

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Preface: What We Know in our Elbows</i>	xi
Introduction	1
Our Impossible Method	1
Too General, Too Specific	4
The Pinch of Salt	7
A Roadmap to the Book	12
A Negative-Space Ethnography	18
Part I Impossibilities	27
1 The Impossible Method	29
Introduction: On Seeing One Comparative Method	29
Problems of Mapping	34
Problems of Communication	40
Problems of Purpose	47
Conclusion: From Problems to Impossibility	52
2 The Garden of Forking Paths	53
Introduction: On Seeing Two Comparative Methods	53
Fork 1. The Comparative Method vs Naive Comparisons: The Birth of an Impossible Method	56
Fork 2. The Historical Method vs the Comparative Method: A Boasian Crisis	72
	vii

Contents

Fork 3. Comparison vs Description: Varieties of Functionalist Hope	78
Fork 4. Topology vs Typology: Structuralist Alternatives	96
Fork 5. The Frontal vs the Lateral: Interpretivism and its Heirs	119
Fork 6. Old Worries, New Hopes: Anthropological	
Comparatisms Today	133
Conclusion: The Shadow of Two Forms	144
3 Caesurism and Heuristics	148
Introduction: On Seeing Many Comparative Methods	148
Making a Break from Caesurism	149
A Heuristic View	152
The Normativity of Heuristics	155
Caesurism as a Heuristic: Seeing Fractal Patterns in	
Theoretical Debates	163
The Normativity of Caesurism	174
Conclusion: How Far Have We Got?	181
Part II An Archetype	185
4 <i>Comparatio</i>	187
Why?	187
Building an Archetype	191
Conclusion: A Roadmap to Part II	197
5 Two Ends of Lateral Comparison: Identity and Alterity	202
Introduction: Different Ends	202
The Argument by Analogy	206
The Persistence of Caveated Generalisation	209
Alterity	211
Compare and Contrast	215
Conclusion: <i>Comparatio</i> as Common Ground	220
Coda: A Note on Diagrams	223
6 Another Dimension of Lateral Comparison: Identity	
and Intensity	225
Introduction: A Genealogy of Intensity	225
Varieties of Intensity in Anthropological Comparison	229

Contents

Intensity and Identity: A Second Axis	234
Conclusion: The Plane of Lateral Comparison	237
7 Two Ends of Frontal Comparison: Identity, Alterity, Reflexivity	242
Introduction: ‘Us and Them’ not ‘This and That’	242
Tylor’s Ejections	251
The Persistence of Ejection: Interpretivism and Methodological Equation	256
Ejection and Satire	259
Equivocation and Recursivity: Ejection Inside-Out	261
Conclusion: Identity, Alterity, Reflexivity	266
8 The Oscillations of Frontal Comparison: Identity, Intensity, Reflexivity	270
Introduction: Intense Critiques, Intense Responses	270
An Unstable Compound	274
Frontal Comparison Stabilised: The West, Anthropology and the Rest	279
After Culture: Frontal Comparison Destabilised	286
Not-Quite-Fictions: Frontal Comparison Refounded	291
Oscillation and Rigour	310
The Frontal and the Lateral: A Constitutive Oscillation	313
Conclusion: The Archetype of Comparison	319
9 Rigour	325
Introduction: The Rigour of Comparisons	325
The Rigour of the Anthropologist	327
The Rigour of the Discipline	331
The Rigour of the World	339
Conclusion	344
Conclusion	347
Good Comparisons are Comparisons that Object	347
Coda: Views from the Fence	353
<i>Notes</i>	355
<i>References</i>	365
<i>Index</i>	385