one reason or another, it has been a few months since they last saw you, and will take up where they left off. This is of great use in continuing fieldwork, and one can say with truth that Ardener's fieldwork in West Africa, in Nigeria and then in Cameroon, spanned the best part of twenty years.

Having been appointed to his lectureship in 1963, Ardener retained his membership of Queen Elizabeth House, and became a senior common room member of St Antony's College. In 1969 he became a supernumerary fellow of St John's College, and his life was subsequently centred round Oxford, although he maintained close contact, socially and intellectually, with Cameroon.

Ardener's close contact with Evans-Pritchard in Oxford was a fruitful one, and acknowledgement of it is extensively made in chapter 1. The literary, historical, philosophical and more generally humane, aspects of Evans-Pritchard's work, coupled as they were with great achievements in fieldwork and in ethnographic writing, were particularly attractive, in the context of the problems that Ardener himself came to deal with.

In Oxford and England, as once in Cameroon, Ardener became closely involved in the organizational as well as the intellectual aspects of his work. He fought the corner for social anthropology, both in the university and in the country, recognizing that if the interests of the profession were not looked after by those involved in it, they would be looked after by no one. The tasks were not always pleasant or rewarding, and Oxford anthro-

polology in the 1970s went through an acutely difficult period. Nevertheless, in various capacities in the Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology (including a long period as chairman), in the ASA (the Association of Social Anthropologists of Britain and the Commonwealth, of which he was chairman for four years), on committees of the SSRC (Social Science Research Council), on the executive committee of ALSISS (the Association of Learned Societies in the Social Sciences), and in connection with the Human Sciences degree in Oxford, he brought insight, wit and commitment to the professional life and interests of social anthropology.

On top of normal teaching activities, Ardener became closely involved with the attempt to establish, in Oxford, a joint honours school which would bring together various biological and social aspects of the study of humanity. This was a long, often tedious, and sometimes controversial business, but it was rewarded in 1970 with the first intake of students to the 'Human Sciences' honours school. It was largely through Ardener's efforts in committee that social anthropology had a prominent place in this school, and so became, for the first time, a subject that could be studied seriously at undergraduate level in Oxford; this may well prove to have been of lasting significance for the continued prosperity of social anthropology at Oxford. The Human Sciences connection is important, providing as it did an institutional expression of the contact that Ardener maintained with the more observational and statistical disciplines – with demography, ethology, and so on. Some of the chapters below (in particular chapters 3, 6, 7 and 11, part 1) are the direct result of problems arising from this meeting of disciplines, in the context of the Human Sciences degree course. It is important to stress Ardener's sustained interest in, and contact with, the resolutely positivist and empirical aspects of the 'human sciences', since such preoccupations may not be self-evident to those who knew him primarily as an expert on 'linguistics'.

In 1972, Ardener published a paper called 'Belief and the Problem of Women' (see below, chapter 4), which became, over the following years, the crystal upon which a formidable body of work and endeavour in 'women's studies' was to grow. His original expression of problems concerning 'muted groups', and the differential bounding of groups of men and women, have proved to be of enduring value, and he continued to be associated with the lively intellectual effort that his work had, in part at least, provoked. It is perhaps worth noting that this work was never, either in principle or in practice, exclusively about 'women', for the 'problem' to which he drew attention was a general one (and cf. Hardman 1973; Maguire 1974; Chapman 1978, for other applications). He was a founding member of the Oxford University Women's Studies Committee, on which he remained until his death. He encouraged the establishment of the 'Centre for Cross-Cultural Research on Women', at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, with which his wife and several of his one-time students have been particularly associated. From these Oxford endeavours a long list of publications has come forth (see, for a few examples among many: Ardener, S. (ed.) 1975a; 1978; Macdonald, Holden and Ardener (eds)

1987), continuing evidence of the 'intellectual stamina' of 'the local style of women's studies' (cf. Ardener, E. 1980: x).

Ardener's graduate students tended in the first place, as was natural, to seek research locations in Africa. A shift of interest back to Europe and Britain was pending in social anthropology, however, and Ardener encouraged this from early days. The study of linguistics, not only in Europe but throughout the world, has long been influenced by what has always been, and will doubtless remain, the best documented domain – that of the 'Indo-European' languages. Ardener had extensive exposure to the scholarly study of these languages. In the British context, early linguistic work is inevitably tied to problems concerning ethnicity, population movement, historical sources and so on, and he brought an anthropologically trained mind to this area. His thirst for languages was such that he had, in the Cameroons, while the tropical rain beat down, begun a serious study of modern Welsh, learning initially from a native-speaking Welshman and local District Officer, Cledwyn Hughes (for a Welsh language account of the surprising phenomenon of an English Welsh-speaker in the Mountain Hotel, Buea, Southern Cameroon, see *Y Faner* 15 November 1985: 13). Early British and English histories were never far from Ardener's mind, even in the West African context. He edited and annotated an important early linguistic work on West African languages, J. Clarke's *Specimens of Dialects* (1848, see Ardener, E. 1972c) and, searching for an image to contrast Clarke with a contemporary, S. Koelle (see 1854), he produced 'Koelle is Bede where Clarke is Nennius' (Ardener, E. 1972c: 19). It was only a short step from this to modern ethnographic study of British and European ethnic and linguistic groups, and this he increasingly encouraged.

Several of Ardener's students had turned to the problems posed by minority languages in the European context, and Scottish Gaelic had attracted particular attention. Ardener applied himself to the phonetics of the varieties of Scottish Gaelic with the same enthusiasm and rigour that he had brought to earlier studies of the languages of West Africa. He had begun a comparative study of the Gaelic dialects, in a characteristic attempt to map linguistic and social variation on to one another. In the last few years of his life, he had begun making regular summer trips to the Outer Hebrides, the last stronghold of spoken Gaelic. These trips he made with his wife Shirley, and they had begun to seem, although much more modest, rather like those earlier yearly trips to the Cameroons. The fruits of this work were still, for the most part, in the future, although the experience of Hebridean life is delightfully rendered in one of the last papers in this volume – 'Remote Areas' (below, chapter 14).

The Cameroonian example served Ardener as a model for the relationship between 'history' and 'ethnicity', which he pursued in several papers (see 1958; 1967a; below, chapters 3 and 7). Throughout the last decade of his life he convened a weekly seminar with the title 'History and Ethnicity' (for some of the period in collaboration with Michael Hurst). This led, fairly directly, to the 1987 ASA conference with the same title, a selection of papers from which is in press (see Chapman, McDonald and Tonkin (eds),

1989). Other publications arising from the preoccupations of these seminars are imminent, and many more will doubtless appear.

Every year, at Oxford, Ardener gave a series of lectures on problems associated with the theoretical meeting of social anthropology and linguistics, society and language. In these lectures, and in his other activities, he became involved in the attempt, widespread perhaps, but particularly vigorous at Oxford, to assimilate structuralism to the British anthropological tradition, and to advance further once that assimilation had been made. The lectures, changing and developing from the first delivery in 1963 to the last in 1987, are only inadequately represented in the published papers. They were taxing, stimulating and often extremely funny. Besides these lectures, Ardener was involved in a range of seminars, classes and introductory lectures, particularly involving the Human Sciences degree. His introductions to anthropological linguistics, and to problems presented by language, staged for Human Scientists, but sometimes attracting a much wider audience, were masterpieces, both in content and delivery. These, similarly, are poorly represented in the published papers (although see chapter 1 on Saussure and chapter 11 on Whorf). This is a pity, for Ardener's verbal deliveries, formal and informal, in conversation, tutorial, lecture, seminar and conference, were often his most brilliant and characteristic contributions. He had a rare and remarkable capacity to turn thought in unexpected and exciting directions, and the results were often profound, unsettling and hilarious, all at once. It is a minor tragedy that financial retrenchment in academia in recent years, coupled with the *amour-propre* of the disciplines, denied him the large audience that he merited. The groups of students who had his lectures on their lists (undergraduate human scientists and graduate social anthropologists), were, in recent years, held down in size through various problems of funding. The natural audience was, therefore, when Ardener was at the height of his powers, diminishing or static. And those who did not have his lectures on their lists did not, of course, come. Social anthropology is a little out of town, in fact and in metaphor. Ardener was, of course, concerned about the decline in academic funding and morale in recent years, but he was not, in a sense, surprised by it. As he remarked himself, 'there is of course no inherent justice in demographic patterns' (Ardener, E. and Ardener, S. 1965: 307), and the age structure of the academic community in Britain has demonstrated the acute truth of this over the last twenty years. Ardener was not of the charmed generation that flooded into the universities as very young academics in the 1960s and 1970s, and he had not its illusions to lose.

One area of neglect of Ardener's work is, however, particularly noteworthy. The relationships between language, thought and reality, philosophical issues as they are, were discussed in Ardener's presentations in a serious and novel way that should, I think, have commanded the attention of Oxford philosophy. The absence of such attention (except on the part of a handful of individuals) is partly to be explained by the often intellectually restrictive structures imposed by the categorization of the disciplines. It is also, however, evidence of a characteristic and rather general feature of

academic philosophy – happy to raid anthropology for ethnographic examples torn out of context, but rather blind to the sophisticated blend of conceptual finesse and empirical command that social anthropology can bring to ‘philosophical’ discussion. Social anthropology’s philosophy is of the world, one might say, not of the seminar room. Rare it was, at any rate, that one of the great army of Oxford undergraduate philosophers found their way to Ardener’s lectures. If he had been lecturing in Paris they would, I think, have been fighting for seats (for what that is worth).

Ardener never sought publication avidly, and took much more pleasure in students’ publications than in his own. Many of those that knew him will, perhaps, feel that his written work did not capture the essence of their relationship to him, or the essence of what he communicated to them; much of his work remained in lecture notes, and in the memory of those who had listened to him. He was wryly aware that people might one day try to ‘do a Saussure’ on him, and this has indeed begun to happen (see the appendix for forthcoming works). He was also, however, aware that posthumous concern creates not a reality, but a simulacrum of it (see 1987a: 44). He would certainly have agreed that he could, and perhaps should, have written a great deal more. Most of his publications since 1971 are contained in this volume, and the result in pounds and ounces is not particularly impressive. This relatively slight physical aspect is not, however, a reliable measure of intellectual weight. He did not repeat himself, or labour a point. His apparently relaxed style conceals a tense economy of expression and of argument. He could make a terse article do where others might produce a book and say less; make one phrase serve where others might require laboured paragraphs.

Some found Ardener’s conversation and story-telling baffling, and sometimes they were. It is true that he did not give away the key to a good story until the very last line, and took pleasure in the suspense (sometimes of several hours’ duration!). And some have complained of obscurity in his writing. This is a difficult point to deal with briefly. It might be said, however, that while there doubtless *are* obscurities, as in all truly original writing (and I discuss below some of the difficulties of expression which attended the intellectual enterprise on which Ardener was engaged), it would be imprudent to be too ready to identify these. I know, from the experience of myself and others, that many of what one might take at first sight for obscurities, turn out to be failures of one’s own understanding rather than of Ardener’s expression.

Ardener was closely associated with the origin (in 1970), and continued production, of the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, known in Oxford as ‘JASO’ [dʒasou]. This journal began as a means of allowing graduate students to cut their intellectual and literary teeth. It has grown, over the years, into one of the front ranking anthropological journals in the English-speaking world. In a short article in the tenth year of its publication, Ardener looked back upon these ten years, saying of JASO that it had, in its early years, an ‘urgent provisionality’ (Ardener, E. 1980: xiii). Something of the same might be said of his own work, which he was

continually revising, in response to developments in his thought, and in response to commentary from his students. He would probably, in relation to himself, have rejected the adjective 'urgent', as being rather too magniloquent for the often rather leisurely process by which his papers drifted from hand to hand in unpredictable directions, and re-appeared, cited, summarized, plagiarized, or misunderstood, in the works and conversations of others. He would certainly have been happy, however, to have his work thought of as 'provisional'. He often said, in typical vein, that the only way in which works of this provisional nature could acceptably assume published form, was as posthumous works. So much so, indeed, that he sometimes spoke of this volume, before his death, and without any anticipation of that sad event, as a 'posthumous' work. At the time of his death, publication of these papers was imminent – the contract with the publishers was ready to be signed, the papers had been collected and collated by the present editor, the introduction was waiting to be written. It would be wrong, of course, to think of Ardener's premature departure from the scene at this stage as an act of autobiographical finesse. I think he would, however, be happy to have it remembered as such. Circumstance delivered the joke, and he was not one to refuse such a gift.

THIS VOLUME

This volume contains most of the major papers produced in their final form by Edwin Ardener since 1971. There are one or two important absences (see below), and no minor pieces (reviews and so forth) have been included. Neither has any effort been made to bring in any of the variety of unfinished works, which exist in partial and note form. In the foregoing biographical account, it has been noted that Ardener's African fieldwork involvement, and the ethnographic writing arising from this, were remarkably and unusually complete, and that this work is held in the highest esteem by Africanists. This should be remembered in reading this collection, for the papers that follow are not, in any simple sense, ethnographic writings. Indeed, most of these works were commonly perceived to be highly 'theoretical', an adjective frequently used to mean the very opposite of 'ethnographic' or 'descriptive'. This dichotomy, 'theoretical/descriptive', like many others forming the fabric of comfortable debate in the human sciences, is largely dissolved through Ardener's treatment, and this will be discussed at greater length below. For the moment, however, it is enough to stress that there is no sudden discontinuity in Ardener's work, between the specifically African works published before 1970, and the more general anthropological papers gathered in this volume. The close interlinking of anthropological concerns with linguistics, history and demography, so characteristic of the later work, is already fully present in the earlier papers. The meeting of empirical and definitional problems is there from the first.

There is no obviously privileged starting point, therefore. Readers familiar with Ardener's recent work may find the omission of 'Witchcraft, Economics and the Continuity of Belief' particularly notable, and a word of

explanation is necessary. This paper was given to an ASA conference in 1968, and published in 1970 in the volume *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (ASA 9), edited by Mary Douglas. It was commonly perceived as being the theoretical precursor of some of the papers presented here, introducing the idea of the 'template', a temporary theoretical and figurative device which Ardener developed, and renamed, in later formulations. The decision to omit this paper was based on two considerations. Firstly, the paper fits naturally into a sequence of studies of the Cameroons, and is to be published as part of such a sequence, in a volume edited by Shirley Ardener. This will also contain the substantial and previously unpublished manuscript of 'Kingdom on Mount Cameroon' (the title of the volume will be *Facing Mount Cameroon – Studies in the History of the Cameroon Coast 1500–1970*). Pressure on space in *Facing Mount Cameroon* was less intense than in this volume, and so it was decided that 'Witchcraft, Economics and the Continuity of Belief' should go there rather than here. The continued availability of this paper is, therefore, assured, and readers should note its importance as an immediate precursor of the papers presented here.

The second reason for leaving out this paper applies also to three other important omissions – a need to keep the length and cost of this book within reasonable limits. The three papers to which I refer particularly are: 'A Directory Study of Social Anthropologists' (1965, with S. Ardener); 'Social Anthropology and the Historicity of Historical Linguistics' (1971); and 'Evidences of Creation' (1987 conference paper, in press) (the location of these papers can be found in the appendix). The decision to omit these papers and not others may seem arbitrary or misguided. The 1965 paper, co-authored with his wife, remained a favourite of Ardener's throughout, and invites omission only because it is slightly outside the obvious theoretical range of the other papers. The 1971 paper is often perceived as an exercise in technical linguistics, and as such, as Ardener well knew, risks seeming unappealing to the general reader, although it has an immediate relevance to the theoretical concerns of the rest of this volume. The 1987 conference paper was Ardener's last major contribution, and is forthcoming in the volume *History and Ethnicity – ASA Monographs 27* (see Chapman, McDonald, and Tonkin (eds) 1989). It will, therefore, be readily available at the same time as *The Voice of Prophecy*. All three of these omitted papers are of the highest quality, and these excuses (for that is all they are) for leaving them out are clearly not good ones. All ideally would have found a place. The same also goes for several shorter pieces, among which particular mention might be made of Ardener's note on 'Edward Sapir (1884–1939)' (1987; see the appendix).

The reason this volume begins with two 1971 papers is, therefore, largely to do with length. A variety of earlier papers could profitably have been included. The two 1971 contributions presented here are significant, however, in that both were directly addressed to the entire British anthropological population, through its two major institutions, the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA), and the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI). The 1969 conference of the ASA, convened by Ardener, has come to

be recognized as a landmark in modern British anthropology (see, for example, Parkin 1982: v). The introduction to the ensuing ASA monograph, written by Ardener, is itself a major work, in which linguistics and social anthropology, as they then were, were brought face to face. The 1971 paper 'The New Anthropology and its Critics' continued the same concerns in something rather like polemic form. This paper was first given as the Malinowski lecture at the London School of Economics, and was greeted with a rather characteristic and dramatic mixture of excitement, speculation and doubt. It was subsequently published in *Man*, the journal of the RAI. The novelty of the 'New Anthropology' was not something that Ardener claimed for himself, of course, for any such novelty was already 'largely over', and full and explicit acknowledgement is made of sources and inspiration. There was, however, a claim for a break between one period and another, whose implications had not been fully appreciated by the greater anthropological community in which this break had occurred. Hence the polemical tone, and the sometimes hostile reception. The theoretical concerns were by no means all new, but this paper focused them in a particularly challenging way. Beginning this volume with the two 1971 publications is, then, appropriate. It is, however, in another way, no more than expedient, and readers should bear in mind the work that went before.

Shirley Ardener and I have both tried, at different times and in different ways during Ardener's lifetime, to devise some sort of thematic grouping of the following papers (into, say, papers concerned with 'population and ethnicity', papers concerned with 'language' and so on). All such groupings, however, lacked conviction, and this for reasons which are fundamental to Ardener's thought and style. All of his papers reach out to the others, in ways that conventional themes, topics and titles simply cannot accommodate (and I return to this point below). The papers in this book are therefore presented more or less according to the date of their composition. Details of where each paper was first delivered, and first published, can be found in the appendix. Two of the pieces are previously unpublished, chapter 9, 'The Voice of Prophecy', and 'Total Translation', the third part of chapter 11, 'Comprehending Others'. ('Comprehending Others' is thus presented here for the first time in full.) Both chapter 9 and chapter 11 were, in Ardener's own opinion, vitally important parts of his work, and as such it is entirely typical that they should have remained unpublished, in whole or in part.

Having said that thematic grouping does not do justice to the following papers, some suggestion of the inter-relationship of the following papers may be useful.

Chapter 1 stands, in many respects, alone. It is a major summary of past and present trends, with many pointers to the future. Written as a commentary on a conference which took place in 1969, as an introduction to a diverse collection published in 1971, as a summary of relationships between two sophisticated disciplines from the late nineteenth century to 1971 and as a polemical and predictive intervention in a difficult and controversial area, one which divided the anthropological community of the time, it is

not surprising that it is a piece which is firmly tied to its context. In the early stages of the preparation of this book, Ardener was considering rewriting this chapter, and much early momentum was lost, broken upon the problem of how this might be achieved. We had solved the problem by deciding to leave it out altogether, and let Ardener provide some substitute for it in his introduction. Now that he will not write the introduction, however, inclusion of chapter 1 becomes vital, since so much work refers back to it. In the year or so before Ardener's death, I had attempted several editings of the piece, in order to fit it for inclusion in this work, and the changes that I have presumed to make (and see the editor's preface to chapter 1) are those that met with at least some approval. Readers should bear in mind, however, the provenance and context of this piece.

Chapter 2, 'The New Anthropology and its Critics', might be said to be the first of the main series of theoretical papers, which is continued in chapter 5 ('Some Outstanding Problems in the Analysis of Events'), chapter 9 ('The Voice of Prophecy – Further Problems in the Analysis of Events'), and chapter 11 ('Comprehending Others'). Three pieces with clear affinities to one another are those that concern 'the problem of women' – chapters 4, 8 and 12. Chapter 8, indeed, takes the form of an extended commentary on chapter 4, and the two were published together in 1975.

Beyond these few comments, one can do little without going into detail that is rendered otiose by the volume itself. Chapters 3 and 7 might be said to concern 'population and ethnicity'; chapter 6 and the first part of chapter 11 to derive from the problematic meeting of anthropology and animal behaviour. One could go on, but only at risk of producing a pale imitation of the papers themselves – their inter-relationships, at a level well above conventional thematization, are manifold, and the reader can be left to discover these. The reference section at the end of the volume contains all the works cited in the various papers (including this introduction). I have also added, as an appendix, a complete list of Ardener's publications.

There has been a need for a collection of Ardener's papers for some years, for it was clear that, at a local level at least, demand for them far exceeded supply. Some of the papers gathered here, before, if ever, they were published, had a long history of informal circulation, in typewritten form, photocopied and re-photocopied, and passed around from one student to another. Those that existed in published form were often difficult to find, either because the books in which they appeared were out of print, were not commonly accessible, or were simply rather expensive. It was, in consequence, very difficult to assemble, at the same time and in the same place, a complete run of the papers that have been gathered together here. Ardener's attitude to the publication of his work was, as we have seen, rather equivocal, and he often preferred to give his papers to conferences, to circulate them in typewritten form, and to let them develop over the years. He was also anxious that his work should be circulated, locally, at the least possible cost to those, often classically 'impoverished' students, who wished to read them. This sometimes lent a feeling of conspiratorial informality to

the propagation of his works, which was both a relish and a frustration, according to whether or not you were able to get what you wanted. This volume will, by contrast, be a rather sober reality. All the words will be legible, and all the references made in full. As I was putting the final touches to this introduction, in a village in a remote part of West Cumbria, an entirely unexpected and unheralded visitor knocked on my window, having made a long detour on a longer journey, to ask if I had a spare copy of 'the Munro lecture', published below as chapter 9. The publication of this volume will, in some small sense, be the end of an era.

I discussed the title of this book with Ardener at some length. Two possibilities were seriously considered, *Comprehending Others* and *The Voice of Prophecy*. I leaned towards the latter, on grounds of euphony and interest. Ardener, however, had serious reservations about it, and inclined towards the safer *Comprehending Others*. This was not because he preferred it, exactly, but because, he said, 'If I call it *The Voice of Prophecy*, they'll think I mean me'. In the end, Shirley Ardener and I have decided that *The Voice of Prophecy* is the better title, and it is perhaps necessary to point out, for those that might have been inclined to wonder, that the prophet in question is not E. W. Ardener.

THE INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTION

There is, however, perhaps more to be had out of the notion of prophecy than an unwanted joke. In a situation of theoretical and conceptual innovation, statements from within a novel structure of understanding are always likely to be perceived, at worst, as laughably meaningless, and, at best, as oracular – an oracle spiced, perhaps, with the exciting hint of fulfilment. It is no exaggeration to say that Ardener's writings and oral deliveries were often received in this way, even by those essentially sympathetic to his enterprise. There is nothing dramatic about this, for it is a common response to original thinking. Ardener draws attention, in chapter 1, to the problems faced by Lévi-Strauss in trying to express an intuitive insight in a conceptual language ill-suited to it, and the same problems might be said to have faced Ardener himself. In chapter 9 (1975) he says 'Lévi-Strauss should appear banal, not merely "outmoded"' (see below, p. 154), and this was not a criticism of Lévi-Strauss. For it was the very success of some, at least, of the innovations made by Lévi-Strauss that *should*, at least, have made the original pronouncements seem banal. As Ardener notes, a prophet is incomprehensible before the prophetic fulfilment (should any occur), and commonplace afterwards. The 'voice of prophecy' was not Ardener's own, but the argument concerning prophecy and world-structure can indeed be applied to his own work and to its reception, as Kirsten Hastrup shows below (see p. 224).

Ardener's papers as presented here are their own evidence, of course, and nothing further is needed. I intend no attempt here at summarizing or introducing his ideas. His work was, however, in many respects a struggle against conventional forms of social scientific understanding, against the

grain of common expression. A brief examination of how and why this was may, perhaps, be appropriate here, for it is a question which he does not treat explicitly himself. It is also a question which requires consideration of his work as a whole, in the context of its time, and in the context of his own life.

Ardener was taught, in the 1940s, the empirical and functionalist orthodoxies of the social anthropology of the time. He carried out very long-term, highly empirical and rigorous research within this framework, and published three monographs resulting from it, along with many shorter pieces. His field research involved collaboration with statistically minded demographers, and Edwin had great respect for the rigour of the demographic *attempt* at seizing empirical totality. During his early teaching years at Oxford, graduate theses in social anthropology were required to have a 'statistical appendix'. His criticism of this at the time was not of the requirement, but rather of its frequently inadequate fulfilment. If you were going to have a statistical appendix, he argued, then it should be done properly or not at all – the half-hearted appearance of enumeration was useless.

During his long fieldwork, however, it was forced upon his attention that no amount of empirical endeavour could substitute for a *social* understanding of the reality under investigation. Counting was of little use until you knew *what* you were counting, and once you knew *what* you were counting, then the counting itself often seemed superfluous. And the question of *what* you were counting, the question of definition, could not be solved by turning with greater assiduity to the researcher's terminology and analytic framework. It was, rather, a question which involved a conceptually complex meeting of the definitions of the researcher, and the definitions of the society under investigation. The complexity of this meeting is now commonly understood, and given titles like 'reflexivity'. Thirty or forty years ago, however, it was scarcely acknowledged. Ardener was studying, among other things, the relationship between divorce and fertility. Studying divorce rates meant studying marriage breakdowns. This presented itself in the first place as an empirical question, with 'marriage' an unquestioned element, holding its common English language meaning. It resolved itself, however, not empirically, but definitionally – the answers to the problems came through a study not of how many marriages broke down, but rather through the study of what marriage *was*, in the terms of the society under study. Many other examples of this kind of problem are discussed in Ardener's papers.

As well as conducting social anthropological research after the habit of the times, Ardener was, and unusually for the period, deeply interested in language, languages and linguistics. The subtle and erudite pleasure in the social life of words, so characteristic of his later writing and conversation, seems to have been present from very early days. While an undergraduate, he taught himself Rumanian in order to read a work otherwise inaccessible to him. He continued, throughout his life, to learn languages as a kind of recreation. These enthusiasms were, it seems, an entirely personal feature –

they were not, at any rate, either required or dictated by the anthropology of the time (and see below, chapter 1, on this). They did mean, however, that Ardener achieved an early version of the now long-fashionable meeting of social anthropology and linguistics – a meeting which proved particularly fruitful, and one that provides the source from which this book might be said to spring. At the time when these concerns were coming together in Ardener's thought, of course, the early works of Lévi-Strauss were already some years past, and were making their first muffled appearance on the British intellectual scene. Ardener's early interests and enthusiasms, although independently developed, made him nevertheless peculiarly well-suited to the task of thinking through the problem that Lévi-Strauss had brought to the fore – how were anthropology and linguistics to come together?

It should be noted, however, that Ardener's early enthusiasm for linguistics was for highly formal approaches – information theory, cybernetics, Chomskyan structuralism and so on. Lévi-Strauss's programme seemed, and in many respects was, a natural complement to this. Ardener's rigorous use of formal models, which remained a feature of his thought, has its origin here (as does the important recognition that models *were* only models, not embodiments of reality – see below, chapters 1 and 2).

Ardener is often thought of as having brought 'linguistic' concerns into the heart of British social anthropology, and this is certainly one aspect of his achievement. Within this enterprise, however, it was not only social anthropology which was obliged to change. Conceptions of language and linguistics have had to be transformed as well, in a way that would not always be recognized or approved of by linguists. The traffic of ideas between linguistics and anthropology was never one-way in Ardener's thought and writing. He never wished to impose inappropriate disciplinary conventions, deriving from linguistics, upon anthropology, and he always recognized both the empirical and conceptual strength of anthropology, covert or unexploited though this strength might sometimes be. As he says, in what is perhaps the central paper of the volume:

The appearance of linguistic examples . . . I know from experience, will lead some readers to a negative reaction. But a close examination will show that we are not dealing with linguistics, or socio-linguistics as normally understood, in such cases. I have had useful discussions on every point with linguistic audiences, but only anthropologists, it seems, easily draw the right conclusions (see below, p. 184).

He has, so to speak, tried to take the pair 'language and society', as it was understood by earlier anthropological and linguistic traditions, and to transform each term by its contact with the other. The result, a possibility of analysis of simultaneities which are at once social and linguistic, material and ideal, is very different from the terms in which the argument might have been structured in the early days of the shift from 'function to meaning' (see below, p. 37; Pocock 1961). Many of the oppositions by which functionalist anthropology defined its virtue, and through which

structural and symbolic anthropology found their escape, are dissolved by this kind of analysis – material/ideal, social/linguistic, real/symbolic, behaviour/thought, measurement/definition (and many more).

These dualities, however, and others like them, were the very fabric of thought within positivist social anthropology, and they formed a coherent and powerful framework for the disposition of truth and untruth, relevance and triviality. They allowed older-style positivist thinking to continue on its way, while accommodating newer developments as a kind of optional extra – suitable, perhaps, for ‘symbolic’ analysis. Ardener’s work is a dissolution of this fabric. It is, however, always difficult to express criticism of a structure of knowledge in terms that are outside the structure but comprehensible within it. Social anthropology in later years has contributed much to an understanding of this common human problem, and it is here that the figurative ‘voice of prophecy’ might be invoked. Argument which cuts across the grain of these dualities, as Ardener’s did, was in the first place confusing. It was often received, as noted above, as either perverse or delphic. Because, however, the dominant position within anthropological thinking was built around the first half of each of the oppositions cited above, the apparently perverse or delphic statement was readily assimilated to the second half of the same oppositions. Ardener was attempting to lead social anthropology out of the positivist empiricism of a previous period. He was not doing so from an idealist position, but *criticism* of positivist empiricism, within the dominant contemporary systems of social anthropological self-understanding, could not look like anything else. And the apparently oracular statement, with its apparent waywardness and ambiguity, was only too readily assimilated to idealism, as this was constructed in empirical and materialist critique. This has led, over the years, to a persistent suspicion of idealism, which Ardener came to expect, with a kind of wry fatalism. The charge is refuted by the work in general, and I think it fair to say that Ardener, for the most part, could not be bothered with going over the same points again and again. In one rather unusual aside, he said:

I am particularly desirous to stress the material features of the reality demonstrated, being tired of the naive assumption that we must here be in an ‘idealist’ discourse (see below, p. 171).

The misunderstanding that led to suspicions of idealism also led, when turned on its head, to something perilously like an espousal of idealism, on the part of those who enthusiastically misunderstood the nature of their conversion. Ardener refers to ‘occasional excesses’ which ‘derive from misinterpretation of the new freedoms’ (below, p. 60). This double-edged misinterpretation was a source of some vexation. Ardener knew, from experience across the full range of the human sciences, that positivist empiricism was ever liable to take fright when presented with the goods that he offered. Ingrained distaste had to be overcome, and great circumspection employed. It was no part of this careful preparation that there

should be, in the background, a noisy idealist fan-club disgracing itself by riotous assembly, and frightening austere positivism back into the securities of its old faith. Something rather like this did, however, happen from time to time.

It is evident from Ardener's writings, and from his own practice, that the place of empirical material in the 'new anthropology' (as of 1971) was as vital as it had ever been to previous schools. The intricacy of the problems that such material posed, in its gathering and understanding, were now openly expressed; empirical material remained, however, of paramount importance. How could it be otherwise? It began to seem, however, in the immediate locality, that this did not go without saying. There was, I think, a temporary reaction against fact-gathering among some students in Oxford, of which the JASO of the 1970s is some witness. I do not wish to overstate this. There were, however, features of the time and the place which made this a possibility. A rejection of 'naive empiricism' was undertaken, which contained the potential that the empirical material would be rejected along with the naivety – baby and bathwater alike down the drain. All the reality-denouncing enthusiasms of the 1960s still perfumed the air. The structure of Oxford graduate social anthropology meant that many students did a library B. Litt before going to do fieldwork, and it was typically from this group that the editors and contributors (readers as well, perhaps) of JASO were drawn. The rigours and rewards of fieldwork were not, therefore, in certain sections of the student body, appreciated as perhaps they might have been. The sustained intellectual critique in which JASO was involved, valuable as it was, did not in itself contain any impulse to fieldwork. Graduate careers were completed, doctorates finished and tenured posts acquired, within the confines of library research. It is a small matter of notoriety that JASO, in its first invitation to submit papers, asked for papers on 'analysis'. Merely 'descriptive' papers were discouraged. In his article 'Ten Years of JASO', Ardener noted, with something like embarrassed relief, that this admonition was disavowed by a contributor (see Tonkin 1971) very early in the journal's history (the note was changed in 1977). Nevertheless, this editorial requirement, in an intellectual context close to Ardener, is interesting, and bears upon the charge of 'idealism'. Some of Ardener's students at the time did, I think, contrive to persuade themselves that facts *were* vulgar, and that theory was the only work for an intellectual. This was emphatically *not* prescribed by Ardener himself, but it was one, itself rather vulgar, reception of the point that he was trying to get across. No surprise then, that, from the outside, some of the winds blowing from Oxford at the time seemed to contain the whiff of idealism. It has, of course, long been a part of the intellectual sub-culture of British social anthropology that Oxford is 'idealist', and unfavourable assessment of Ardener's work fitted readily into this piece of easy academic folklore.

Ardener had put great effort into trying to persuade positivist empiricism of the virtues of conceptual sophistication. It began to be necessary, however, to put some effort into persuading enthusiastic idealism of the virtues of empirical rigour. He insisted, and had the right to insist, that criticism of

empiricism could only come from those that had practised it. He insisted also, and this increasingly as the need for insistence became evident, that conceptual finesse (of whatever kind) could only legitimately grow out of a serious involvement with empirical detail. You could not, as it were, try to be Picasso, without having first acquired the abilities of a competent technical draughtsman. Children's daubs would not do, superficial though the resemblance might be. The image is mine, I must stress, although I do not think that Ardener would have disavowed it entirely.

I do not mean by this that Ardener regarded conceptual dealings as something that could be done *after* the gathering of empirical detail. Or that he regarded empirical detail as something that could be gathered *without* the intervention of conceptual considerations. Rather, the serious attempt to gather empirical material must proceed with a self-consciousness of associated conceptual problems, problems deriving from the meeting of the 'world-structure' of the observer and the observed. Conceptual advance and empirical advance would come together, not necessarily predictably or comfortably, but always inalienably joined. You could not, as JASO hoped in its optimistic youth, have the excitement of the 'analysis' without the tedium of the 'description', for 'analysis' and 'description' had started to look much like one another. Much of Ardener's work has been an attempt to integrate mensurational considerations of human affairs, with conceptual, categorical, classificatory and symbolic approaches. Such approaches are often regarded as being in direct opposition to mensurational approaches, or are treated as essentially different – alternative, optional or additional. Ardener wished to show that measurement (mensuration) and definition (category and so on) were *simultaneously* present in the understanding, apprehension and generation of events. He speaks of the 'collapse of measurement into definition' (below, p. 149). I am anxious not to tie his work up with clichés, for its essential openness was one of its most attractive features. Nevertheless, this phrase usefully characterizes some of the problems with which he was dealing. From Sir Henry Sweet's route to the phoneme (below, p. 28), to the understanding of marriage stability (see Ardener, E. 1962a; below, note 33, chapter 1), concerted attempts at measurement in human affairs, led to a new and more refined understanding of problems of definition, classification, category (and so on), which in their turn illuminated empirical data.

I have noted that thematic grouping of the papers below failed, and this is because the categories of analysis of traditional ethnographic writing are dissolved by Ardener's approach. Maryon McDonald, in her postscript to this volume, discusses this rather radical point, in the context of some of today's developments. Ecology, population, economy, law, politics, symbolism, ritual and language (to name only a few) no longer retain either empirical or analytical integrity. The 'ecology' is no longer an observable complex of biological features, from which understanding can be built. It is, rather, already a part of the 'world-structure' under study, which gives it form and meaning. Population groups are no longer head counts, statistical conglomerates of blood and bone, but semantic phenomena, defining and

self-defining, with the features that characterize all human classification, of whatever degree of materiality. There is no natural ordering of the results of ethnographic enquiry, therefore, which would allow one area of study to be isolated from another, or allow an ethnographic construction from the lowest material foundations to the ideological or symbolic peroration. There can be no self-evident beginning in, say, ecology and population size, for a 'collapse into one another of the definitional and the material' (below, p. 185) has been achieved. There can be no natural end, either, in the heady uplands of symbolism; language is no 'refuge from materiality' (below, p. 173), for we are now dealing with a 'semantic materialism' (ibid.).

I have drawn attention to Ardener's ethnographic and empirical achievement, and also to his theoretical and conceptual effort and innovation, because these need to be appreciated together. Ardener had worked in West Africa over a twenty-year period, and his 'research', in this sense, was as much a part of his ordinary life as was teaching in Oxford. The 'fieldwork' hat was not one that he wore on special occasions, but one that he always had on – so much so that one risked not noticing it at all. As I have said elsewhere:

He made constant use of material from this fieldwork throughout his life, but he also carried it very lightly. It was perhaps not always clear to those who knew him primarily as the author of later theoretical papers, that there lay behind these such an unusually complete involvement in long-term fieldwork and empirical endeavour, and such a large body of published ethnographic writing. There was no fieldwork swagger, but rather a complete confidence in the material – a confidence so secure it needed no announcement. To many students, who did not refer to the ethnographic writings directly, Edwin's involvement with the Cameroons might have seemed to consist of a series of hilarious and absurd events, recalled and recounted at length, and with relish. It took some time before one noticed that every tale had its moral, that in Edwin's telling gravity and hilarity always came together, and that there was never need for distinction between the absurd and the profound (Chapman 1987).

It is, perhaps, worth noting that many of those who might have felt disposed to assume materialist or empirical virtue, in criticism of Ardener's position, were building on much shakier foundations.

Ardener's work has, of course, developed over the years. In his decennial note in the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, he observes that the contributions to the journal over the decade from 1970 to 1980 move 'in the direction of less and less trust in formalistic approaches and increasingly towards more simple expositions' (see Ardener, E. 1980: x). The same might be said of his own work, as a comparison of, say, chapter 2 with chapter 13 will readily show. The adjective 'simple', however, needs to be properly understood. Certainly, there is a marked tendency to dispense with formal models and technical language. Ardener became increasingly impatient with the often unwieldy, wordy, modish, grandiose and borrowed theoretical and conceptual apparatuses, so lamentably common in the

social sciences, which only obscured the material they were supposed to reveal. He said, in 1973, 'I try to lighten the heavy load that specific terms lay across the analysis' (below, p. 86); in 1980, that 'it is my desire to constitute the problem from the anthropological subject matter, and not to import or impose theories developed from other puzzles and other concerns' (below, p. 160); and, in 1984:

we would often be best advised to 'cut the painter' linking us to our stimulating authors, and to let the doomed *Titanic* steam on its way, while we row our own course. That advice is easier to give than to take, it would seem: hitching a ride from these impressive vessels is extremely tempting to many (see below, p. 195).

The apparent simplicity of the later papers is, I would venture, evidence of a greater intellectual command and sophistication, features that are all the more powerful for being unobtrusive. The simplicity represents a step *beyond* the earlier formal and technical expressions, not a retreat from their complexity.

I have noted that chapter 1 was written between 1969 and 1971, and must be understood as of its time. It is not only a period piece, however. Ardener was by no means persuaded that what he had said in this piece had been fully received and understood, and several times voiced the view that the greater part of his criticism, as of 1971, was still relevant and necessary in 1987. This was, indeed, a serious obstacle to the intended revision – how to revise with diplomacy, when one major diplomatic problem was that revision seemed in many respects unnecessary?

There have, of course, been significant works inspired by the 1971 papers. The 1982 ASA conference, 'Semantic Anthropology' (cf. Crick 1976), which resulted in the volume of the same name, edited by David Parkin, is a clear example. At least two other recent ASA conferences, in 1984 and 1985 (which resulted in the volumes *Reason and Morality*, edited by Joanna Overing, and *Anthropology at Home*, edited by Anthony Jackson), are mulling over many of the same concerns.

Ardener was always interested in currents of opinion among educated people (those that he called, with mild irony, 'the thinking classes'). He was interested in the social and intellectual conditions which lay behind the production of academic disciplines. In this sense, his anthropology, however exotic some of its objects, had always been 'at home'. While he concentrated his thought upon social anthropology, he was interested in a variety of subjects which impinged upon it – literature and literary criticism, demography, linguistics, sociology, politics (the activities, one might say, of 'the thinking classes' in general). His views on these all invite lengthy discussion, for which there is no space here. He was, in general, interested in the social activity of the intellect, and often both impatient and critical of its slow reactions. It may help to give some idea of the genuine modernity of his thinking, and its speed in relation to much of the surrounding environment, if we touch upon three areas that have engendered, and continue to engender, apparently endless debate – Marxism, the

'rationality' debate and the later developments of structuralism. Ardener was deeply interested in the phenomenon of Western intellectual Marxism, and this interest was reflected in the concerns of some of his students, as the JASO of the 1970s was witness (and see Ardener, 1980: x, for a comment on this). Nevertheless, he regarded it as a problem which was subsumed by other developments, and early expressed surprise that it remained satisfactory to a thinker as sophisticated as Althusser (below, p. 61). Indeed, he came to view its very slow disintegration with a mixture of amusement and irritation. He attended an anthropological conference in Amsterdam in 1981, and a notice-board kept conference delegates informed of the programme, and of changes to it. When a sign went up on the notice-board saying 'Marxism cancelled', he greeted this with some amusement, as a long overdue announcement of rather broader significance.

In 1971, he characterized the 'rationality debate' (as conducted, for example, in Wilson (ed.) 1970) as a 'fight in a ditch between the lines' (below, p. 46). In 1985 he recalled this as a 'skirmish between the lines' (below, p. 210), and noted that it was still going on, in much the same terms as before (and see, for example, Hollis and Lukes (eds) 1982). There is no doubt, in my view, that the contribution of *The Voice of Prophecy* is one that can halt (or slow down, at least) the roundabout of problems upon which rationality and relativism ride. Many of the oppositions through which the debate is conducted are collapsed by Ardener's approach. Many of the burning questions, rather than finding answers, simply stop looking like questions.

Ardener studied the emergence of structuralism into social anthropology (indeed, he was part of this emergence), and he noted its move from anthropology to other disciplines. He climbed through structuralism and moved on, however, and came to have little time for what he called the 'cookbook structuralism' which seemed to replace functionalism as the easiest anthropological orthodoxy. Structuralism, as a theory one could carry round and apply to things, had no place in his thinking. It is perhaps not surprising that the tardy efflorescence of structuralism in literary criticism, and the developments that were wrought from it therein, should have excited his amusement. When modish post-structuralism announced its talent for 'deconstruction', he drew attention to the fact that anthropologists had been practising deconstruction as a kind of empirical and logical necessity, long before the term 'deconstruction' was invented in its vogue form (see, for example, Lévi-Strauss 1962a, 1963b; Needham 1971, referring back to Hocart and Kroeber). He observed that 'we may ignore the embarrassing party going on in Criticism around the corpses of Structuralism and its congeners' (below, note 16, chapter 13).

And yet, Marxism continues to structure argument in the 'thinking' press. The rationality debate continues to chew over its bones. The embarrassing party around the corpse of structuralism continues its noisy song and dance of self-announcement. The gauche excitements engendered by post-structuralism and deconstruction continue to render the literary magazines breathless. And Edwin Ardener is, alas, no longer there to smile.

Many have had the experience of trying to follow where Ardener led, and found themselves bumping into things, going very slowly, and making a great deal of noise, where he advanced with speed and silence. It was his pride, laughingly expressed, that he could 'ghost between the interstices', and certainly he had the ability to lead those who followed him closely to intellectual destinations that they might never have found by themselves. It is a legitimate fear, I think, that some of those intellectual destinations may now prove much more difficult of access. Social anthropology, by its very nature, often produces unusual and interesting combinations of knowledge and experience among those who practise it. By any standards, however, the combination of erudition, and conceptual and empirical expertise, that Ardener brought to his thought and writings, was rare and thrilling. This volume will give some idea, at least, of the challenge and the excitement that he could provoke. He was not, however, greatly concerned with reputation even in life, and with posthumous reputation not at all. He would have hoped, perhaps, that his work could contribute to the greater recognition of social anthropology, and to an increased awareness within social anthropology of its own strengths. If *The Voice of Prophecy* can do this, then he would have been satisfied.

One must conclude by adding that there were, of course, many sides to Ardener, and a narrowly professional view of his achievement does not do justice to these, or to the nature and bent of his writings. He had the skill, born at least in part from the profession of anthropology, of being interested in, and interesting to, whatever social and intellectual milieu he might find himself in. St John's College knew him as a full-time college man, tireless in committee, proud and supportive of college reputation, friendly to newcomers, humorous traditionalist, genial wit and erudite raconteur. Jericho, the motley suburb of Oxford in which he lived, knew him as the committed chairman of its residents association. Cameroonians knew him as a full-time scholar of West Africa. I knew him as an authority on European linguistics and ethnicity, of formidable and often completely unexpected insight and erudition. And there are doubtless many other remembered 'Edwins' and 'Ardeners', in the recollections of all those that have, in one way or another, passed close to him, as students, friends or colleagues.¹ It is perhaps as fitting a valedictory tribute as an anthropologist could wish, that, along with obituary notices in learned journals, national papers, and the college record, the local residents' neighbourhood paper, the *Jericho Echo*, could say:

Here in Jericho, we saw the scholarship which made his name in the University put to the direct benefit of the people he lived among.

Malcolm Chapman