

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph.

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Chapter I

Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness

Anthropology discovered globalization before the term became fashionable. By the late 1970s changes in the dynamism, mass, speed, and direction of global flows had seriously affected anthropological practice through their impact on the feasibility and relevance of ethnographic fieldwork. What did it mean to do fieldwork in India when there were so many Indians in New Jersey? Could one still pretend that non-Western peoples were so untouched by North Atlantic power that they truly constituted cultural isolates? Then, in the mid-1980s, as postmodernism announced ever louder the death of the grand narratives associated with Western modernity, a number of anthropologists tried to reassess ethnography—both fieldwork and writing—in relation to the increasingly suspect claims inherent in these narratives. They not only pursued the critique of progress launched by earlier anthropologists, but also engaged in a critique of representation that directly addressed fundamental assumptions of anthropological practice. The new wave of challenges brought forward by changes within and outside of academe required an archaeology of the discipline and a careful examination of its implicit premises.

From 1982 to the early 1990s, one of the most powerful attempts at that reexamination in the United States was what I call, in short, the postmodernist critique of anthropology. The label is a convenient shortcut: It includes scholars who never saw themselves as part of a single movement. Indeed, postmodernism never became a school in anthropology. Furthermore, the postmodernist melancholy of the 1980s has been outflanked in anthropology, as elsewhere, by the euphoria, outrage, or confusion spurred by the rise of the narratives of globalization—a shift that, temporary though it may be, we need to incorporate in our appraisal of globalization (chapter 3). Yet the reassessment of representation, the calls for a cultural critique of the discipline and for a greater individual reflexivity that proliferated in the 1980s offered both a diagnostic package of anthropological problems and a related set of solutions. Decades later both packages are still instructive in spite of, or even because of, their limitations. Their critique is also instructive because many of the sensibilities and assumptions of postmodernism—minus the gloomy mood—have since passed into anthropological approaches to

globalization. Yet the diagnostic package of the postmodernist critique falls short of building the archaeology that it rightly sees as necessary because it tends to treat the discipline as a closed discourse. Similarly, the set of solutions proposed, from the reevaluation of ethnography as text to the greater reflexivity of individual anthropologists as writers and fieldworkers, does not address anthropology's relationship to the geography of imagination of the West. Nor does it question the Savage slot.

This chapter expands on a critique of that dual package to present an argument central to this book. I contend that anthropology belongs to a discursive field that is an inherent part of the West's geography of imagination. The internal tropes of anthropology matter much less than this larger discursive field within which it operates and upon whose existence it is premised. Any critique of anthropology requires a historicization of that larger discursive field—and thus an exploration of the relations between anthropology and the geography of imagination indispensable to the West. New directions will come only from the new vantage points discovered through such a critique.

Challenges and Opportunities

Academic disciplines do not create their fields of significance, they only legitimize particular organizations of meaning. They filter and rank—and in that sense, they truly *discipline*—contested arguments and themes that often precede them. In doing so, they continuously expand, restrict, or modify in diverse ways their distinctive arsenal of tropes, the types of statements they deem acceptable. But the poetics and politics of the “slots” within which disciplines operate do not dictate the enunciative relevance of these slots. There is no direct correlation between the “electoral politics” of a discipline and its political relevance. By “electoral politics,” I mean the set of institutionalized practices and relations of power that influence the production of knowledge from within academe: academic filiations, the mechanisms of institutionalization, the organization of power within and across departments, the market value of publish-or-perish prestige, and other worldly issues that include, but expand way beyond, the maneuvering we usually refer to as “academic politics.” Coalitions of variable durations coalesce intellectual, institutional, and individual affinities and contribute to propelling certain scholars to the forefront of their discipline in ways that make their voices more authoritative within the guild and more representative of that guild to the outside world.

Changes in the types of statements produced as “acceptable” within a discipline, regulated as they are—if only in part—by these “electoral politics,” do not necessarily modify the larger field of operation, and especially the enunciative context of that discipline. Changes in the explicit criteria of acceptability do not automatically relieve the historical weight of the field of significance that the discipline inherited at birth. More likely, the burden of the past is alleviated when the sociohistorical conditions that obtained at the time of emergence have changed so much that practitioners face a choice between complete oblivion and fundamental redirection. At one point in time, alchemists become chemists or cease to be—but the transformation is one that few alchemists can predict and that even fewer would wish.

Anthropology is no exception to this scenario. Like all academic disciplines, it inherited a field of significance that preceded its formalization. Like many of the human sciences, it now faces dramatically new historical conditions of performance. Like any discourse, it can find new directions only if it modifies the boundaries within which it operates. These boundaries not only predated the emergence of anthropology as a discipline, but they also prescribed anthropology's roles (and ethnography's ultimate relevance) to an extent not yet unveiled. Anthropology fills a pre-established compartment within a wider symbolic field, the "Savage" slot¹ of a thematic trilogy that helped to constitute the West as we know it. A critical and reflexive anthropology requires, beyond the self-indulgent condemnation of traditional techniques and tropes, a reappraisal of this symbolic organization upon which anthropological discourse is premised.

Anthropology's future depends largely on its ability to contest the Savage slot and the *thématique* that constructs this slot. The times are ripe for this questioning. More important, solutions that fall short of this challenge can only push the discipline toward irrelevance, however much they reflect serious concerns. In that light, calls for reflexivity in the United States are not products of chance, the casual convergence of individual projects. Nor are they a passing fad, the accidental effect of debates that stormed philosophy and literary theory.² Rather, they are timid, yet spontaneous—and in that sense genuinely American—responses to major changes in the relations between anthropology and the wider world, provincial expressions of wider concerns, allusions to opportunities yet to be seized. What are those changes? What are these concerns? What are the opportunities?

On sheer empirical grounds, the differences between Western and non-Western societies are blurrier than ever before. Anthropology's answer to this ongoing transformation has been typically ad hoc and haphazard. The criteria according to which certain populations are deemed legitimate objects of research continue to vary with departments, with granting agencies, with practitioners, and even with the mood shifts of individual researchers. Amid the confusion, more anthropologists reenter the West cautiously, through the back door, after paying their dues elsewhere. By and large this reentry is no better theorized than were previous departures for faraway lands.³

While some anthropologists are rediscovering the West without ever naming it, what "the West" stands for is itself an object of debate within and outside the gates of academe. The reactionary search for a fundamental Western corpus of "great texts" by many intellectuals and bureaucrats in the English-speaking world is both the reflection of a wider conflict and a particular response to the uncertainties stirred by this conflict. Interestingly, few anthropologists have intervened in that debate. Fewer even among those thought to be at the forefront of the discipline have deigned to address directly the issue of Western monumentalism, with one or two exceptions (e.g., Rosaldo 1989). Even more interestingly, anthropological *theory* remains irrelevant to—and unused by—either side of the "great texts" debate, rhetorical references notwithstanding. Today, the statement that any canon necessarily eliminates an unspecified set of experiences need not come only from anthropology—thanks, of course, to the past diffusion of anthropology itself, but thanks especially to changes in the world and to the experiences that

express and motivate these changes. Minorities of all kinds can and do voice their cultural claims, not on the basis of explicit theories of culture but in the name of historical authenticity. They enter the debate not as academics—or not only as academics—but as situated individuals with rights to historicity. They speak in the first person, signing their argument with an “I” or a “we,” rather than invoking the ahistorical voice of reason, justice, and civilization.

Anthropology is caught off guard by this reformulation. Traditionally, it approached the issue of cultural differences with a monopoly over “native discourse,” hypocritically aware that this discourse would remain a quote. It is too liberal to accept either the radical authenticity of the first person or the conservative reversion to canonical truths—hence, its theoretical silence.

Silence seems to me a hasty abdication. At the very least, anthropology should be able to illuminate the myth of an unquestioned Western canon upon which the debate is premised.⁴ In so doing it would certainly undermine some of its own premises; but that risk is an inherent aspect of the current wave of challenges: its numerous opportunities are inseparable from its multiple threats. Nowhere is this combination of threats and opportunities as blatant as in the postmodern admission that the metanarratives of the West are crumbling.

The Fall of the House of Reason

Whatever else postmodernism means, it remains inseparable from the acknowledgment of an ongoing collapse of metanarratives in a world where Reason and Reality have become fundamentally destabilized (Lyotard 1979, 1986).⁵ To be sure, the related claim (Tyler 1986:123) that “the world that made science, and that science made, has disappeared” is still premature. The growing awareness among literati that rationality has not fulfilled its promises to uncover the absolute becoming of the spirit does not alter the increasing institutionalization of rationality itself (Godzich 1986:xvii–xix). Indeed, one could argue that the spectacular failure of science and reason, judged on the universal grounds that scholars love to emphasize, serves to mask success on more practical and localized terrains into which academics rarely venture.

But if the world that science made is very much alive, the world that made science is now shaky. The crisis of the nation-state, the crisis of the individual, the crisis of the parties of order (liberal, authoritarian, or communist), terrorism, the crisis of “late capitalism”—all contribute to a Western malaise and, in turn, feed upon it (Aronowitz 1988; Jameson 1984). Philosophers reportedly asked: Can one *think* after Auschwitz? But it took some time for Auschwitz to sink in, for communism to reveal its own nightmares, for structuralism to demonstrate its magisterial impasse, for North and South to admit the impossibility of dialogue, for fundamentalists of all denominations to desecralize religion, and for reenlightened intellectuals to question all foundational thought. As the walls crumbled—North and South and East and West—intellectuals developed languages of postdestruction. It is this mixture of negative intellectual surprise, this post-mortem of the metanarratives, that situates the postmodernist mood as primarily Western and primarily petit bourgeois.

These words are not inherently pejorative, but they are meant to historicize the phenomenon—an important exercise if we intend to have relevance outside the North Atlantic. First, it is not self-evident that all past and present worldviews required metanarratives up until their current entry into postmodernity. Second, if the collapse of metanarratives alone characterized the postmodern condition, then some of those populations outside of the North Atlantic that have been busily deconstructing theirs for centuries, or that have gone through mega-collapses of their own, have long been “postmodern,” and there is nothing new under the sun. Things fell apart quite early on the southern shores of the Atlantic, and later in the hinterlands of Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Third, even if we concede, for the sake of argument, that metanarratives once were a prerequisite of humankind and are now collapsing everywhere at equal rates (two major assumptions, indeed), we cannot infer identical reactive strategies to this collapse.

Thus, we must distinguish between postmodernism as a mood, and the recognition of a situation of postmodernity, especially now that the melancholy is fading. The acknowledgment that there is indeed a crisis of representation, that there is indeed an ongoing set of qualitative changes in the international organization of symbols (Appadurai 1991, 1996), in the rhythms of symbolic construction (Harvey 1989), and in the ways symbols relate to localized, subjective experience, does not in itself require a postmortem. In that light, the key to dominant versions of postmodernism is an ongoing destruction lived as shock and revelation. Postmodernism builds on this revelation of the sudden disappearance of established rules, foundational judgments, and known categories (Lyotard 1986:33). But the very fact of revelation implies a previous attitude toward such rules, judgments, and categories—for instance, that they have been taken for granted or as immutable. The postmortem inherent in the postmodernist mood implies a previous “world of universals” (Ross 1988a:xii–xiii). It implies a specific view of culture change. It implies, at least in part, the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century Europe.

In cross-cultural perspective the dominant mood of postmodernism thus appears as a historically specific phenomenon, a reaction provoked by the revelation that the Enlightenment and its conflicting tributaries may have run their course. This mood is not inherent in the world situation, but neither is it a passing ambience as many of the postmodernists’ detractors would have—even though it ushers in fads of its own. It is a mood in the strong sense in which Geertz (1973:90) defines religious moods: powerful, persuasive, and promisingly enduring. But contrary to religions, it rejects both the pretense of factuality and the aspiration to realistic motivations. It seeks a “psychoanalytic therapeutic” from the “modern neurosis,” the “Western schizophrenia, paranoia, etc. all the sources of misery we have known for two centuries” (Lyotard 1986:125–6).

“We,” here, is the West, though not in a genealogical or territorial sense. The postmodern world has little space left for genealogies, and notions of territoriality are being redefined right before our eyes (Appadurai 1991, 1996). It is a world where black American Michael Jackson starts an international tour from Japan and imprints cassettes that mark the rhythm of Haitian peasant families in the Cuban Sierra Maestra; a world where Florida speaks Spanish (once more); where a Socialist prime minister came to Greece by way of New England and the

fundamentalist imam came from Paris to turn Iran into an Islamic state. It is a world where a political leader in reggae-prone Jamaica traces his roots to Arabia, where U.S. credit cards are processed in Barbados, and Italian designer shoes are made in Hong Kong or Shanghai. It is a world where the Pope can be Polish and where most orthodox Marxists live on the Western side of a fallen iron curtain. It is a world where the most enlightened are only part-time citizens of part-time communities of imagination.

But these very phenomena—and their inherent connection with the expansion of what we conveniently call the West—are part of the text that reveals the post-modernist mood as eventuating from a Western *problématique*. The perception of a collapse as revelation cannot be envisioned outside of the trajectory of thought that has marked the West and spread unevenly outside its expanding boundaries. Its conditions of existence coalesce within the West. The stance it spawns is unthinkable outside of the West, and has significance only within the boundaries set by the Western reading of world history.

Millennial Historicity

Human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators, yet the boundaries between these two sides of historicity, necessary as they are as heuristic devices, are themselves historical, and thus fluid and changing. The interface between what happened and that which is said to have happened is thus always a matter of struggle, a contested field within which uneven power is deployed (Trouillot 1995). I have insisted so far that the West is a historical projection, a projection *in* history. But it is also a projection *of* history, the imposition of a particular interface between what happened and that which is said to have happened.

As anchor of a claim to universal legitimacy, the geography of imagination inherent in the West since the sixteenth century imposes a frame within which to read world history. Thematic variations and political choices aside, from Las Casas to Condorcet, to Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, and beyond, this framework has always assumed the centrality of the North Atlantic not only as the site from which world history is made but also as the site whence that story can be told. Eric Wolf (1982) has argued that the human disciplines have treated the world outside of Europe as people without history. One can more precisely claim that they were also treated as people without historicity. Their capacity to narrate anecdotal parts of the world story was always subsumed under a North Atlantic historicity that was deemed universal.

The linear continuity that Western universalism projects—the sense of a telos, if not all the teleological variations that punctuate the literature from Condorcet to Engels—reflected and reinforced implicit and explicit persuasions of a growing general public within and outside the North Atlantic. During the last two centuries, it became obvious to increasing segments of otherwise diverse populations that history was going somewhere. With the certitude of a telos—or at the very least, of a universal “meaning” to history—came a particular twist on periodization: Chunks of chronology could be read backwards or in their contemporaneity as

temporary moments of regress or, more often, as indications of progress. Not only was world history going somewhere, but one could tell how far it had gone and guess how much further it had to go.

Within this continuity and the global temporality that it entailed, the nineteenth century emerges as an era of certitudes, of truths worth dying for—and killing for—in the name of a species suddenly united in spite of its inequalities, and indeed often because of them. Yet the twentieth century was, from that same perspective, a century of paradoxes (Todorov 2001). It was an age of extremes (Hobsbawm 1962) during which the incompatibilities of Western universalism—evident in the Renaissance yet quickly masked by the rhetoric of the Enlightenment and the enormous deployment of North Atlantic power in the nineteenth century—revealed themselves in full force. The last hundred years of this now defunct millennium were those during which the global domination of North Atlantic institutional forms became so pervasive that subjugated peoples everywhere found it impossible to formulate the terms of their liberation and to envision their futures outside of these forms. It was the century of hope, yet it was also the century of violent deaths—almost eighteen million in World War I alone, twice as many in World War II, and twice as many again since then in ethnic, civil, and national wars, border conflicts, and separatist struggles. It was the century during which international institutions gained legitimacy, yet it was also the century that fully institutionalized international disparities. It was the century of medicine and technological miracles, yet it was also the century during which humanity measured the full horror of technology and its capacity for mass destruction.

As that century drew to a close, its contradictory path—long covered up by the partisans of communism and capitalism alike—could not be hidden anymore, especially once the fall of the Soviet Union had removed one of the necessary components of the teleological discourses that nurtured the cover-up. Maybe world history was going nowhere. With that creeping sense of loss, moods and affects began to replace the analytical schemes that once promised a universal future that now appeared increasingly dubious. Postmodernist melancholy mourned the death of utopias: There was never a future. Globalitarist euphoria claimed the end of history: Our present is the future. Both reflect the millennial historicity of a North Atlantic incapable of inserting the history of the last one hundred years in a single universal narrative. Utopia and progress both became concrete in the twentieth century, but neither survived intact.

If the postmodern mood is fundamentally Western in the sense delineated above, what does this mean for an anthropology of the present? It means that the present that anthropologists must confront is the product of a particular past that encompasses the history and the pre-history of anthropology itself. Consequently, it also means that the postmodernist critique within North American anthropology remains within the very thematic field that it claims to challenge. Finally, it means that a truly critical and reflexive anthropology needs to contextualize Western metanarratives and read critically the place of the discipline in the field so discovered. In short, anthropology needs to turn the apparatus elaborated in the observation of non-Western societies on itself, and more specifically, on the

history from which it sprang. That history does not begin with the formalization of the discipline, but with the emergence of the symbolic field that made this formalization possible.

The Savage and the Innocent

In 1492, Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the Caribbean. The admiral's mistake would later be heralded as "The Discovery of America," a label challenged only in the last century during its quincentennial celebration. To be sure, it took Nuñez de Balboa's sighting of the Pacific in 1513 to verify the existence of a continental mass, and Amerigo Vespucci's insistence on a *mundus novus* for Christendom to acknowledge this "discovery." Then it took another fifty years to realize its symbolic significance. Yet 1492 was, to some extent, a discovery even then, the first material step in a continuously renewed process of invention (Ainsa 1988). Abandoning one lake for another, Europe confirmed the sociopolitical fissure that was slowly pushing the Mediterranean toward northern and southern shores. In so doing, it created itself, but it also discovered America, its still unpolished alter ego, its elsewhere, its Other. The Conquest of America stands as Europe's model for the constitution of the Other (Todorov 1982; see also Ainsa 1988).

Yet from the beginning, the model was Janus-faced. The year 1516 saw the publication of two anthropological precursors: the Alcalá edition of the *Decades* of Pietro Martire d'Anghiera (a paraethnographic account of the Antilles, and in many ways one of Europe's earliest introductions to a "state of nature" elsewhere) and one more popular edition of Amerigo Vespucci's epistolary travel accounts. In that same year too, Thomas More published his fictional account of an "ideal state" on the island of *Utopia*, the prototypical nowhere of European imagination.

The chronological coincidence of these publications, fortuitous as it may be, symbolizes a thematic correspondence now blurred by intellectual specialization and the abuse of categories. We now claim to distinguish clearly between travelers' accounts, colonial surveys, ethnographic reports, and fictional utopias. Such cataloging is useful, but only to some extent. In the early sixteenth century, European descriptions of an alleged state of nature in the realist mode filled the writings of colonial officers concerned with the immediate management of the Other. The realist mode also pervaded travelers' accounts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, before settling in the privileged space of learned discourse with eighteenth-century philosophers and the nineteenth-century rise of armchair anthropology. Even then, the line between these genres was not always clear-cut (Thornton 1983; Weil 1984). The realist mode also pervaded fiction—so much so that some twentieth-century critics distinguish between utopias and "extraordinary voyages," or trips to the lands of nowhere with the most "realistic" geographical settings. On the other hand, fantasies about an ideal state increased in fiction, but they also found their way into theater, songs, and philosophical treatises.

Classifications notwithstanding, the connection between a state of nature and an ideal state is, to a large extent, in the symbolic construction of the materials themselves. The symbolic transformation through which Christendom became

the West structures a set of relations that necessitate both utopia and the Savage. What happens within the slots so created—and within the genres that condition their historical existence—is not inconsequential. But the analysis of these genres cannot explain the slots nor even the internal tropes of such slots. To wit, “utopia” has been the most studied form of this ensemble, yet there is no final agreement on which works to include in the category (Andrews 1937 [1935]; Atkinson 1920, 1922; Eliav-Feldon 1982; Kamenka 1987; Manuel and Manuel 1979; Trousson 1975). Further, when reached, agreement is often ephemeral. Even if one could posit a continuum from realist ethnography to fictional utopias, works move in and out of these categories and categories often overlap on textual and non-textual grounds. Finally, textuality is rarely the final criterion of inclusion or exclusion. From the 200-year-long controversy about the *Voyage et aventures de François Leguat* (a 1708 best-seller believed by some to be a true account and by others, a work of fiction), to the Castañeda embarrassment⁶ to professional anthropology, to debates on *Shabono*⁷ or the existence of the Tasaday,⁸ a myriad of cases indicate the ultimate relevance of issues outside of “the text” proper (Atkinson 1922; Pratt 1986; Weil 1984).

That the actual corpus fitting any of these genres at any given period has never been unproblematic underscores a thematic correspondence that has survived the increasingly refined categorizations. In the 1500s, readers could not fail to notice the similarities between works such as Jacques Cartier’s *Brief Récit*, which features paraethnographic descriptions of Indians, and some of Rabelais’s scenes in *Gargantua*. Montaigne, an observant traveler himself within the confines of Europe, used descriptions of America to set for his readers issues in philosophical anthropology—and in the famous essay “Des cannibales,” he is quick to point out the major difference between his enterprise and that of his Greek predecessors, including Plato: The Greeks had no realistic database (Montaigne 1952). Early in the seventeenth century, Tommaso Campanella produced his *La Città del Sole* (1602) informed by descriptions that Portuguese missionaries and Dutch mercenaries were bringing back from Ceylon and by Jesuit reports of socialism within the Inca kingdom.

Utopias were both rare and inferior—by earlier and later standards—during the seventeenth century. Few are now remembered other than those of Campanella, Sir Francis Bacon, and François Fénelon. But the search for an exotic ideal had not died, as some authors (Trousson 1975) seem to suggest. Fénelon’s *Aventures de Télémaque* went into 20 printings. The *History of the Sevarites* of Denis Vairasse d’Alais (1677–79) was published originally in English, then in a French version that spurred German, Dutch, and Italian translations (Atkinson 1920). Utopias did not quench the thirst for fantasy lands but only because relative demand had increased unexpectedly.

Travel accounts, of which the numbers kept multiplying, filled the demand for the Elsewhere. Some did so with reports of unicorns and floating isles, then accepted as reality by their public, including some of the most respected scholars of the time. But most did so with what were “realist” pictures of the savage, pictures that would pass twentieth-century tests of accuracy and are still being used by historians and anthropologists. Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre (1973 [1667]), Jean

Baptiste Labat (1722 [1722]), or Thomas Gage (1958 [1648])—to take only a few recognizable authors writing on one hemisphere—familiarized readers with the wonders of the Antilles and the American mainland.

Outside of a restricted group of overzealous scholars and administrators, it mattered little to the larger European audience whether such works were fictitious or not. That they presented an elsewhere was enough. That the Elsewhere was actually somewhere was a matter for a few specialists. The dream remained alive well into the next century. Baron de Montesquieu was so much aware of this implicit correspondence that he gambled on reversing all the traditions at the same time, with considerable aesthetic and didactic effect, in his *Lettres Persanes* (1721). The Elsewhere became Paris; the Other became French; the utopia became a well-known state of affairs. It worked, because everyone recognized the models and understood the parody.

The thematic correspondence between utopias and travel accounts or paraethnographic descriptions was not well camouflaged until the end of the eighteenth century. The forms continued to diverge, while the number of publications within each category kept increasing. Utopias filled the century that gave us the Enlightenment, from Jonathon Swift's parodic *Gulliver's Travels* (1702) to Bernadin de Saint Pierre's unfinished *L'amazonne* (1795). But so did realistic descriptions of far away peoples, and so did, moreover, crossnational debates in Europe on what exactly those descriptions meant for the rational knowledge of humankind. In the single decade of the 1760s, England alone sent expeditions like those of Commodore Byron, Captains Cartwright, Bruce, Furneaux, and Wallis, and Lieutenant Cook to savage lands all over the world. Bruce, Wallis, and Cook brought home reports from Abyssinia, Tahiti, and Hawaii. Byron and his companions carried back accounts "of a race of splendid giants" from Patagonia. Cartwright returned with five living Eskimos who caused a commotion in the streets of London (Tinker 1922:5–25).

Scholars devoured such "realistic" data on the Savage with a still unsurpassed interest while writing didactic utopias and exploring in their philosophical treatises the rational revelation behind the discoveries of the travelers. Voltaire, who read voraciously the travel descriptions of his time, gave us *Candide* and *Zadig*. But he also used paraethnographic descriptions to participate in anthropological debates of his time, siding for instance with the Göttingen school on polygenesis (Duchet 1971). Denis Diderot, who may have read more travel accounts than anyone then alive, and who turned many of them into paraethnographic descriptions for the *Encyclopédie*, wrote two utopias true to form.⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, whom Claude Lévi-Strauss called "the father of ethnology," sought the most orderly link between "the state of nature" first described by Martire d'Anghiera and the "ideal commonwealth" envisioned by More and his followers. He thus unwittingly formalized the myth of the "noble savage," renewing a theme that went back not only to Alexander Pope and Daniel Defoe, but to now forgotten travelers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Long before Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Pietro Martire already thought that the Arawak of the Antilles were sweet and simple. Ferdinand Magellan's companion, Antonio Pigafetta, claimed in 1522 that the Indians of Brazil were "*creduli e boni*" by instinct. And Pierre

Boucher, writing of the Iroquois in 1664, had confirmed that "*tous les Sauvages ont l'esprit bon*" (Atkinson 1920:65-70; Gonnard 1946:36).

The myth of the noble Savage is not a creation of the Enlightenment. Ever since the West became the West, Robinson has been looking for Friday. The eighteenth century was not even the first to see arguments on or around that myth (Gonnard 1946). The verbal duel between Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Gines de Sepúlveda on the "nature" of the Indians and the justice of their enslavement, fought at Valladolid in the early 1550s in front of Spain's intellectual nobility, was as spectacular as anything the Enlightenment could imagine (Las Casas 1992 [1552]; André-Vincent 1980; Pagden 1982). Rather, the specificity of eighteenth-century anthropological philosophers was to dismiss some of the past limitations of this grandiose controversy and to claim to resolve it not on the basis of the Scriptures, but on the open grounds of rationality and experience. But the debate was always implicit in the thematic concordance that had tied the observation of the savage and the hopes of utopia since at least 1516. Swiss writer Isaac Iselin, a leading voice of the Göttingen school of anthropology, criticized Rousseau's ideals and the state of savagery as "disorderly fantasy" (Rupp-Eisenreich 1984:99). The fact that the Göttingen school did not bother to verify its own "ethnographic" bases, or that it used travelers' accounts for purposes other than Rousseau's (Rupp-Eisenreich 1985), matters less than the fact that Rousseau, Iselin, Christoph Meiners, and Joseph-Marie De Gérando shared the same premises on the relevance of savagery. For Rousseau, as for More and Defoe, the Savage is an argument for a particular kind of utopia. For Iselin and Meiners, as for Swift and Thomas Hobbes in other times and contexts, it is an argument against it. Given the tradition of the genre being used, the formal terrain of battle, and the personal taste of the author, the argument was either tacit or explicit and the Savage's face either sketched or magnified. But argument there was.

The nineteenth century blurred the most visible signs of this thematic correspondence by artificially separating utopia and the Savage. To schematize a protracted and contested process, it is as if that century of specialization subdivided the Other that the Renaissance had set forth in creating the West. From then on, utopia and the Savage evolved as two distinguishable slots. Immanuel Kant had set the philosophical grounds for this separation by laying out his own teleology without humor or fiction while moving away from the *Naturinstink*. Nineteenth-century French positivists, in turn, derided utopias as chimeric utopianisms (Manuel and Manuel 1979).

The growing fictional literature in the United States also modified the forms of utopia (Pfaelzer 1984). To start with, America had been the imagined site of traditional utopias, Alexis de Tocqueville's *feuille blanche*, the land of all (im)possibilities. Defining an elsewhere from this site was a dilemma. Ideally, its Eden was within itself (Walkover 1974). Not surprisingly, William Dean Howells brings *A Traveler from Altruria* (1894) to the United States before sending his readers back to utopia. Edward Bellamy chose to look "backward." More important, America's Savages and its colonized were also within itself—as American Indians and black Americans, only one of whom white anthropologists dared to study before the latter part of this century (Mintz 1971a, 1990). With two groups of

savages to pick from, specialization set in, and Indians (especially "good" Indians) became the preserve of anthropologists.¹⁰

At the same time, a black utopia was unthinkable, given the character of North American racism and the fabric of black/white imagery in American literature (Levin 1958). Thus the black pastoral (the unmatched apex of which is *Uncle Tom's Cabin* [1851]—but note that the flavor is also in Faulkner) played the role that Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1787) had played earlier in European imagination.¹¹ But true-to-form utopia writers in North America moved away from the specter of savagery.

Other factors were at play. The nineteenth century was America's century of concreteness, when its utopias became reachable. Of the reported 52 million migrants who left Europe between 1824 and 1924, more than ninety percent went to the Americas, mostly to the United States. In the United States, and in Europe as well, decreasing exchange among writers—who were involved in different forms of discourse and seeking legitimacy on different grounds—contributed even more to giving each group of practitioners the sentiment that they were carrying on a different enterprise. As they believed their practice and practiced their beliefs, the enterprises indeed became separated, but only to a certain extent. By the end of the nineteenth century, utopian novelists accentuated formal interests while utopianisms were acknowledged primarily as doctrines couched in nonfictional terms: Saint-Simonism, Fabian Socialism, Marxism (Gonnard 1946). Travel accounts came to pass as a totally separate genre, however Robinson-like some remained. The "scientific" study of the Savage *qua* Savage became the privileged field of academic anthropology, soon to be anchored in distinguished chairs, but already severed from its imaginary counterpart.

A Discipline for the Savage

The rest of the story is well known, perhaps too well known, inasmuch as the insistence on the methods and tropes of anthropology as a discipline may obscure the larger discursive order that made sense of its institutionalization. Histories that fail to problematize this institutionalization—and critiques premised on that naïve history—necessarily fall short of illuminating the enunciative context of anthropological discourse. To be sure, anthropologists to this day keep telling both undergraduates and lay readers that their practice is useful to better understand "ourselves," but without ever spelling out exactly the specifics of this understanding, the utopias behind this curiosity turned profession.

It has often been said that the Savage or the primitive was the alter ego the West constructed for itself. What has not been emphasized enough is that this Other was a Janus, of whom the Savage was only the second face.¹² The first face was the West itself, but the West fancifully constructed as a utopian projection, and meant to be, in that imaginary correspondence, the condition of existence of the Savage. This thematic correspondence preceded the institutionalization of anthropology as a specialized field of inquiry. Better said, the constitutive moment of ethnography as metaphor antedates the constitution of anthropology as discipline, and even precedes its solidification as specialized discourse.

Anthropology's disciplinary emergence was part of the institutionalization of the social sciences from the mid-nineteenth century to the start of World War II. That institutionalization closely followed the rise of nationalism and the consolidation of state power in North Atlantic countries where the social science disciplines first solidified. It paralleled the partition of the world mainly by the same countries (Wallerstein et al. 1996). Eurocentric ideas first developed and nurtured successively by the Renaissance, the first wave of colonialism, the Enlightenment, and the practice of plantation slavery in the Americas, had gathered new momentum with colonialism's second wave. By the time the social sciences were standardized in degree-granting departments, non-Western areas and peoples were thought to be fundamentally different both in essence and in practice. They could not be known through the same scientific procedures or subjected to the same rules of management. At the same time, the desire to know and manage them had increased.

It is in that context that cultural anthropology became, almost by default, a discipline aimed at exposing the people of the North Atlantic to the lives and mores of the Other. Anthropology came to fill "the Savage slot" of a larger thematic field, performing a role played, in different ways, by literature and travel accounts—and at times, by unexpected media.¹³ The contingent factors of that institutionalization now seem irrelevant. Yet had Classics maintained a more sustained dialogue with Orientalism, had Oriental Studies remained vibrant in France and especially in Britain, had sociology become an institutional arm of the state abroad as it was at home, cultural anthropology's niche and formalization would have been different. There would have been a division of academic labor on the Savage slot. As there was not such a division, anthropology inherited a disciplinary monopoly over an object that it never bothered to theorize.

Yet that theorization is necessary. For the dominant metamorphosis, the transformation of savagery into sameness by way of Utopia as positive or negative reference is not the outcome of a textual exercise within anthropological practice, but part of anthropology's original conditions of existence. That the discipline was positivist in a positivist age, and structuralist in a context dominated by structuralism, is not very intriguing; as Tyler (1986:128) acutely notes, the more recent "textualization of pseudo-discourse" can accomplish "a terrorist alienation more complete than that of the positivists." Thus attempts at disciplinary reflexivity cannot stop at the moment of institutionalization, or emphasize the internal tropes of late modern ethnographies, even though some rightly allude to the correspondence between savagery and utopia, or the use of the pastoral mode in anthropology (e.g., Clifford 1986b; Rosaldo 1986; Tyler 1986). Such attempts are not *wrong*. But the primary focus on the textual construction of the Other *in* anthropology may turn our attention away from the construction of Otherness upon which anthropology is premised, and further mask a correspondence already well concealed by increasing specialization since the nineteenth century.

Indeed, the savage-utopia correspondence tends to generate false candor. It rarely reveals its deepest foundations or its inherent inequality, even though it triggers claims of reciprocity. From Pietro Martire to North American anthropology's forays into postmodernist reflexivity, the Savage has been an occasion to profess innocence. We may guess at some of the reasons behind this recurrent

tendency to exhibit the nude as nakedness. Let me just say this much: In spite of such old claims, the utopian West dominated the thematic correspondence. It did so from behind the scenes, at least most of the time. It showed itself in least-equivocal terms in just a few occasions, most notably the philosophical jousts over American colonization in sixteenth-century Spain (Pagden 1982) and in the anthropological debates of the eighteenth century (Duchet 1971).

But visible or not, naïve or cynical, the West was always first, as utopia or as challenge to it—that is, as a universalist project, the boundaries of which are no-where, u-topous, non-spatial. And that, one needs to repeat, is not a product of the Enlightenment, but part and parcel of the horizons set by the Renaissance and its simultaneous creation of Europe and Otherness, without which the West is inconceivable. Thomas More did not have to wait for ethnographic reports on the Americas to compose his *Utopia*. Similarly, eighteenth-century readers of travel accounts did not wait for verification. Even today, there is a necessary gap between the initial acceptance of the most fanciful “ethnographies” and the “restudies” or “reassessments” that follow. The chronological precedence reflects a deeper inequality in the two faces of Janus: the utopian West is first in the construction of this complementarity. It is the first observed face of the figure, the initial projection against which the Savage becomes a reality. The Savage *makes sense* in terms of utopia.

The Mediation of Order

Utopia itself made sense only in terms of the absolute order against which it was projected, negatively or not.¹⁴ Utopias do not necessarily advance foundational propositions, but they feed upon foundational thought. Fictional “ideal states,” presented as novels or treatises, suggest a project, or a counter-project. It is this very projection, rather than their alleged or proven fanciful characteristics, that makes them utopias. Here again, we need to go back to the Renaissance, that fictional rebirth through which Christendom became the West, where two more snapshots may clarify the issue.

From the point of view of contemporaries, the most important event of the year 1492 was not Columbus’s landing in the Antilles, but the conquest of the Muslim kingdom of Granada and its incorporation into Castile (Trouillot 1995:108–40). The gap between the three religions of Abraham had paralleled the sociopolitical fissure that split the Mediterranean, but because of that fissure religious intolerance increasingly expressed itself in ways that intertwined religion, ethnicity, territory, and matters of state control. To put it simply, as Christendom became Europe, Europe itself became Christian. It is no accident that the fall of Muslim Granada was immediately followed by the expulsion of the Jews from the now Christian territory. It is no accident either that the very same individual who signed the public order against the Jews also signed Ferdinand and Isabella’s secret instructions to Columbus. Indeed, nascent Europe could turn its eyes to the Atlantic only because the consolidation of political borders and the concentration of political power in the name of the Christian God presaged the advent of internal order.

Order—political and ideological—was high on the agenda, both in theory and in practice; and the increased use of the printing press stimulated the interchange between theory and practice. Thus, in 1513, three years before Thomas More's *Utopia*, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. In retrospect, that work signified a threshold: Some leaders of the emerging Western world were ready to phrase the issue of control in terms of *realpolitik* long before the word was coined. The Machiavelli era encompassed Desiderius Erasmus's *Education of a Christian Prince*, Guillaume Budé's *Education of a Prince*, and other treatises that shared an "emphasis on the workable rather than the ideal," a belief that "men's destinies were to some extent within their own control and that this control depended upon self-knowledge" (Hale 1977 [1971]:305).¹⁵

The seminal writings that inscribed savagery, utopia, and order were conceived in the same era. This simultaneity is but one indication that these slots were created against the backdrop of one another. In the context of Europe, the works that set up these slots were part of an emerging debate that tied order to the quest for universal truths, a quest that gave savagery and utopia their relevance. Looming above the issue of the ideal state of affairs, and tying it to that of the state of nature, was the issue of order as both a goal and a means, and its relation with reason and justice. Campanella's *City*, the runner-up to *Utopia* in the critics' view, clearly engaged some of Machiavelli's proposals and those of contemporary Spanish philosophers (Manuel and Manuel 1979:261–88). Campanella, like More, also wrote in nonfictional modes. He commented on European political regimes in terms of their ultimate justification. He proposed to various European monarchs a nonfictional plan of rule based on his religious and philosophical views. Indeed, the opinions expressed in his treatises got him thrown into a Spanish jail where he wrote his fictionalized utopia (Manuel and Manuel 1979; Trousson 1975:39, 72–8). Sir Thomas More, in turn, was executed.

The relation between fictionalized utopias and matters of political power goes way back to the ancestral forms of the genre in ancient Greece (Trousson 1975:39). So do debates on the nature of otherness. But we need not take the naïve history of the West at face value: Greece did not beget Europe. Rather, Europe claimed Greece. The revisionist historiography through which the Renaissance turned Christendom into Europe and gave it its Greek heritage is itself a phenomenon that needs to be placed in history. The distinctiveness of the Renaissance was, in part, the invention of a past for the West.¹⁶ It was also, in part, an emerging claim to universality and to an absolute order inconceivable without that claim. As Las Casas, Montesquieu, and Montaigne were quick to point out in different terms and times, a major difference between Europe and ancient Greece was the reality of the Savage as experienced by Europe after 1492. Unlike that of Greece and Rome, or that of the Islamic world, the West's vision of order implied from its inception two complementary spaces, the Here and the Elsewhere, which premised one another and were conceived as inseparable.¹⁷

In imaginary terms that Elsewhere could be Utopia; but in the concrete terms of conquest, it was a space of colonization peopled by others who would eventually become "us"—or at the very least who *should*—in a project of assimilation antithetic to the most liberal branches of Greek philosophy (Hartog 1988 [1980]).

In that sense, order had become universal, absolute—both in the shape of the rising absolutist state (quite opposed, indeed, to Greek democracy) and in the shape of a universal empire stretching the limits of Christendom out into nowhere. Colonization became a mission, and the Savage became absence and negation.¹⁸ The symbolic process through which the West created itself thus involved the universal legitimacy of power—and order became, in that process, the answer to the question of legitimacy. To put it otherwise, the West is inconceivable without a metanarrative. Since their common emergence in the sixteenth century, world capitalism, the modern state, and colonization posed—and continue to pose—the issue of the philosophical base of order to the West. What language can legitimate universal control? Here again the geography of imagination and the geography of management appear to be distinct yet intertwined, both empirically and analytically.

Chronological convergences again illustrate the point. At about the time Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, the Spanish Crown made known its supplementary laws on American colonization and the Medici clan in 1513 secured the papacy with the nomination of Leo X—the same Leo, Bishop of Rome, to whom Pietro Martire dedicated parts of his ethnography. Two years later, the accession of Francis I as king of France signaled the self-conscious invention of the traditions constitutive of the French nation-state—a self-consciousness manifested in the imposed use of the French dialect and the creation of the Collège de France.¹⁹ One year after Francis's advent, Charles I (later Charles V) became king of Castille and of its New World possessions, and Martin Luther published the theses of Wittenberg. The second decade of the new century ended quite fortuitously with a semblance of victory on the side of order, that is, with Charles's "election" to the imperial crown in 1519. But the condemnation of Luther (1520), rural agitation within Castille itself, and the so-called Oriental menace (culminating with the 1529 siege of Vienna by the Turks) kept reminding a nascent Europe that its self-delivery was not to happen without pains. The notion of a universal empire that would destroy the borders of Christendom through its ineluctable expansion became both more attractive in thought and more unattainable in practice.²⁰

The fictionalized utopias that immediately followed More's and overlapped with the practical reshaping of power in a newly defined Europe were by and large reformist rather than revolutionary, hardly breaking new imaginary grounds (Trousson 1975:62–72). This is not surprising, for just as the Savage is in an unequal relationship with utopia, so is utopia in an uneven relationship with order. Just as the Savage is a metaphorical argument for or against utopia, so is utopia (and the Savage it encompasses) a metaphorical argument for or against order, conceived of as an expression of legitimate universality. It is the mediation of universal order as the ultimate signified of the Savage-utopia relation that gives its full sense to the triad. In defense of a particular vision of order, the Savage became evidence for a particular type of utopia. That the same ethnographic source could be used to make the opposite point did not matter beyond a minimal requirement for verisimilitude. To be sure, Las Casas had been to the New World, Sepúlveda had not; and this helped the cause of the *Procurador*. To be sure, the Rousseauists were right and Göttingen was wrong about cranial sizes. To be sure, the empirical verdict is not yet in on the Tasaday. But now as before, the

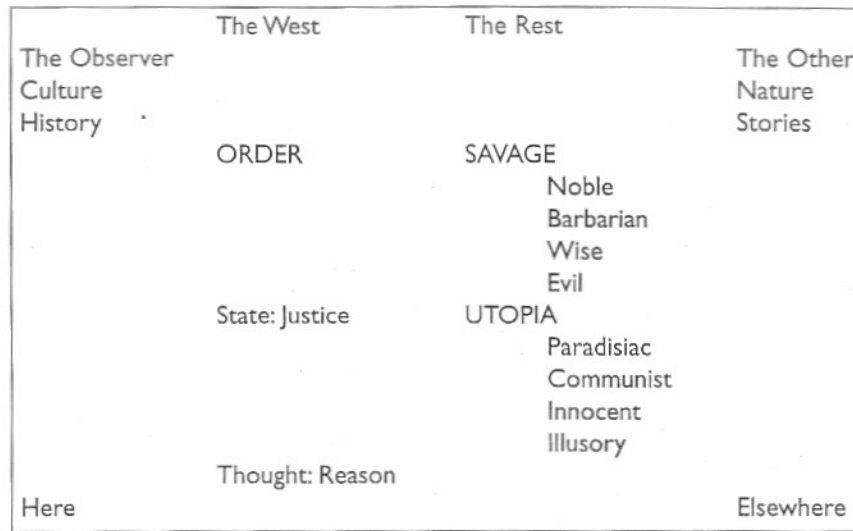


Figure 1 The symbolic organization of the Savage Slot, ca. 1515–1990

Savage is only evidence within a debate, the importance of which surpasses not only his understanding but his very existence.

Just as utopia itself can be offered as a promise or as a dangerous illusion, the Savage can be noble, wise, barbaric, victim or aggressor, depending on the debate and on the aims of the interlocutors. The space within the slot is not static, and its changing contents are not pre-determined by its structural position. Regional and temporal variants of the Savage figure abound, in spite of recurring tendencies that suggest geographical specialization.²¹ Too often anthropological discourse modifies the projection of non-academic observers only to the extent that it “disciplines” them.²² At other times, anthropologists help create and buttress images that can question previous permutations.²³ Thus what happens within the slot is neither doomed nor inconsequential (Fox 1991; Vincent 1991). The point is, rather, that a critique of anthropology cannot skirt around this slot. The direction of the discipline now depends upon an explicit attack on that slot itself and the symbolic order upon which it is premised (figure 1). As long as the slot remains, the Savage is at best a figure of speech, a metaphor in an argument about nature and the universe, about being and existence—in short, an argument about foundational thought.

Portrait of the Artist as a Bubble

This brings us back to the present. I have argued that to historicize the West is to historicize anthropology and vice versa. I have also suggested that ongoing changes in the world within and outside of academe make that two-pronged historicization both urgent and necessary. If these two arguments are correct, together they expose the seriousness of the challenges we face. Yet they also expose

the limitations of some of the solutions proposed. The portrait of the postmodernist anthropologist that emerges from this dual exercise is not a happy one indeed. Camera and notebooks in hand, he is looking for the Savage, but the Savage has vanished. The problem starts with the fated inheritance of the moderns themselves. The world that the anthropologist inherits has wiped out the empirical trace of the Savage-object: Coke bottles and cartridges now obscure the familiar tracks. To be sure, one could reinvent the Savage, or create new Savages within the West itself. Solutions of this kind are increasingly appealing (see chapters 3 and 6). The very notion of savagery is increasingly redundant on empirical grounds, irrespective of the Savage-object. Lingering conditions of modernity make the notion a hard one to evoke in imagination, now that hordes of Savages have joined the slums of the Third World or touched the shores of the North Atlantic. We are far from the days when five Eskimos caused an uproar in London. The primitive has become terrorist, refugee, freedom fighter, opium or coca grower, or parasite. He can even play anthropologist, at times. Televised documentaries show his "real" conditions of existence; underground newspapers expose his dreams of modernity. Thanks to modernity and modernization, the savage has changed, the West has changed, and the West knows that both have changed empirically.

But modernity is only part of the anthropologist's difficulty. Modern obstacles have modern (technical) answers, or so we used to think. The more serious issue is that technical solutions do not suffice anymore. At best, they can solve the problem of the empirical object by removing the Cokes and cartridges. At worst, they can fabricate an entire new face for savagery. But they cannot remedy changes in the larger thematic field, especially since the Savage never dominated this field. He was only one of the requisite parts of a tripartite relation, the mask of a mask. The problem is not simply that the masks are torn, that true cannibals are now rare, nor even that now—as in Norman Mailer's *Cannibals and Christians* (1966)—both are equally good or equally evil (Walkover 1974), if evil itself can be defined (Lyotard 1986).

This is altogether a *postmodern* quandary. It is part of the world of constructs and relations revealed by our juxtaposed snapshots, and it is an intrinsic dilemma of postmodern anthropology. For if indeed foundational thoughts are seen as collapsing, if indeed utopias are arguments about order and foundational thoughts, and if indeed the Savage exists primarily within an implicit correspondence with utopia, the specialist in savagery is in dire straits. He does not know what to aim at. His favorite model has disappeared or, when found, refuses to pose as expected. The fieldworker examines his tools and finds his camera inadequate. Most importantly, his very field of vision now seems blurred. Yet he needs to come back home with a picture. It's pouring rain out there, and the mosquitoes are starting to bite. In desperation, the baffled anthropologist burns his notes to create a moment of light, moves his face against the flame, closes his eyes and, hands grasping the camera, takes a picture of himself.

Tactics and Strategy

Lest this portrait be taken to characterize the postmodernist anthropologist as the epitome of self-indulgence (as many critics, indeed, imply), let me say that

narcissist labels characterize postmodernist anthropologists as individuals no better than they typify their predecessors or adversaries. Intellectuals as a group claimed and gained socially sanctioned self-indulgence long before postmodernism. Individual intent is secondary here. At any rate, anthropology's situation warrants more sober reflection than petty accusations of egomania across theoretical camps.

I may end up being both more lenient and more severe—thus risking the condemnation of foes and proponents alike—by saying that the perceived self-indulgence of postmodernist anthropologists inheres in the situation itself. That is what makes it so obvious and such an easy target for opponents. If we take seriously the perception of an ongoing collapse of the Western metanarratives, the vacuum created by the fall of the house of Reason in the once fertile fields of utopian imagination, and the empirical destruction of the Savage-object, then the anthropologist aware of this situation has no target outside of himself (as witness) and his text (as pretext) within the thematic universe he inherits.

Once phrased in these terms, the dilemma becomes manageable. One obvious solution is to confront and change the thematic field itself and claim new grounds for anthropology—which is just what some anthropologists have been doing, though without explicit programs. But the dilemma as lived by the postmodernists is no less real, and the epiphany of textuality cannot be reduced to a mere aggregate of individual tactics of self-aggrandizement or preservation.²⁴ If electoral politics may explain either overstatements or the craving for new fads in North American anthropology and elsewhere, they say little of the mechanisms leading to specific choices among myriad possibilities.²⁵ Why the text? Why the sudden (for anthropologists, to some extent) rediscovery of literature, and of only some literature at that? However much the (re)discovery of textuality and authorial legitimation may be associated with midterm maneuvers, it also must be seen in another context. In that context—the thematic field delineated by order, utopia, and the Savage—this emphasis on textuality represents a strategic retreat triggered by the perception of ongoing destruction. In other words, electoral politics alone cannot explain postmodernist anthropology. To propose viable alternatives, one needs to take the ideological and theoretical context of postmodernism seriously, more seriously than the postmodernists do themselves. One needs also to take more seriously both literary criticism and philosophy.

Metaphors in Ethnography and Ethnography as Metaphor

The discovery of textuality by North American anthropologists in the 1980s was based on a quite limited notion of the text (see chapter 6). The emphasis on “the *independent* importance of ethnographic writing as a genre” (Marcus 1980:507), the dismissal of pre-text, con-text, and content, all contribute to reading the anthropological product as isolated from the larger field in which its conditions of existence are generated. Passing references aside, the course of inquiry on the relations among anthropology, colonialism, and political “neutrality” that opened in the late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g., Asad 1973) is considered closed because it

allegedly revealed all its partial truths. Passing mentions of gender aside, feminism—as a discourse that claims the specificity of (some) historical subjects—is bypassed because it is said to deal only with “content.”²⁶ Passing references to the Third World notwithstanding, the issues raised by Wolf’s *historization of the Other* (1982), an inquiry that inherently makes anthropology part of this changing world, are considered moot. Mentions of relations of textual production notwithstanding, the mechanisms and processes emphasized are those that singularize the voice of anthropology, as if anthropological discourse was either self-enclosed or self-sufficient.

Not surprisingly, the archaeological exploration that underpins the North American exercise in reflexivity tends to stop at the institutionalization of anthropology as a discipline in the Anglophone world, or at best to the delineation of a specialized anthropological discourse in the Europe of the Enlightenment. In spite of the professed renunciation of labels, boundaries are set in modern terms to produce a history of the discipline, albeit one with different emphases. The construction exposed is a discursive order *within* anthropology, not the discursive order within which anthropology operates and makes sense—even though, here again, this larger field seems to warrant passing mention. The representational aspect of ethnographic discourse is attacked with a vigor quite disproportionate to the referential value of ethnographies in the wider field within which anthropology finds its significance. To use a language that still has its validity, the object of inquiry is the “simple” rather than the “enlarged” reproduction of anthropological discourse. Terminology and citations notwithstanding, the larger thematic field on which anthropology is premised is barely scratched.

If we take seriously the proposition to look at anthropology as metaphor—as I think we can, given the thematic field outlined—we cannot just look at metaphors in anthropology. The study of “ethnographic allegory” (Clifford 1986b; Tyler 1986) cannot be taken to refer primarily to allegorical forms *in* ethnography without losing sight of the larger picture. Our starting point cannot be “a crisis in anthropology” (Clifford 1986a:3), but the histories of the world.²⁷ We need to go out of anthropology to see the construction of “ethnographic authority” not as a late requirement of anthropological discourse (Clifford 1983) but as an early component of this wider field that is itself constitutive of anthropology (see chapter 6). Would that the power of anthropology hinged upon the academic success of genial immigrants such as Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski! It would allow us to find new scapegoats without ever looking back at the Renaissance. But the exercise in reflexivity must go all the way and examine fully the enlarged reproduction of anthropological discourse.²⁸

Observers may wonder why the postmodernist experiment in U.S. anthropology has not encouraged a surge of substantive models. The difficulty of passing from criticism to substance is not simply due to a theoretical aversion to content or an instinctive suspicion toward exemplars. After all, the postmodernist wave revitalized substantive production in other academic fields. It stimulated architects and political theorists alike. At the very least, it has provoked debates on and of substance. Further, some political radicals advocate the possibility of militant practices rooted in postmodernism—although not without controversies

(Arac 1986b; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Ross 1988b). More important, the implicit awareness of an expanding situation of postmodernity continues to motivate grass-roots movements all over the world with their partial truths and partial results. In fact, an anthropologist could well read postmodernism, or at the very least the postmodern situation, as a case for the specificity of otherness, for the destruction of the Savage slot.

To claim the specificity of otherness is to suggest a residual of historical experience that always escapes universalisms exactly because history itself always involves irreducible objects. It is to reserve a space for the subject—not the existential subject favored by the early Sartre and who keeps creeping back into the *mea culpa* anthropology, but the men and women who are the subjects of history.²⁹ It is to acknowledge that this space of the historical subject is out of reach of all metanarratives, not because all metanarratives are created equal and are equally wrong—which is the claim of nihilism and always ends up favoring *some* subjects and *some* narratives—but because those claims to universality necessarily imply the muting of first persons, singular or plural, that are deemed marginal. To say that otherness is always specific and historical is to reject this marginality. The Other cannot be encompassed by a residual category: there is no Savage slot. The “us and all of them” binary, implicit in the symbolic order that creates the West, is an ideological construct and the many forms of Third-World-ism that reverse its terms are its mirror images. There is no Other, but multitudes of others who are all others for different reasons, in spite of totalizing narratives, including that of capital.

Many propositions follow from this statement, not the least of which may be that a discipline whose object is the Other may in fact have no object—which may lead us to take a much needed look at the methodological specificity of anthropology. It also follows that the authenticity of the historical subject may not be fully captured from the outside even by way of direct quotes; there may be something irreducible in the first person singular. This, in turn, raises two related issues: that of the epistemological status of native discourse,³⁰ and that of the theoretical status of ethnography. I will turn to these issues in chapter 6, but some preliminary conclusions are worth posting now.

First, anthropology needs to evaluate its gains and losses with a fair tally of the knowledge anthropologists have produced in the past, sometimes in spite of themselves and almost always in spite of the Savage slot. We owe it to ourselves to ask what remains of anthropology and specific monographs when we remove this slot—not to revitalize disciplinary tradition through cosmetic surgery, but to build both an epistemology and a semiology of what anthropologists have done and can do. We cannot simply assume that modernism has exhausted all its potential projects. Nor can we assume that “realist ethnography” has produced nothing but empty figures of speech and shallow claims to authority.

Second, armed with this renewed arsenal, we can recapture domains of significance by creating strategic points of “reentry” into the discourse on otherness: areas within the discourse where the production of new voices or new combinations of meaning perturbate the entire field and open the way to its (partial) recapture.³¹ This chapter is not the place to expand in the directions of these

many queries, which are best addressed in chapters 4, 5, and 6. I can only tease the reader by pointing to a few tasks that seem urgent in this new context: an epistemological reassessment of the historical subject (the first person singular that has been overwhelmed by the voice of objectivity or by that of the narrator and that is so important to many feminists, especially African American feminists); a similar reassessment of nativeness and native discourse, now barely conceptualized; and a theory of ethnography, now repudiated as the new "false consciousness." And for the time being, at least, we need more ethnographies that raise these issues through concrete cases. Not so much ethnographies that question the author/native dichotomy by exposing the nude as nakedness, but ethnographies (ethno-historio-semiologies?) that offer new points of reentry by questioning the symbolic world upon which "nativeness" is premised. At the very least, anthropologists can show that the Other, here and elsewhere, is indeed a product—symbolic and material—of the same process that created the West. In short, the time is ripe for substantive propositions that aim explicitly at the destabilization and eventual destruction of the Savage slot.

That it has not been so in North American anthropology is thus a matter of choice. In spite of a terminology that intimates a decoding of "anthropology as metaphor," we are barely reading anthropology itself. Rather, we are reading anthropological pages, and attention remains focused primarily on the metaphors in anthropology. This recurring refusal to pursue further the archaeological exercise obscures the asymmetrical position of the savage-other in the thematic field upon which anthropology was premised. It negates the specificity of otherness, subsuming the Other in the sameness of the text perceived as liberating cooperation. "We are the world"?³²

Anthropology did not create the Savage. Rather, the Savage was the *raison d'être* of anthropology. Anthropology came to fill the Savage slot in the trilogy order-utopia-savagery, a trilogy that preceded anthropology's institutionalization and gave it continuing coherence in spite of intradisciplinary shifts. This trilogy is now in jeopardy. The time is ripe to attack frontally the visions that shaped this trilogy, to uncover its ethical roots and its consequences, and to find a better anchor for an anthropology of the present, an anthropology of the changing world and its irreducible histories. But many anthropologists only pass near this opportunity while looking for the Savage in the text. They want us to read the internal tropes of the Savage slot, no doubt a useful exercise in spite of its potential for self-indulgence, but they refuse to directly address the thematic field (and thus the larger world) that made (makes) this slot possible, morosely preserving the empty slot itself.

Times have changed since the sixteenth century: One now is innocent until proven guilty. Thus, claims of innocence can take the shape of silence. Somehow, to my surprise, I miss the faithful indignation of a Las Casas.