JOHN BARNES

John Arundel Barnes
1918–2010

JOHN BARNES was an intellectual and a scholar who truly spanned disciplines. He taught, did field research, and contributed significantly to the development of theoretical and methodological approaches in both sociology and social anthropology. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1981 and was a member of the Sociology, Demography and Social Statistics Section (S4), although he would have been equally at home in Anthropology and Geography (S3). Indeed, often sociology and social anthropology coalesce in his work. He was also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Social Sciences, and he contributed to the development of social sciences in both Australia and the United Kingdom. In the 1974 *Register of Members* of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth, Barnes listed his interests as Asia and Oceania (regional), and ecology, politics and economics, culture, and the ethics of social enquiry (theoretical).[1] This makes clear his ever-changing concerns. He had already made his name in European and African ethnographic studies, in network analysis and mathematical modelling, in kinship theory, in the politics of 'race relations' in Africa, and in many other fields. Later he would make contributions in several other areas, but he was perhaps most at home in the eclectic style of social science that spanned conventional sociology and social anthropology and gave prominence to a history which embraced both social change and continuity, to relations

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[1] *Register of Members* (London, Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth, 1974), p. 21.

between structure and individual action, and to the nature of virtually all contemporary societies.

Barnes privately published his autobiography in 2008.[2] Other autobiographical material includes an interview by Les Hiatt, a video interview by Jack Goody, a short note in the *Australian Anthropological Society Newsletter*, and a shorter memoir.[3] Material gathered from some of these is included in his autobiography, and his warm personality and great sense of humour come through wonderfully in the Goody interview. In 1990, Barnes published a valuable selection of his best essays, with a concentration on his ideas on the modelling process in social science research.[4] And in the same year, colleagues presented him with a Festschrift published as a special issue of *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*.[5] The latter dealt exclusively with the reinterpretation of Barnes's famous and seminal paper, 'Genetrix: genitor : : nature: culture?'.[6] At least for some social anthropologists, this remains his most inspiring and enduring work.

I

John was born in Reading, Berkshire, on 9 September 1918. The family soon moved to a different part of town, but he recalled that when he was about five or six his mother pointed out his birthplace to him and his brother Irwin: 27 Coley Hill, 'a rather forbidding terrace house near the central shopping area'.[7] His parents had moved from London, in the case

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[2] J. A. Barnes, *Humping My Drum: a Memoir* (Raleigh, NC). Available at www.lulu.com

[3] Les Hiatt, 'An interview with John Barnes', *Australian Anthropological Society Newsletter*, 63 (1986), 4–15. Interview of John Barnes by Jack Goody, 19 Dec., 1983 <www.alanmacfarlane.com/ancestors/barnes.html>. J. A. Barnes, 'Where lies the truth?', *Australian Anthropological Society Newsletter*, 64 (1986), 4–9. John Barnes, 'Looking back and hardly believing', in Geoffrey Gray (ed.), *Before It's Too Late: Anthropological Reflections, 1950–1970*, Oceania Monographs, 51 (Sydney, 2001), pp. 147–51.

[4] J. A. Barnes, *Models and Interpretations: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, 1990).

[5] Warren Shapiro (guest editor), 'On the generation and maintenance of the person: essays in honour of John Barnes', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 1 (2/3): Special Issue 1 (Sydney, 1990).

[6] J. A. Barnes, 'Genetrix: genitor : : nature: culture?', in Jack Goody (ed.), *The Character of Kinship* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 61–73.

[7] Barnes, *Humping My Drum*, p. 1. Without further notes, I shall draw on Barnes's memoir for much of the biographical material presented here, and also for his own recollections of career decisions. The memoir is extensive and incredibly detailed; it numbers 464 printed pages. As he suggests in the 'Preamble' there, it may be incorrect at times, but at least is based (mainly) on his own recollections.

of his father, and from Bath, in the case of his mother, around 1912. John's father, Thomas Daniel Barnes, known as Tom, had a music shop in Reading and before that worked as a piano tuner in Bath and then in London. Tom's father, James, lived with John's natal family in Reading. Grandfather James was one of twelve siblings, at least two of whom were said to have been last seen working in a quarry in New South Wales. Tom's own brother was called Irwin, and John's brother was named after him. Irwin the elder, after having worked as a surveyor in Africa, emigrated to Australia (also NSW) to practise that profession not long after 1900. John himself would follow his Uncle Irwin, but as an anthropologist, to Africa in 1946 and to Australia in 1956. The Barnes family belonged to the Baptist Church and Tom sang in the choir, although John learned later in life that Tom had rejected his Christian beliefs, and John eventually did the same.

John's mother, Mabel Grace Nash, known as Grace, was the daughter of a Bath publican. One of her sisters, embarrassed by their father's occupation, used to tell people that their father was 'a traveller in hops'. Grace once told John and Irwin that he been a great traveller and had even been to the South Pole. Later they learned that 'The South Pole' was a pub near Bath Spa railway station, and that as a child Grace had lived above it. Grace's mother had been an alcoholic, and the family were active in the Congregational Church and the temperance organisation, the Band of Hope. Before she married John's father, Grace was manager of a milk shop in Bath. She lived to the age of 97, and in later life became 'pleasantly confused'.

At the age of six, in 1924, John started school. Clooneavon House School had been a small school for girls. To expand its intake it had opened its doors for boys that year, and for the whole of that year John was the only boy. After two and a half years there, he moved to the junior section of Reading School. He came top of his class in many subjects, but did 'dismally' in religious knowledge. He won a scholarship to Christ's Hospital, a well-known boarding school near Horsham in Sussex. Because of his Baptist upbringing he had not yet been christened, but at school he was duly baptised and confirmed in the Anglican Church. John joined the Christian Union, whose evangelical leanings later turned out to be of some practical benefit when he came to work closely with evangelical missionaries during his anthropological fieldwork in Central Africa, Norway, Australia and Papua New Guinea. He was not much good at games, but excelled academically, especially at mathematics. His skills in mathematics also turned out to be useful later in his anthropological career,

when he came to deciphering the intricacies of 'Murngin' (Yolngu) kin-ship structures that had eluded analysts and ethnographers, if not Yolgnu Aborigines themselves.[8] They also earned him (after an entrance examination) a scholarship to Cambridge.

John entered St John's College, Cambridge, in 1936. He started in mathematics but expressed a desire to switch to economics, which was refused on the grounds that his scholarship was in mathematics. His col-lege allowed him to skip to Part Two of the Mathematics Tripos for his first two years and read for Part Two of the Economics Tripos in the third. This would require him to work on Part One of the Economics Tripos in his spare time during his first two years. However, he found economics dull. He dabbled in astronomy too, although the course proved to consist mainly of the kind of mathematics he least liked. He therefore settled on the Archaeology and Anthropology Tripos for his third year.

His formal Director of Studies was the archaeologist Glyn Daniel, but he decided to study social anthropology as his main interest, with East Africa as his 'special area'. He worked closely with Jack Driberg, a colour-ful former colonial officer who reportedly had supported his own anthropological training, at the London School of Economics, by playing poker.[9] Driberg had spent considerable time in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and in Uganda, and John would later follow him to Central Africa, where he made his name as an ethnographer of the Ngoni of Fort Jameson of what was then Northern Rhodesia. Through Driberg, John met a number of anthropologists based at Oxford, including A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes and Max Gluckman.

At Cambridge, John became secretary of the Student Christian Movement, and despite, by his own admission, lacking musical talent, joined the choir of the Cambridge University Socialist Club. He had been a pacifist, but the rise of Hitler dissuaded him from keeping his pacifist principles, although he maintained his broadly left-wing beliefs. He also, gradually it seems, became an atheist. It was at Cambridge that he met Frances Bastable, whom he married, at Kingsclere, in Hampshire, on 16 December 1942 when John was on leave from the Royal Navy. They spent more than sixty years together and had four children—though a

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[8] I refer here to his short but important monograph, J. A. Barnes, *Inquest on the Murngin*, RAI Occasional Paper No. 26 (London, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1967). The 'Murngin' (Yolngu) are an Aboriginal people whose impenetrably complicated kinship system could perhaps only really be understood by Barnes, who believed that, at least in a certain sense, it did not exist.

[9] See also Ray Abrahams, 'Jack Herbert Driberg (1888–1946)', *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, NS 2(1–2) (2010), 74–82.

honeymoon eluded them, as John had to head quickly to his ship at Greenock, on the Clyde.

Just before the war, John had been awarded a small grant, of £30, to go with a friend to Scandinavia to explore possibilities for ethnographic fieldwork. They had planned to travel across Germany to France, and to meet up with Frances in Paris. However, while they were in Norway, the United Kingdom declared war on Germany, and that put an end to the plan. When he returned to the UK he caught up with his recruiting board. He joined the Royal Navy and, after training as an air navigator, served with the aircraft carrier HMS *Victorious* (which, for a time as part of the United States Navy, also doubled as USS *Robin*). The ship sailed through the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, and gave John not only the chance to see the Pacific and the African coast, but even, in New York in 1942, a chance to meet briefly with Ruth Benedict and Ralph Linton, two of the most prominent members of Franz Boas's team at Columbia University. Boas himself had died earlier that year. John served in the navy from 1940 to 1946.

II

Barnes earned his BA in 1939. In the same year he was offered a Fellowship at the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, but because of the war was not able to take it up. After the war, he studied briefly (in 1946) with Isaac Schapera, as a postgraduate student at the University of Cape Town. Max Gluckman, then Director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (RLI), had sent him to work with Schapera as part of his RLI apprenticeship. Barnes completed his D.Phil. in social anthropology at Oxford in 1951. His earlier appointments were numerous, and he often held more than one at the same time. They included Research Officer at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (1946–8), Lecturer in Anthropology at University College London (1949–51), Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge (1950–3), Simon Research Fellow at the University of Manchester (1951–3), Honorary Research Assistant at University College London (1951–4), Reader in Anthropology at the London School of Economics (1954–6), Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney (1956–8), Professor of Anthropology at the Australian National University (ANU) (1958–69), Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge (1965–66, 1969–2010), and Professor of Sociology at the University of Cambridge (1969–82).[10]

[10] *Register of Members*, p. 20.

Among Barnes's many early achievements were the Wellcome Medal, awarded by the Wellcome Trust in 1950, and the Rivers Memorial Medal of the Royal Anthropological Institute in 1959. He was elected to the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth in 1950. He was an active member of several anthropological and sociological associations and a stalwart of anthropology and sociology in both Australia and the United Kingdom. By the time he returned to the UK in 1969, he had served as Chairman of the Australian Branch of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth, President of Section F of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science, and President of the Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand, as well as an Executive Member of the Interim Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.[11]

Through his career, Barnes was offered many jobs, and of course he accepted several. One he turned down was a post at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, in 1950—because he did not want to raise his family in South Africa. He spent some time in South Africa after the war, and the National Party government was elected in 1948. He later lectured on South African 'race relations', in Australia and in Hawaii, although he never claimed expertise in that field. His arrival in Cape Town in 1946 was alone, because his wife Frances was pregnant with their first child and keen to complete her medical studies. John met his son Rory for the first time when Frances and Rory arrived in Livingstone, in then Northern Rhodesia, some months later. His base in the Federation was at Fort Jameson (now Chipata) in the Eastern Province, where he worked with the Ngoni, a displaced offshoot of the Zulu kingdom who had reached that part of what is now Zambia and Malawi (with some also in Tanzania and Mozambique) in the mid-nineteenth century. From Fort Jameson, he visited Max Gluckman in Barotseland, Elizabeth Colson among the Plateau Tonga, Max Marwick among the Cewa, and J. Clyde Mitchell among the Yao. Barnes enjoyed visiting colleagues and students in the field, and later he regretted that his department at Sydney in the 1950s had no money for such trips.

After his stint at the RLI Barnes returned to England to write up his field notes and complete his D.Phil. Officially, his supervisors were Max Gluckman, Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (in succession, apparently each doing a term at a time). Eventually, Max Gluckman, with whom he had started, was his only supervisor, although his comments on

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[11] *Register of Members*, p. 20.

the thesis itself were limited. Isaac Schapera, though, worked systematically through the thesis and became one of his two examiners (the other being J. G. Peristiany). Schapera had recently left Cape Town and taken up the second chair in anthropology at the London School of Economics, and Barnes drove him to Oxford for his own viva—the formal exam lasting less than a minute. In those days, the group associated with the RLI met in their own seminar once a week at the Royal Anthropological Institute in London. The seminar was also attended by Evans-Pritchard, although reportedly he often dozed off on the sofa at the far end of the room. Barnes also attended two other seminars in his Oxford days, both at the London School of Economics: the lively intercollegiate anthropology seminar chaired by Raymond Firth, and the rather more sedate sociology seminar chaired by Morris Ginsberg.

When in 1952 Barnes began his fieldwork in Norway, he was holding down three posts: a Simon Fellowship at Manchester, a college fellowship at St John's College, Cambridge, and an honorary research assistantship at University College London (UCL). It seems that he had also recently been offered, but turned down, a lectureship at Cambridge (and in any case, it transpired that no lectureship was actually available at Cambridge at that time). His decision to leave them all for fieldwork at the small settlement of Bremnes (later part of Bømlo, in southwestern Norway) was accepted by Daryll Forde, head of anthropology at UCL, who assisted Barnes in getting free Norwegian tuition at UCL. It also pleased Max Gluckman, who had been appointed Professor of Social Anthropology at Manchester in 1949. Gluckman had been director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute from 1941 to 1947, and the dynamic theoretical approach that Gluckman, Barnes and their colleagues fostered became known as the Manchester School (though it could as easily have become known as the RLI School).[12] The Manchester School was more than a theoretical school though, as it entailed a number of specific methodological tools useful in both fieldwork and analysis. Among these the extended case study method and network analysis were the most prominent, and the latter was associated with Barnes, who gave it its name.[13]

[12] Raymond Firth, 'Max Gluckman, 1911–1975', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 61 (1975), 479–96. Richard P. Werbner, 'The Manchester School in South-Central Africa', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 13 (1984), 157–85. T. M. S. Evans and Don Handelman (eds.), *The Manchester School: Practice and Ethnographic Praxis in Anthropology* (New York, 2006).
[13] The extended case study emphasised a small number of cases to illustrate ethnographic generalities, whereas network analysis emphasised individual associations rather than the place of an individual within a social structure.

The Norwegian fieldwork gave Barnes the chance to take part in local activities, perhaps in a way that had not been as easy in Central Africa. Ultimately, it gave him comparative insights on Africa and points on which he would ultimately draw comparisons based on later visits, for example, to New Guinea, where he noted the relative isolation of communities, similar to that experienced in Bremnes. Fieldwork in Bremnes, as well as his development of network analysis, also gave Barnes an entry into the discipline of sociology which was to become as significant to him as social anthropology.

In 1954 he was given a Readership at the London School of Economics, but the post was short-lived. In 1956, he took the opportunity to take his first chair, at the University of Sydney. The Department of Anthropology there was Australia's most famous one, established by its first professor, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, in 1925. Barnes was unhappy at Sydney though and apparently suffered disagreements with some of his colleagues. Meanwhile, the Australian National University (ANU), at Canberra, was keen to replace Siegfried Nadel, who had died early in 1956 and whose post remained vacant. An attempt to entice Edmund Leach to ANU fell through. The Vice-Chancellor offered Barnes the job, but prematurely, and Barnes had to keep the offer secret from colleagues, including close friends, at both Sydney and ANU—including Jim Davidson, who happened to be convener of the search committee. Barnes, still an Africanist and a northern Europe specialist, was happy at ANU despite ethnographic specialisations in other parts of the world (notably Australia and New Guinea). And he was delighted with life in Australia.

Barnes's unexpected decision to return to Cambridge in 1969, his choice of a newer college over an older one, and above all his decision to abandon an anthropology chair for a sociology one, all caused bemusement in some circles. He later revealed that the decision to change jobs and countries had had to do with the fact that he feared doing so later in life would have been impossible, although his documented disagreements with his colleague Derek Freeman at ANU perhaps also played a part. Barnes was a peace-loving man, and he shied away from academic politics when he could. For Barnes, the unexpected thing was that he should have been chosen for the Cambridge post at all. He was concerned that some might say that Meyer Fortes, who was William Wyse Professor of Social Anthropology there at the time and a member of the appointment committee, had acquired a second chair of anthropology through the back door. This led him to resist, at first, the invitation to teach an anthropology course at Cambridge, although later he did so. His decision for

Churchill over St John's reflected, at least in part, his wish to be part of what he perceived as a younger and more vibrant institution. He never regretted that momentous decision—although he had calculated that Fellows of Churchill would, before long, be the same age as Fellows at St John's, and mused over the fact that he may indeed enjoy growing older there, along with his fellow Fellows.

After thirteen years as Professor of Sociology at Cambridge, in 1982, the year after his election to the British Academy, Barnes took early retirement and returned to Australia. By his own admission, his heart lay there, although he carried both British and Australian passports—having acquired Australian nationality in 1987. He was Visiting Fellow at ANU (1978–9, 1984–92) and subsequently Programme Visitor (1993–8). His career was long, and he loved travelling and indeed travelled widely, throughout much of Australia, many parts of Asia and the Pacific, North America, Africa and Europe. He also enjoyed hill walking, even after, in 1997, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

His clever and subtle humour (and his raucous, infectious laugh) won him many friends and delighted his postgraduate students, whom he visited in their fieldwork sites when he could. He was a private and shy person, it seems, but had great influence on his students, to whom he was always steadfastly helpful. They were indeed his students, not his disciples, and their work continues some of his interests in both Australia and the UK. He was utterly devoted to his wife and children. He returned to England in 1998, and he died 'in exile' (as he signed his own memoir[14]) in the village of Histon, near Cambridge, on 13 September 2010. His wife Frances died a few weeks later in Leeds, where she had gone to be with their daughter. They were survived by their four children (one in Australia, three in England), and eight grandchildren.[15]

III

To many of us today, social anthropology and sociology are very different disciplines. To John Barnes, they never were, and perhaps for this reason some social anthropologists came to regard him as more of a sociologist, while sociologists often saw more the anthropologist in him.

[14] Barnes, *Humping My Drum*, p. 454.
[15] Michael W. Young, 'John Arundel Barnes (1918–2010)', *The Australian Anthropological Society Newsletter*, no. 120 (Dec. 2010), 2–6. Ray Abrahams, 'John Arundel Barnes (1918–2010)', *Anthropology Today*, 26(6) (Dec. 2010), 27.

Although he made great contributions to both subjects, he found such disciplinary boundaries distasteful, and the rigid separation of sociology and anthropology in the minds of others perhaps marginalised his work more than it might have. He may have resented this, although, it seems, he never explicitly said so.

In Barnes's early training in social anthropology, the mainstream view was Radcliffe-Brown's, and Radcliffe-Brown saw anthropology as a kind of sociology, which he perceived as static in nature.[16] Barnes and his fellow fieldworkers based at the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute gradually came to reject the static view of society that that sociological view implied. They focused instead on a dynamic approach, looked for conflict and contradiction in social structure and to social organisation over social structure. Barnes was part of this movement, and partly through his own work sociology came to follow similar lines, with the eventual rejection of structural-functionalism in favour of other perspectives and methods— not least, network analysis. Network analysis was to find its way into the heartland of the Manchester School through the work of fieldworkers in Central Africa, including particularly J. Clyde Mitchell and A. L. (Bill) Epstein.[17] Ironically perhaps, it had its most direct origins in Barnes's Norwegian fieldwork, and it served too to assist Gluckman in his desire to bring sociology together with social anthropology at Manchester. Rapidly too, it was to take prominence in sociology, particularly in the United States.

So what of J. A. Barnes the sociologist? The choice of the best of his articles among practitioners of that discipline would certainly include 'Class and committees in a Norwegian island parish'.[18] It is still the most cited of his articles, and was influential in sociology, as indeed it was also in anthropology within the Manchester School. The reason for its significance, however, is not apparent in its title, nor even in its subject matter. Its classic status derives from the fact that this short article virtually established a subdiscipline: that of network analysis. Barnes was in fact the first to use phrases such as 'network analysis' and 'social networks'. 'Class and committees' was published in 1954, and many years later, in 1987, he remarked that in spite of the abundance of formal organisations, 'most

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[16] See, for example, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London, 1952).

[17] See Lynn Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham, NC, 2001), pp. 152–89.

[18] J. A. Barnes, 'Class and committees in a Norwegian island parish', *Human Relations*, 7 (1954), 39–58.

individuals appeared to make decisions with reference to personal contacts that often cut across organizational boundaries'. Barnes 'tried to capture this configuration with the label "network"', which he applied particularly to the 'class system'.[19]

The paper was published after initial presentation at the 1953 meeting of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the Commonwealth, to which Barnes had been admitted three years before. Barnes's main appointment at the time was with the University of Manchester, but he soon moved to the London School of Economics. There he found that Elizabeth Bott was encountering a similar phenomenon in her work on relationship patterns among couples and families in London. Soon she was to publish, using the same term: 'network'.[20] Clyde Mitchell and others from the Manchester School also followed suit and developed the methodologies with which to explore network analysis, both in Central Africa and elsewhere.[21] Ultimately, the journal *Social Networks* was to follow, and a professional body, the International Network for Network Analysis, and much later, social networking websites. Barnes, who now has a posthumous *Facebook* page, remarked in 1987 that though his interests in sociology moved away from network analysis towards the sociology of knowledge, nevertheless he tried to keep in touch with those still practising what he had started.[22] And by 2007, a journalist would have to enlighten American readers with the fact that '"Social network" is not a *Facebook* term. Sociologist J. A. Barnes coined the phrase in 1954 to explain . . . .'[23]

The content of the 1954 article is not in fact confined to networks. It really has two main themes: networks and leadership. Barnes once remarked that even in Africa he did not find what he was supposed to find: corporate groups, such as agnatic lineages, dominating the social life of the Ngoni.[24] Agnatic ideology was not replicated in group structure. When he started fieldwork in Norway, then, he had expected groups to be more formally organised than in Central Africa. Here he would find his corporate groups, but in fact it was the networks that proved more important than

[19] J. A. Barnes, 'This Week's Citation Classic: "Class and committees in a Norwegian island parish"', *Current Contents / Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 23 (8 June 1987), 18.
[20] Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network* (London, 1957).
[21] J. C. Mitchell (ed.), *Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Social Relationships in Central African Towns* (Manchester, 1969).
[22] Barnes, 'This Week's Citation Classic', p. 18.
[23] Monica Hesse, 'An unmanageable circle of friends', *The Washington Post* (Sunday, 26 Aug. 2007), M10.
[24] Barnes, *Models and Interpretations*, p. 67.

local government organisations, producers' cooperatives or other groups. The second theme, though rather rarely cited, concerns patterns of leadership. Barnes uncovered in Bremnes patterns of decision-making that emphasised discussion and consensus. Rivalries, pressures and divided loyalties were in evidence, but committees avoided public displays which might be awkward, such as voting.

Barnes's work in sociology of course includes a great deal of other material, though it is fair to say that although a professor of sociology for thirteen years, his output in social anthropology was greater, at least in number of books and papers. Among his most interesting contributions to sociology, though, was his Inaugural Lecture as Professor of Sociology at Cambridge, delivered in the wake of the era of student protest.[25] One reviewer did comment that 'it will hardly set the Cam on fire', but Barnes answered with characteristic reason coupled with humour that this had not been his intention. Rather, he 'had merely hoped to explain to the university why its sociology students might try to burn its buildings'.[26]

Barnes began his Inaugural Lecture by noting that he was the first Professor of Sociology at Cambridge. This of course exempted him from having to pay tribute to pioneers, as is customary on such an occasion. But the novelty of the subject in that university did require him, as he saw his duty, to justify its existence there. He pointed out that the subject had been taught in some American universities since the 1880s and at the London School of Economics since 1907. But of course sociological thought had existed in other guises at Cambridge, as elsewhere, long before 1969, and he pointed this out. Disciplines such as social anthropology, politics, economics and history, all then well-represented at Cambridge, employ ideas and even methods commonly regarded as belonging to sociology. Furthermore, he noted, a sustained analysis of the relations between the status of women, marital discord, and problems in bringing up children made it inevitable either that sociology should be present at Cambridge, or that these need not be concerns for Cambridge and its students. Likewise, poverty, war, overpopulation and the social consequences of environmental degradation, he argued, merit study. This may seem quite obvious today, but the paper is eminently readable and a good argument to be put before a new generation of undergraduates. Indeed, it is hard to think of it as a product of its time, since it remains current even now.

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[25] J. A. Barnes, *Sociology in Cambridge: an Inaugural Lecture* (Cambridge, 1970).
[26] Barnes, *Models and Interpretations*, p. 182.

During his tenureship of the Cambridge chair, Barnes published two books that fall within the disciplinary milieu of sociology, with a third some years later.[27] All three hint, in their different ways, at the lack of clear disciplinary boundaries in what Barnes saw as social science, rather than as sociology or anthropology. They are also, in curious ways, related works, and they show Barnes's concern with both the practicality and the philosophy of ethical issues, and the relations between the practical and the philosophical.

Of these the first, *The Ethics of Social Inquiry*, is the most clearly sociological. Yet, its subtitle, *Three Lectures*, gives a hint of the origin if not the content of this short monograph. The three lectures were presented at the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), at Bangalore in South India. The invitation to South India had come from M. N. Srinivas, India's premier sociologist, who was in fact an Oxford-trained anthropologist: in India, the two disciplines are in any case often merged. The invitation specifically to the ISEC had come from its director, V. K. R. V. Rao, an economist and later a politician. Barnes urged his listeners to study the process of social inquiry itself, as well as to heed the words of E. E. Evans-Pritchard (with whom both Srinivas and Barnes had been former associates at Oxford), 'He who sups with the administration needs a long spoon.' He also commented on the difference between social and natural science, in that the former is specifically concerned with human society and thus has a more direct relevance for ethical concerns. Barnes drew examples from classical anthropological and sociological sources, as well as employing what were then topical examples from Chile and Vietnam.

The second book to fall within the disciplinary domain of sociology, *Who Should Know What?*, covers dilemmas and problems of covert and overt data-collection, of privacy and anonymity, and of dealing with written documents. It also touches on cultural formulations of the latter: in Scandinavia, documents are generally open; in other countries, they are surrounded by a legally enforced secrecy that ends arbitrarily at some exact date. The most interesting point in all this is shown through a historical example related to the dissemination of results. This is the example of the notion of the natural science paradigm within the social sciences, and Barnes uses the case of A. C. Haddon's decision on publication of the

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[27] J. A. Barnes, *The Ethics of Inquiry in Social Science: Three Lectures* (Oxford, 1971). J. A. Barnes, *Who Should Know What? Social Science, Privacy and Ethics* (Harmondsworth, 1979). J. A. Barnes, *A Pack of Lies: Towards a Sociology of Lying* (Cambridge, 1994).

results of the Cambridge Torres Straits Expedition of 1898–9.[28] These were published not in the Torres Straits, nor even in Australia, but in Cambridge. And some were not published until 1935—of little use either to the Torres Straits inhabitants or their administrators.

   The last of the three sociological works, humorously entitled *A Pack of Lies*, was written after Barnes taught a course on lying at Flinders University in Adelaide in 1990. It is the only one of his books with 'sociology' in the title or subtitle. Yet his examples and discussion ranges from sociology to social anthropology, to philosophy, psychology, linguistics and literary studies, and even to primatology (can non-human primates lie?).

IV

If the Manchester School had its roots in the RLI and its ethnographic tradition, then so too did network analysis. In another sense, as with the Norwegian case, the theory lies within the social organisation itself. A good deal of his work touches on the inapplicability of 'African models', and this applies even within Africa itself. While others (including E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes, Daryll Forde and Jack Goody) tended to emphasise rigid structures, particularly lineages and clans, Barnes and his RLI colleagues saw African society in rather different terms. These different, more fluid forms of social organisation were prevalent especially, but by no means exclusively, in Central Africa. This may stem partly (but only partly) from the fact that Central Africa was perceived as being in the throes of 'social change'.

   Barnes published a number of papers in this genre, and two book-length works. The latter two were, respectively, a monograph on marriage and one on politics.[29] *Marriage in a Changing Society* begins with a discussion of marriage before 1898, when Britain took control of the region. Historical evidence from documentary sources, as well as comparative examples from other Nguni-speaking groups such as Zulu and Swazi, provided a baseline. The Fort Jameson Ngoni (like other Nguni-speakers) married through the exchange of various payments: ideally a 'snuff-box' (a handful of tobacco), followed by 'bridewealth' (eight head

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[28] Barnes, *Who Should Know What?*, pp. 32–3.
[29] J. A. Barnes, *Marriage in a Changing Society: a Study in Structural Change among the Fort Jameson Ngoni* (Cape Town, 1951). J. A. Barnes, *Politics in a Changing Society: a Political History of the Fort Jameson Ngoni* (Cape Town, 1954).

of cattle) and a 'legalisation payment' (e.g. an ox, a chicken or a cloth). A hierarchical system of polygyny, leviratic marriage, and segmentation by 'houses' (residential units, each headed by a different co-wife) all occurred. (Schapera suggested that a group of co-wives be called a 'bevy', but his suggestion came too late for Barnes to change the text, and Barnes called them 'bands'.[30]) At Fort Jameson, colonial rule changed all this. The Ngoni kingdom and its army were defeated, and a British settlement was established in its centre. Large villages were burnt, people were dispersed and cattle were looted. Clans were never that important for Ngoni, but the agnatic lineages that did exist lost some of their significance. Migrations in the twentieth century, both to the towns and to the mines, brought changes too, and Barnes vividly documents many aspects of social life with textual description, accompanied by statistical evidence, and through fourteen short 'case histories'. Barnes's contribution to the use of statistics, for example in divorce rates, was seminal, and led to subsequent suspicion whenever any anthropologist dared utter such then-common vagaries as 'divorce is rare' or 'divorce is frequent'. Though little read today, *Marriage in a Changing Society* remains a tour de force of ethnographic writing.

Politics in a Changing Society follows a similar form. It is less a history in the conventional sense, and more an anthropological (or sociological) analysis of processes in which changing social relations are more important than historical events. It also begins with a baseline, from both documentary and comparative material, and follows this with analytical use of field data. There was a trend at the time in examining change in more sophisticated and systematic ways, for example by Edmund Leach and Aiden Southall,[31] and Barnes's contribution was appreciated by many both in the Manchester tradition and outside it. Indeed Manchester University Press later reprinted both *Marriage in a Changing Society* and *Politics in a Changing Society*.[32]

Among J. A. Barnes's most important articles in social anthropology are such gems as 'African models in the New Guinea Highlands',[33] 'Time flies like an arrow',[34] and 'Genetrix: genitor : : nature: culture?' Probably

[30] Barnes, *Marriage in a Changing Society*, p. iii.

[31] E. R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: a Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London, 1954). Aidan W. Southall, *Alur Society: a Study in Processes and Types of Domination* (London, 1956).

[32] In 1954 and 1957 respectively.

[33] J. A. Barnes, 'African models in the New Guinea Highlands', *Man*, 62 (1971), 5–9.

[34] J. A. Barnes, 'Time flies like an arrow', *Man*, NS 6 (1971), 537–52.

most social anthropologists would agree that all of these remain impor-
tant for the discipline. They are still cited and assigned as undergraduate
readings. Indeed, many of Barnes's works—thirteen of which were
included in his collection *Models and Interpretations*—have stood up well
to time. What is perhaps more striking, though, is that so many of them
are linked to his earlier interests in Northern Rhodesia and to the time he
spent there.

'African models in the New Guinea Highlands' was first published in
Man in 1962. It was presented the year before at the Tenth Pacific Science
Conference in Honolulu. Ironically, considering its subsequent celebrity,
the paper was initially rejected by three other journals, and later attacked
by various critics, not least for being a 'red herring'.[35] Yet it had a sober-
ing impact on the Melanesia specialists, caught out by this Africanist's
amazement at the use of simplified African-derived models to account for
social phenomena in colonial New Guinea. Such models do not even
characterise many African societies very well, especially if viewed through
time. Melanesianists were looking for patrilineal descent systems, with all
that documented examples like the Nuer of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan or
the Tallensi of the Gold Coast (Ghana) might imply. The article's beauty
lies in its generality—written as it was on board ship, and citing no refer-
ences. It was certainly not detailed, but it did give eight reasons why
Highland New Guinea society was *not* characterised by stereotypical
'African' descent systems. It would take twenty years before the misleading
application of African models in Africa would be similarly debunked, at
least at a theoretical level.[36]

'Time flies like an arrow' was first published in the newly revamped
Man (then merged with the former *Journal of the Royal Anthropological
Institute*), in 1971. It was written to celebrate and to comment on the
work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. It is an intellectually challenging piece, and
for that very reason it requires contemplation as much as it demands close
reading. Barnes contrasts Radcliffe-Brown's notion of synchronic analy-
sis (concerned with enduring characteristics) with Lévi-Strauss's (concerned
with Saussurian principles of regularity), and likewise Radcliffe-Brown's
notion of diachronic analysis (characterised by a search for systematic
change) with Lévi-Strauss's (characterised by a recognition of the partic-

[35] See Barnes, *Models and Interpretations*, p. 44.
[36] The debunking of African models within Africa can be attributed to several scholars writing
about the same time, but the most indicative is Adam Kuper, 'Lineage theory: a critical
retrospect', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 11 (1982), 71–95.

ular and the accidental). Consequently, notions of structure and process may be quite different in the two implied traditions of anthropology. Moreover, although both British and French structuralists were more interested in the synchronic than the diachronic, they perceived it differently. Barnes was apparently thinking of Radcliffe-Brown as his exemplar of 'British structuralists', but a concern with Edmund Leach's brand of British 'French-style structuralism' (Lévi-Straussian but focused on single societies rather than human universals) would add another dimension.

'Genetrix: genitor : : nature: culture?' appeared in 1973 in *The Character of Kinship*, a Festschrift for Meyer Fortes. It uses Western, Australian Aboriginal, Melanesian and African examples. It shows the intricacies of kinship, as a product of both nature and culture, and culture itself as consisting of layers of culturally constructed social realities. The simple Latin distinctions between *genetrix* and *mater* and between *genitor* and *pater* imply precision, but they hide the fact that far from 'knowing' the 'biological facts' of reproduction, neither the Romans nor probably many in the West knew much at all about how conception occurs. Spermatazoons were discovered in 1677, although what they had to do with fertilisation was not at first clear. Mammalian ova were discovered in 1828, although how they combined with spermatazoons only became known (to a small group of scientists) in 1875. So much for Western 'knowledge'. Barnes criticised the ideas of David Schneider, then leading a new approach in kinship studies that maintains a clear distinction between science (which Schneider saw as based on facts) and culture (which he saw as consisting of symbols).[37] Barnes's own specific contribution lay in distinguishing three levels: the true genetic mother and true genetic father, the culturally recognised genetic mother (genetrix) and culturally recognised genetic father (genitor), and the culturally recognised social mother (mater) and culturally recognised social father (pater).[38] When new reproductive technologies were invented along with techniques for putting them into practice, the field opened further, although theoretical discussions of the nature of kinship were already being informed by the diverse notions of Melanesians, Australian Aborigines and early Christian theologians concerning how reproduction occurs. Some of these issues were dealt with in the special issue of *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* which was dedicated to Barnes.

[37] David M. Schneider, *American Kinship: a Cultural Account* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972).
[38] J. A. Barnes, 'Physical and social kinship', *Philosophy of Science*, 28 (1961), 296–9. J. A. Barnes, 'Physical and social facts in anthropology', *Philosophy of Science*, 31 (1964), 294–7.

    Barnes produced a number of other works in the field of kinship. *Three Styles in the Study of Kinship* was intended as his final gesture in this area.[39] Essentially a pedagogical work, although highly analytical too, it outlines in great detail the approaches to kinship study of George Peter Murdock, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Meyer Fortes. Their main works were all published in 1949. Schneider's now-classic study of 'American kinship' had only just been published as Barnes was completing *Three Styles*, and moving back to Cambridge to take up the chair in sociology. However, an invitation to return to the fray (for a conference in India), along with the growing interest in Schneider's approach, required Barnes to comment. In a paper delivered there and published in 1980, Barnes chose to set 'the current state of play' in historical terms (and kinship studies had begun in earnest in 1871).[40] He concluded, perhaps enigmatically, that a coming synthesis might involve a combination of Lévi-Straussian structuralism and Raymond Firth's brand of micro-sociology (by which Barnes meant his studies of kinship in London rather than his much better-known work on the Pacific island of Tikopia). It was not, in other words, to come from Schneider's work, which he regarded with great suspicion.

V

John Barnes's groundbreaking work spans sociology, anthropology and the formal study of kinship structures—arguably a discipline separate from both. His best-known work in sociology was in methodology and in network analysis, and much of his work in anthropology was also related to that interest. He lives on in anthropology through the one-letter symbols now used by virtually all anthropologists (except for some in the North American kinship tradition), F, M, B, Z, S, D, H, W, P, G, C, E (respectively, father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, husband, wife, parent, sibling, child, spouse): a system thought up by Barnes, with others, on the train from Cape Town to Livingstone in 1946.[41] He put it

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[39] J. A. Barnes, *Three Styles in the Study of Kinship* (London, 1971).

[40] J. A. Barnes, 'Kinship studies: some impressions of the current state of play', *Man*, NS 15 (1980), 219–303.

[41] Used in strings of possessives, for example MMBDD (mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter)—one of four permitted-spouse genealogical positions for female alters and male egos, out of sixteen possible female second-cousin genealogical positions for female alters and male egos, in some Australian Aboriginal kinship systems.

to exemplary use in his most 'serious' venture into kinship studies, his Royal Anthropological Institute occasional paper *Inquest on the Murngin*.

John lives in our folk memory also through phrases we now take for granted: network analysis (which he invented in 1953) and structural amnesia (which he invented in 1947). Perhaps only anthropologists will know the latter, which refers to *forgetting* ancestors who are unimportant, for example, in defining one's lineage, and *remembering* those who are important in that way. J. A. Barnes defines an intellectual lineage for many social scientists, and his descendants in both sociology and anthropology are abundant.

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