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Don Quixote's choice

A manifesto for a romanticist anthropology

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In this article we propose to engage anthropology as a romanticist discipline. Revisiting particular histories, we depict the anthropological discipline and its core method (ethnography) as imbued with sensibilities and militancies that define it as a "romantic subversion," an against-the-grain attitude against intellectual hegemonies and conformisms. We do so by focusing on three points: the charting of a *romanticist* conceptual agenda in anthropology; the analysis of ethnographic intersubjectivity and personal transformation as *romantic heroisms*; and the discussion of a counterhegemonic *militant anthropology*. We speculate about an anthropological ethos that is inherently subversive and "quixotic," following the inspiration of Miguel de Cervantes' classic novel.

Keywords: romanticism, romance, history of anthropology, ethnography, anthropological militancy

> *"Look, your grace," Sancho responded, "those things that appear over there aren't giants but windmills, and what looks like their arms are the sails that are turned by the wind and make the grindstone move."*
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> *"It seems clear to me," replied Don Quixote, "that thou art not well-versed in the matter of adventures: these are giants; and if thou art afraid, move aside and start to pray whilst I enter with them in fierce and unequal combat."*
>
> —Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*

Since its inception, anthropology has been a restless discipline, dwelling in a constant unsettlement, provoked both by internal and external movements of disciplinary revision. This disquiet is deeply engrained since its founding moments: from the hesitation between positivist and more subjectivist configurations to its

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persistent fixation with the marginal and the exotic as preferential objects, its recurring reflexivity and self-referentiality, its disciplinary flirtation with philosophy, history, psychology, and other subjects, and the constant threat of disappearance that hovers over it. This unsettlement has often undermined anthropology's own capacity to become assertive, public, and relevant in several academic and political contexts; but it has also been in many ways its driving force, one that constitutes its originality within the social sciences and humanities. In this article we identify the "drive" as a consequence of a certain romanticist sensibility and propose that anthropologists need not be afraid of the inherent doubt that characterizes our discipline, taking advantage of that romanticist drive and oppositional stances as subversions, ways of combating internally and externally imposed hegemonies, fashions, and obligations.

To do so, we invoke a quixotic metaphor to rethink the anthropological endeavor as an individual enterprise, one where the anthropologist—as Don Quixote in his most famous battle—is guided by his or her own solipsistic convictions, often affected by the transformative experience of fieldwork, and unsatisfied with established norms, policies, and concepts, tilts at the windmills of common sense and opens new grounds for anthropological understanding. In what follows we outline the historical and intellectual trends that shaped the possibility of a romanticist discipline, one that allowed for the emergence of the (epistemological, experiential, and political) subversions that we explore in the second part of the text.

Quixotic anthropology and the *coincidentia oppositorum*

In 1989, historian of anthropology George Stocking Jr. suggested, in an alternative take to mainstream historiographic interpretations, that the "anthropological sensibility" was a product of particular "romantic strains" present in influential anthropologists throughout the history of the discipline. His suggestion set out to deconstruct the prevailing historiographies that designated anthropology as a scientific endeavor heir to Enlightenment "-ologies" (1989: 3–4). The influence of romanticism in the birth of an anthropological discipline could thus be identified through a specific conception of man and society (and a corresponding methodological approach to these), and its insertion into a particular idea of history.[1] Against the tidal wave of Enlightenment ideas of objective rationalization of man as "species," romanticism may have been responsible for the introduction of subjective sensibilities such as primitivist illusions (and a consequent decentering of the study of man), feelings and subjectivities, the questioning of progressive timelines, and also for holistic envisionings of the phenomena under study. Stocking identified such a polarity in his invocation of Boas' argument concerning methodology (1887) through the lens of Comte's and Goethe's works, balancing between the Enlightenment physicism of one and the Romantic historicism of the other, between objectivity and subjectivity (1989: 5). However, it was not exclusive to such a dimension of the anthropological endeavor.

1. For an exploration of the deep and misconceived contribution of romanticism to the beginnings of French ethnology, you can refer to the collective volume edited by Daniel Fabre and Jean-Marie Privat (2010).

More recently, other historians of anthropology have identified the same "currents" in the intellectual prehistory and initial developments of the discipline, in which the "*romantic attachments towards alien cultures*" of thinkers such as Boas, and later Benedict and Mead, were identified as precursory to the debaters of "collective unconsciousnesses" (Barnard 2004: 107), in opposition to others' enlightened ideas of man, the world and how to study it.[2] Henrika Kuklick also suggested a tension between "enlightened" and "romantic" nineteenth-century anthropologies (2008: 29–30), absorbing the intellectual environment of post-French Revolution Europe through figures such as German philosopher Johan von Herder or the polymath Adolf Bastian.[3] But, as Stocking also revealed, we need not confine ourselves to nineteenth-century precursory trends: highly influential anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss were also influenced by hybrid artists such as Richard Wagner and his aesthetics of mythology, among others. From this perspective, as Stocking notes, the "romantic sensibility" of anthropology is not necessarily attached to a specific historical moment or event, but instead pervades the discipline as a recurrent thought (1989: 7), and has produced two concomitant and disputing legacies. In any case, this sensibility was produced in the context of anthropology's long lasting concern for marginalities and ambiguous objects, and its consequent struggles with issues of bracketing, proximities, and distances, consciously or unconsciously seeking epistemological boundaries and transcendences.[4]

Stocking's thoughts, a reflexive reaction against the overarching postmodern deconstruction of anthropology as a discipline (1989: 7), appeared together with other statements regarding the reason and scope of social and cultural anthropology, namely Adam Kuper's critique of the invention (1988a) or reinvention (1988b) of primitive society, along with wider debates on the *nature* of the "society" anthropologists construe as the object of study.[5] But Kuper initially framed the development of a professional anthropology within the construction of primitivism as the study of the origins of man in reaction to the "shock waves" of Darwinist theory, without further mention of romanticism as an ideological background and focusing instead on the consequences of primitivist mythologization (1988b: 12 and ff.). Stocking, in turn, suggests that the "romantic motives" are not necessarily attached to historically pinned intellectual trends but rather to particular individual sensibilities that are affected by ideologies, aesthetics, and convictions.

Stocking's reminder pushes us into muddy waters: what are we talking about when we refer to romanticism as a "strain" or "sensibility"? Sociologists Michael Lowy and Robert Sayre described it initially as an "undecipherable enigma" (2001: 1), but they also identify, within the diversity and exuberance of nineteenth-century philosophical and artistic currents, the *coincidentia oppositorum* or contradictory, against-the-grain character of intellectual creation among an array of (romantic)

2. Those of Lévy-Bruhl, for instance

3. See Koepping (1995); Boon (1989); Eriksen and Nielsen (2001: 12–15).

4. See James (2005). On marginal objects, see Vasconcelos (2008).

5. This debate is in fact inherent to anthropological historiography and has not ceased to motivate discussion. See for example Ingold (1996) and Kuper (1992), among many others.

protagonists in science, the humanities, and the arts (Lowy and Sayre 2001: 1), inspired or affected by the Sturm und Drang and anti-Enlightenment movements. Not intending to move toward a debate on the concept of romanticism *per se*, in this manifesto we argue for anthropology as a *coincidentia oppositorum*, working on top of some of romanticism's known stances, manifestations, and postures, as detected in contemporary anthropology: antiutilitarianism; irrationalism and sensible intuition; exoticism and reenchantment; counterhegemony and resistance; and ultimately, unsettlement. We understand that these can be translated into discursive regimes but also into ethnographic practices, political militancies, and personal life choices that must be brought to the fore of anthropological debate.

In this regard, what was often acknowledged in the anthropological discipline as a historiographical tension—the balance between a positivist science and a humanity of alterity—has remained confined to a specific memory archive that sequentializes disciplinary history. But are we done with romanticism? Has anthropology, absorbed by "audit cultures,"[6] definitively given way to a rationalized, quantifiable, predetermined conception of humanity and society? If in the nineteenth century the tensions were mediated by specific ideological and aesthetic currents, what seems to be in play today are other politico-pragmatic forces that push the anthropological endeavor into "statistically verifiable accounts" of society. Our argument is that, in complement to the rewriting of anthropology's intellectual history, legacy, and contemporary heuristics, romanticism remains a recurrent and relevant dimension of the anthropological discipline, speaking to methodological, heuristic, and empirical issues, and affecting ethical, political, and personal dispositions. More specifically, we argue that this becomes explicit in certain moments of either methodological or conceptual subversion of the mainstream or canonical disciplinary practices, and propose to rethink the history and contemporary expressions of anthropological thought and practice from a romanticist point of view. We will explore three such moments of *romantic subversion*, which we see as mutually defined.

The first moment is how romanticism, as an ontology or philosophy of man and society, prefigures notions and ideals of subjectivity and social interaction that oppose rationalistic and economistic configurations of personhood and interactivity—"practical reason" as Marshall Sahlins (1976) defined it. From this perspective, we agree with a recent motion debated by Soumhya Venkatesan et al., that the reciprocal model of the study of man has left little room for "love" as a category of social interaction (2011). Below we will follow up on this debate and explore how "romance" can and has been useful for certain strains of anthropological production, moving beyond utilitarian exchange models and highlighting new conceptual possibilities for the understanding of social interaction: love, friendship, play, et cetera.

6. This is a growing concern in anthropology as an academic discipline. Many anthropologists have debated how the production of knowledge in the discipline is being affected by economicist logics that undermine its scope and autonomy (see for example Shore and Wright 1999; Strathern 2000). However, as we also argue throughout this piece, this uncertainty is historically inherent to the discipline.

The second moment is the story of how anthropology, as a discipline that occupies a singular place between the social sciences and the humanities, has been imbued with a certain romantic exoticism—the "anthropologist as hero," *à propos de* Susan Sontag's rendering of Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes tropiques* (see below)—that has not only brought many young students into the discipline[7] but also attributed a particular aura to its main core method: ethnographic fieldwork. From this position, the history of anthropology can be read through a particular lens: that of how anthropologists have performed their fieldwork and in what ways they have become *involved* in it. Involvement in fieldwork has known countless degrees and includes several illustrative and more or less notorious examples: from Evans-Pritchard's fighting with the Anuak against Italian troops during WWII, to Castaneda's becoming a shaman during his ethnographic apprenticeship, plus countless other examples of "converting," "going native," or "marrying the field."[8] Each of these examples shows the transformative and extraordinary qualities of ethnographic knowledge continuously hesitating between observation and participation.

This involvement can also be seen from a political perspective, in the sense that anthropology, and ethnography in particular, have also revealed the counter-hegemonic stances of antiutilitarianism and audit cultures, arguing for the relevance of long-term, intersubjective research in the production of knowledge (our third moment).[9] From this point of view, ethnography, as practice and heuristic, has become a form of resistance to particular modes of science-making and knowledge production, struggling to sustain its particular temporalities, routines, and generative research against typified, increasingly fast-paced production processes. We will discuss this in the last section of this text.

Our final goal in this manifesto will be to discuss the implications of incorporating a romantic/romanticist approach to contemporary anthropology. Is it still possible to argue for anthropology as a romanticist discipline? What are the particular anthropological sensibilities that are constitutive for the discipline? What is so romantic about ethnographic fieldwork? What is the epistemological currency of the categories of love and romance within social theory, and how do they configure *subversive anthropologies*?[10] To achieve this, we welcome the definition

7. We, authors and readers, can also make this point reflexively, thinking about our own individual anthropological biographies, possibly marked by our own juvenile naivetés. How and when did each of us decide to study Anthropology? What attracted us to it?

8. There are also several more or less public cases of "anthropological marriages" between colleagues who shared fieldwork experiences—such as with Marilyn and Andrew Strathern (see: http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/DO/filmshow/strathern2_fast.htm). Other examples reveal how "passing through" anthropology has reverberated into romantic idealisms in people who then embarked on other paths. Such was the tragic case, for instance, of Christopher McCandless (1968–1992), who died of starvation in Alaska after "abandoning society." His story was the subject of a novel (*Into the Wild*, 1996, by Jon Krakauer), documentary, and motion picture.

9. Such a trend was, for instance, part of the critique configured by the appearance of the *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste en Sciences Sociales* (MAUSS) in French academia.

10. Obviously we do not presume to claim a holistic definition of anthropology as a discipline. We recognize its philosophical epistemological, political, and methodological plurality (see Jebens and Kohl 2011).

of romanticism as the *coincidencia oppositorum*, a posture or attitude that—emerging from the intersection of aesthetic, political convictions, or inspirations and the transformative experience of anthropological fieldwork—is inherently subversive and idealist, inasmuch as it defies establishment and hegemony. We also detect this form of idealist romanticism in what Charles Taylor identified as "expressivism" (1989), a conception of human life that grows in opposition to the "*associationist psychology, utilitarian ethics, atomistic politics of social engineering and ultimately a mechanistic science of man*" that is usually related to the European Enlightenments (Taylor 1975: 539, emphasis added). In this line of thought, expressivism—as *the* critique of instrumental reason—emerged as the first challenge to "modern" culture (Khan 1997: 79), of which anthropology is heir.

Following this rationale, we explore the common etymological background behind the notions of romanticism and romance to be found in the European medieval literary genre that, following the *Romanicus* or "Roman style," narrated chivalric adventures as idealist representations that challenged the status quo. This style—of which Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was the heightened consummation—conveyed the *caballeresca* ideals of passion and love as guiding forces of such challenges, albeit necessarily immersed in tragicomic dramatic narratives. Mainstream interpretations of Cervantes' masterpiece portray it as a sarcastic, incredibly humorous critique to idealism, produced in a historical context of Spanish Renaissance verve and spiritual decline (Bloom 2003: 6). Here, Don Quixote appears simultaneously as object and subject of tragedy and comedy, mocked and abused by all those who surround him (Cervantes included) for his delirium and irrationalism, but refusing to abdicate his autonomy until the very end. However, as literary critic Harold Bloom notes, the succession of adventures protagonized by the chevalier constitute a "grand disruption in the aesthetics of representation" to the extent that "fiction . . . disrupted the order of reality" (2003: 8). From this perspective, his refusal and resistance become simultaneously the driving force that pushes Don Quixote to the road—and us readers to pass the pages until the very end of the second volume—one that prevents him from resignation and, ultimately, death.

The key element, for a hypothetical quixotic anthropologist, is in any case a political and ethical configuration, one that values idealism and contestation at epistemological, experiential, and political levels; from this perspective, romanticism, romance, and love become part of the same subversive posture, one that we believe is fundamental for anthropology's self-understanding. To study "irrational behavior" such as love and romance becomes in itself an expression of a romanticist anthropology. Following this argument to the limit, we again see the anthropologist as a potential Alonso Quijano cum Don Quixote, someone who abandons his previously established life after a transformative experience to pursue a quest, an ideal.

However, we are also aware that the common sense understanding of romanticism is often negatively charged, and anthropologists are no exception: by taking such a stance, they too may run the risk of being taxed with idealism or naïveté by their peers, or tax other peers with the same accusation. As Joel Khan has argued, "to refer to a discourse as 'merely romantic' is to rob it of its critical cutting edge" (1997: 79). The reception of an article by Petra Rethmann published in *American Ethnologist* on desire, poetry, and identity in Koriak Women's gift

exchange (2000) illustrates this argument. Rethmann had written about the love and care with which people referred to animals and the ways in which they articulated that love to refer to themselves. This was criticized in several reviews as being too romantic, too idealistic. Although Rethmann recognized that her interpretation might have been influenced by a certain romanticism because she "enjoyed living on the land," she actively challenged the accusation.[11]

We thus agree with Rethmann when she concludes that romanticism should not be reduced to a point of accusation because of the potential openings to new areas of experience it could provide.[12] What may often seem a pointless quixotic endeavor for the majority, may very well turn out to be a moment of (theoretical, epistemological, or political) subversion against the status quo.

On the anthropology of romance and other epistemological subversions

Victor Turner's well-known epistemological turn toward an "anthropology of experience" (Turner and Bruner 1986) at the end of his career revealed an interesting conundrum. Frustrated by the routinized formal paradigms and literary canons of mid-century functionalist and structuralist anthropology, he dreamed of a liberated anthropology that would allow the anthropologist to engage in a *humanizing* portrait of the world, devoid of depersonalized ideas of "culture," "system," "logic," and so on (1987: 72). This dream evolved into a proposal for an anthropology of experience and performance. Through this the ethnographer could delve into (and reflexively participate in) the micro politics of social interaction and attain an understanding of its experiences and significances, via a process of heuristic repersonalization, aestheticization, and experimentation. One consequence of this turn was Turner's progressive concern for a reflexive, participant ethnography, which he saw as a way out of the otherwise tedious or formally rigid approaches to ethnographic writing and reading that were ultimately unable to grasp and communicate alien cultures' "motivational webs" (1979: 80). He then sought for unconventional modes of anthropological work that, through interdisciplinarity, experimentation and performance, could go beyond the typical cognitive reductionism that elicited patterns out of human behavior but that failed to account for "the wishes and emotions, the personal and collective goals and strategies, even the situational vulnerabilities, wearinesses, and mistakes [that] are lost in the attempt to objectify and produce an aseptic theory of human behaviour" (1979: 82). Thus for Turner, the ultimate goal was the study of what D. H. Lawrence called, very romantically, "man alive," through Dilthey's notion of "lived

11. She added: "But what is this romanticism we are speaking of? Is it just part of the exoticism which Western anthropology and thought has for so long forced others, Natives, mystics, 'the mad', and so forth, into inoffensive slots? Or is it part of the naïve notion that the natural world can save us from the pressures of modern life, the onslaught of the capital economy, information technology, and industrialization? . . . To whom and for what reason, did the article appear to be too loving and affect-laden?" (2007: 40–41).

12. "What we easily convict as too romantic may also provide openings into new realms of knowledge, comprehension, insight and awareness" (Rethmann 2007: 42).

experience" (Turner 1987: 84). Turner's liberationist idealism was thus largely about new ways of doing anthropology and of understanding social interaction.

A second consequence was his newfound interest in the category of "play," as a pretend, *as-if* dimension of human life where preestablished rules, models, systems, and organizations are suspended and new ones created—from children's games to theater, sport, and other (often ambiguous and unclassifiable) expressions of social interaction (Turner 1982). This resonates with the antiutilitarian notion of irrational "deep play" previously explored by Clifford Geertz (via Bentham) in his analysis of Balinese cockfights (1973), in which local villagers would engage in betting over the fights in such a fashion that it was deemed incomprehensible under any logical point of view. But if Geertz attempted to decodify the coherent webs of significance behind the apparently counterproductive behavior of Balinese people losing their wealth on account of an animal spectacle, Turner sought to incorporate play as a social stance with the same epistemological leverage in terms of "meaningful action" as any given "economic behavior"—an endeavor later resumed by his colleague, the performer Richard Schechner, in his experimentations on theater and ritual. A bit earlier, Gregory Bateson (1955) and Erving Goffman in his wake (1974) established a fundamental discussion on *play* as framing. The former developed "frames" as a psychological concept in his theory of human communication and the latter as the many "principles of organization of experience" (1974: 4). Other scholars have invested in this category by refusing the residual, reductive, or rationalistic approach to play (which only emphasizes the ludic function) and recognizing this activity as a crucial dimension of human existence, potentially present in every modality of action.[13] This ultimately reveals the "continuous state of productive tension" (Conquergood 1989) in culture, explaining its perpetual incompleteness and lack of fulfillment.

Such configurations of social interactions have placed anthropologists in an uncomfortable yet potentially productive position: how to account for nonrational, irrational, or anti-irrational behavior in society? If our task as ethnographic writers is to strive for coherent registers of our observations, detecting logics and continuities, repetitions, similarities, and differences, to what extent are we unconsciously reproducing predetermined ideas of social order and behavior? After all, what is the anthropological interest in involuntary behavior—or voluntarily nonintentional behavior? How do we make sense of nonsense (Rada 2010)? Can we afford to ignore the nonsensical, Pythonesque, or even "bullshit" (Frankfurt 2005) dimensions of social discourse and activity?

Concomitant to Turner's thoughts, and in the aftermath of the anthropological crisis of authority provoked by the postmodern turn, several trends emerged within anthropology that attempted to overcome the hegemonic representational, overrationalizing account and make sense of the heteroglossia that appeared to anthropologists of the 1980s and 1990s. One path emerged within what is today

13. Jean-Pierre Delchambre described how the extension of market and competition logics to the core of social life has produced individual problems caught up in the "game of life"—difficulties that manifest themselves by the emergence of modern pathologies such as boredom or anxiety (2009). See also Joas ([1992] 1999), Belin (2002) and Delchambre (2005), among others.

called an existential and phenomenological anthropology, as proposed by Michael Jackson and others, who sought to produce matter-of-fact, common sense experiential accounts of social life through the interpersonal, intersubjective relationships that mold it.[14] Another path was the appeal to the senses within ethnographic inquiry, performed by the likes of Paul Stoller, Michael Taussig, and others, who struggled for a new language of ethnographic experience for anthropology, one able to grasp significant dimensions and move beyond detached abstractions.[15] It can be argued that, if such endeavors have found a place within anthropology, with more or less disciplinary acceptance in the process, it has been due to the particular strain that pushes away from standard quantitative social sciences. Subjectifications of this kind have often been framed within a phenomenological anthropology, in which the problem of *experience* and its accountability—or its *grasping*—is the focal point. Here an important claim has been made concerning the transcendence of theory over experience and its refusal within attempts to configure the latter as primary channels of perception and understanding (Knibbe and Versteeg 2008).

Similar questions also appeared against a backdrop of the recurring rationalization of human activity that is part and parcel of anthropology as a philosophy of man—at least in what concerns the classic reciprocal models of human interaction, where the concepts of "motivation," "interest," "gift," "debt," and "value" became paramount. From Bronislaw Malinowski's *kula* circles (1922) to debates on notions of value,[16] there has been a concern to critically address and understand the exchange dimension of social life, confronting the philosophical legacy of human activity as an economy. For instance, stimulating debates over the place of gratuity (Pitt-Rivers [1992] 2011) and more recently reversibility (Corsín-Jiménez and Willerslev 2007) and hospitality (Candea and da Col 2012) in social life have explicitly challenged the exchange approach. In many cases, such proposals revealed political stances on behalf of the anthropologists themselves, who performed a translation of their political convictions into philosophies of the social—"political romanticisms," as it were (see below). In any case, the outcome was a process of "derationalization" of human life that is, from a philosophical perspective, in many ways idealist, moving beyond its mere materialities.

Regardless of personal political viewpoints, the outlook on the social scenery filtered through ideas of conviviality such as love, friendship, and leisure has also (in the aftermath of the controversial postmodern turn) become an object of reflection for the understanding of social relationships and categories of selfhood.[17]

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14. This phenomenological approach has since become an established genre in the discipline. See for instance Csordas (1990), Kleinman (1999), Desjarlais (2003), Biehl, Good, and Kleinman (2007), Knibbe and Versteeg (2008).

15. See for example Jackson (1989, 2005), Stoller (1989, 1997) and Taussig (1991, 2009). See also Geurts (2002) and Desjarlais (2003).

16. After Marcel Mauss' *The gift* (1923–24), this genealogy could invoke Sahlins (1976), Pitt-Rivers ([1992] 2011), Carrier (1995), Godelier (1999), Graeber (2001) and Robbins (2013b), among others.

17. There are, unsurprisingly, historical (antipositivist) precedents that establish intellectual links with the contemporary concern with such topics. For instance, we might cite

Throughout most of the discipline's history, love had been absent from anthropological literature maybe because it was commonly read as the irrational behavior *par excellence*. Informed from a Euro-American perspective, love had been the object of little attention despite its obvious importance in the life of human beings around the world. But, in the wake of such attempts to subvert hegemonic conceptions of social life, new conceptualizations emerged.

One precursory contribution was the development of an "anthropology of emotions," as framed in the landmark review developed by Catherine Lutz and Geoffrey White (1986). Another decisive contribution was Charles Lindholm's anthropological debate on the psychology of love and romance (1988, 1998), questioning the "Western exclusive" of such configurations (2006)—a rationale also invoked by William Jankowiak and Edward Fischer (1992) and Mari Luz Galarza (2009), and later discussed in particular regional contexts by Ernestine McHugh (2001) and Joanna Overing and Alan Passes (2000) in response to emerging sociological configurations regarding the "transformations of intimacy" in Western society.[18] In this latter case, and within a larger project of understanding the "moral economy of intimacy" (Viveiros de Castro 1996) there is a concern for understanding "love" and "anger" in terms of an aesthetics of communality and conviviality, resonating with an experiential and intersubjective approach to social life. From their perspective, the Amazonian case study explored by Overing and Passes reminded us of the need to attend to "emotion talks," in the conjunction between "thinking and the sensual life" that encompasses the management of social (affective) life (2000: 3). Subsequently, other scholars have approached eroticism and sexuality and their ramifications within discourse, identity, and politics.[19] Other anthropologists have also sought to establish a research agenda through ideas of friendship, leisure, recreation, and other expressions of noneconomic activity. One example is the volume edited by Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman, *The anthropology of friendship* (1999), which also proposed crosscultural comparisons of categories of friendship within intersections of social networks, from kinship, labor, self-interested behavior, et cetera.

Returning to Lindholm, his inquiry about the "future of love" detects the expectations, idealizations, and utopias behind romantic feelings, which does not necessarily give way to current, modern bureaucratic calculation—quite the contrary, in fact (1998: 19–20). From this perspective, he refuses to embark, as Anthony Giddens did (1992) in his Weberian de-enchanted, rationalizing pessimism regarding romantic love—to be replaced, according to Weber and Giddens, by sexuality as a "modern religion" (1998: 21). Lindholm also invokes the Schopenhauerian notion of "Will" as a nonrational idealization of the world that is, after all, ubiquitous (1998: 23), but finally conforms with an idea of *merger* that delves into the

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Georg Simmel's different reflections on women, sexuality, and love (1984), the latter being configured as a form of "purely impulsive behaviour," with motivations in between altruism and egoism (1984: 153 and ff.), or even Max Weber's identification of enchanted/disenchanted behavior ([1905] 1992).

18. See Giddens (1992). See also Povinelli (2006) for a debate on reductive conceptions of love as a social phenomenon.

19. See for example Cameron and Kulick (2003).

recognition of love as a "transcendent experience" of self-loss (1998: 25), subject to diverse configurations throughout history and among different societies (Povinelli 2006).

At this stage, studying love appears as a subversive process in general because it defies the overarching positivist project that hovers above scientific practice. Moreover, introducing this holistic and unfixed category of love—at the same time an ideal, an attitude, a discourse, and a moral framework—in specific contexts such as family constitution, tourist economies, or sex industries, push researchers and readers into considering actors as persons and recognize the extent of their agency.[20] For instance, in the study of different "sexscapes" where inequalities are constitutive of social relationships, discourses, and practices of romantic love, what Sealing Cheng calls the "labour of love," is revealed as a source of power constituting "mutuality and reciprocity between self and other" (Cheng 2007), enabling women and men selling sex to claim "a sense of humanity" (Faïer 2007), expressing a desire for recognition and respect as particular individuals. Love thus becomes, for both anthropologists and their interlocutors, meaningful in both political and experiential terms.

This urge to test love, romance, play, and friendship in contexts other than the traditional Western tropes, although it is no different from the classic anthropological endeavor, is revelatory of the dissatisfaction and intellectual frustration shared by many anthropologists in contemporary anthropology.[21] Our partial conclusion at this stage is that the emergence of topics such as emotion, love, subjectivity, body, affects, desire, et cetera, recognized today as valuable and legitimate objects of research, is in a way crafted by the personal convictions of the anthropologist as a theorist of human nature.

The romantic identity of the ethnographer

It is true the prospect of fieldwork may be enchanted by the promise of romance, but that promise may turn badly sour.

—Jeremy MacClancy, "The literary image of anthropologists."

What is so romantic about ethnographic fieldwork? Fieldwork—the methodology that gives anthropology its distinctiveness[22]—is an awkward social and lived space.[23]

20. See for example Cheng (2007); Padilla, et al. (2007), and Spanger (2013).

21. We detect a similar dissatisfaction in the claim of Joel Robbins for an anthropology of the good. He proposes to explore important topics such as value, morality, well-being, empathy, care, gift, time, change, and hope, taking the opposite course to the anthropology of the suffering subjects of the past twenty years (2013a). A trend that Thin (2009) has called the "miserabilist" tradition and that is grounded on the idea that common humanity is to be find in the universal qualities of pain, suffering, and trauma.

22. Or in fact triple distinctiveness, as George Stocking (1992) puts it, because the experience of fieldwork is what makes the discipline distinctive, qualifies its specialists, and constitutes the primary corpus of empirical data.

As with the travellers, explorers, and other adventurers from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the ethos of the modern ethnographer—an individual "scientist of the encounter" who voluntarily chooses to put himself in a bizarre and artificial situation—concentrates some specific and interesting characteristics. In first place, the relative loneliness of this personage, a particular figure sometimes presented as a hero,[24] "alone among the natives" (Stocking 1989) and having to cope with strange, "new" worlds, places him in a delicate position. Indeed, in his fieldwork the anthropologist must cross different bridges and borders of polymorphous nature. This "professional stranger" (Agar 1980) submits himself to a movement of "de-contextualization" and "re-contextualization" as João Pina-Cabral put it (2013), invoking processes that are not linear and imply bodily and mental disposition. Ethnographers become tricksters, as it were,[25] destabilizing routines, quotidians, and courses of history.

For apprentices of anthropology, this process of "de-ethnocentrification" (Pitt-Rivers 1980: 419), where the researcher brackets his or her perspective on life, can be read as an initiation[26] with its share of contrasted emotions and quotidian challenges, an important rite of passage that often determines our anthropological careers. In fact, suffering and anxiety are not absent from the ethnographic experience. More so these can, as George Devereux would suggest, become a methodological aspect of the production of knowledge itself.[27] This is perhaps due to the tendency of the human habitus to defend itself against change and questioning "by limiting exposure to unknown environments, without necessarily being conscious of doing so, the individual avoids contact with information likely to challenge the accumulated information that fashions his or her representations of the world" (Hilgers 2009: 737). The professional challenge of the anthropologist-cum-ethnographer is therefore to confront this tendency by opening him or her to other ways of doing, speaking, or thinking.[28]

In this context of cultural loneliness and degrees of exoticism, the myth of "going native" can take on various forms. But *familiarity* and *strangeness* can be perceived, combined, and negotiated in multiple manners.[29] At one extreme there

23. According to Ioan Lewis, Seligman had very dramatically explained, "field research in anthropology is what the blood of the martyrs is to Church" (in Sarró and Lima 2006: 17).

24. Namely, in the famous discussion by Susan Sontag ([1963] 1994) in reaction to the publication of Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes tropiques*. See also Hayes and Hayes (1970).

25. See Hastrup (1992) and van Meijl (2005) for a development of this argument.

26. Jeremy MacClancy writes in his study of popular accounts of the image of anthropologists that fieldwork "marks them out as distinctive and makes ordinary anthropologists odd and the already odd one even odder" (2005: 549).

27. On this, see also Sarró and Lima (2006: 21 and ff.).

28. Claude Lévi-Strauss ([1952] 1968) wrote about this technique of *depaysement* as a "self-induced cultural disorientation." Susan Sontag used expressions such as "emotional trauma," or "psychological ordeal" ([1963] 1994: 75) to refer to the specific methodology in use in the anthropologists' worlds.

29. See, for instance, Simoni and McCabe (2008) for a debate on such negotiations.

is the case of Bennetta Jules-Rosette, for whom the process of de-ethnocentrification meant the rejection of her own American culture. She described the extent of her involvement in the Apostolic church of John Maranke in the 1970s: "as time passed, I became even more absorbed in the Apostolic community. I did not realize how total this involvement was becoming until several days after the baptism, when I took a short trip to Lusaka. There I was so shocked to see the style of life portrayed in European and American magazines that I was certain that I would never return to the West" (1975: 160). The opposite extreme would be the "bird's-eye view"—a methodological principle that is in itself challenging and open to existential problems. Lévi-Strauss was known for having chosen to study "other human groups" due to a sense of inadaptability within his own culture.[30] As he noted: "Either the anthropologist clings to the norms of his own group, in which case the others can only inspire in him an ephemeral curiosity in which there is always an element of disapproval; or he makes himself over completely to the objects of his studies, in which case he can never be perfectly objective, because in giving himself to all societies he cannot but refuse himself, wittingly or not, to one among them" ([1955] 1967: 382).

Such seemed to be the classic dilemmas of the ethnographer. But besides these drastic either/or commitments to ethnographic methodologies, equally related the ethnographer's personality and his or her ability to respond to the contexts of intended study, we can see a plurality of ethnographic involvements and attachments, each revealing different negotiations and degrees of proximity and distance.[31] The way anthropologists qualify their relationships with the people they work with ("informants," "interlocutors," "friends," "colleagues," "consultants," etc.) is also revealing of the negotiations between proximity and distance within fieldwork, and the different degrees of intimacy that are established.

Wandering through the prefaces of famous monographs, we get a glimpse of the importance of ethnographical relationships in fieldwork experiences, first characterized by the infinite debt anthropologists owe to their informants (and often also their attendant feelings of guilt over the unevenness of the relationships they engage in). Indeed, anthropologists are dependent on their informants: without them there is no anthropological knowledge. And the informant, as cultural translator or interpreter, has a great task to fulfill: "[he] must first learn to explicate culture, to become self-conscious about it and begin to objectify his own life-world. He must then learn to 'present' it to the anthropologist, to an outsider who by definition does not understand even the most obvious things" (Rabinow 1997: 150). Ethnographical relationships are thus unlike any other and are ambiguous and paradoxical in essence. We find in them the constitutive tension of the anthropological methodological project, emerging out of the mix of contradictory postures: proximity and distance, intimacy and estrangement, involvement and detachment, affinity and antagonism, familiarity and strangeness.[32] Specific method-

30. Discussed in Mary (2009).

31. This perspective was explored in Blanes (2006) and Harvey and Fillitz (2006).

32. This sensation was brilliantly captured by Georg Simmel in his classic study of the "stranger," as someone who is "near and far at the same time" (1971: 148).

ological expressions or tools well reflect this ambiguity, as Weber's concept of "passionate detachment" (1978: 213–14), or the concept of "estranged intimacy" proposed by Webb Keane (2003: 223). Both illustrate the paradoxical nature of ethnographic relationships "in which researchers and subjects of the study remain 'strangers' whilst engaging with very intimate issues" (Challinor 2012). The question persists: can ethnographic relationships then be categorized as friendship? If many anthropologists do not hesitate to label their informants as "friends," others cannot avoid recognizing the interested nature of the ethnographer's activities. Their aim to produce anthropological knowledge and thus their relationships are inherently interest-based. "Interest" in this context is lived as an antagonism to the idea of pure friendship constituted merely by affects (even if we assume that both love and interests are constitutive part of human relationships and thus only opposed in common understanding).

For instance, describing the ethnographic intimacy she built with an ultraorthodox Jewish Hassidic woman in Tel-Aviv, Tamar El-Or concluded that even after a strong relationship over two years both women could not be "friends." For her, intimacy is useful for the ethnographic purpose but it is also an illusion: "intimate relationships between researcher and informants blur the subject-object connection they actually maintain. . . . We can't be friends because she was my object and we both know it" (1992: 71), she eventually concluded. Elizabeth Challinor, discussing the issue of ethnographic intimacies based on fieldwork conducted in northern Portugal with young Cape Verdean migrant women (2012), arrives at a similar position when an informant with whom she shared a certain degree of ease clearly stated one day that they were not friends. Challinor thus understood the importance of establishing boundaries for this woman. These examples illustrate how far ethnographic intimacy is from being a linear or predetermined process in anthropological practices.

The questions of good participation in ethnographic relationships, the appropriate degree of involvement of the ethnographers and the suitable way to connect to local or concerned people—in others words, the moral economy of fieldwork—have crossed the anthropological discipline and preoccupied several scholars without great confidence or success in their resolution; in fact, it has been repeatedly argued that fieldwork is something that cannot be *taught* but is learned in the process of *doing*. Since the emergence of positivist views of anthropology that enforce some sort of solution to this conundrum, we have witnessed varied attempts to trace such frontiers and boundaries between ethnographic interlocution and friendship. However, these have always been challenged by new contributions. It is precisely this difficult negotiation between the connection to and distance from the people anthropologists are studying that makes the position of the anthropologist so "vulnerable" (Behar 1996).

At this point we must also consider the transformations that have affected the way we do fieldwork and report our experiences over the last thirty years. Indeed, the reflexive turn—in which Turner, as seen above, participated—had affected the whole discipline and is no stranger to a kind of romantic sensibility. The controversy surrounding the posthumous publication of the diary of the purported founder[33]

33. Indeed, the works of James Urry (1972), George Stocking (1983) and Ian Langham (1981) have contributed to "give Caesar what belongs to Caesar" and illuminate the

of the participant observation, Bronislaw Malinowski, in 1967 is forewarning of this revolutionary turn. If the precursors had the habit of putting their feelings, affections, afflictions, or bodily experiences into separate diaries from the resulting monograph, not intended for public reading, perhaps it was because of the threat that this emotional charge (or in a word the subjectivity of the ethnographer) could weigh on the objectivity, neutrality or in other words the "scientific validity" of the final analyses. Ruth Behar denounced (1996) this tension between the abundance of revelation concerning others (structural to the anthropological discipline) and the pudency surrounding the experience of the ethnographer: "In anthropology, which historically exists to 'give voice' to others, there is no greater taboo than self-revelation" (1996: 26). But today objectivity and subjectivity are no longer thought as irreconcilable postures, and anthropologists are less weary of including their own subjectivity inside their texts, allowing that their subjective material can effectively produce relevant anthropological knowledge. Emotions, affects, desires, and sensory possibilities of experiencing the world are now acknowledged and legitimized as constitutive of the ethnographic work. From this perspective, an explorative methodology emerges from the margins of the traditionalist one. The body and manifold physical or psychological sensations of the ethnographer appear as a possible medium for the production of anthropological knowledge—the "sensuous anthropology" suggested by Paul Stoller (1997) or the "radical empir-icism" of James Davies (2010) following the epistemological intuitions of William James. Relevant examples include anthropologists giving positive accounts of having "been affected" by witchcraft and sorcery,[34] anthropologists rendering accounts of their trance experiences as relevant for their knowledge of ritual and spiritual dispositions, and experiential ethnographers advocating for a radical anthropology and describing "ecstatic" experiences of fieldwork (investigating irruptions of the unusual, unexpected, or transformative moments in the field). Still other scholars have commented on the added value of "participant intoxication," praised a carnal connection in empirical research, and defended love attachments in the field or erotic subjectivity as a "potentially useful source of insight" (Kulick 1995: 5).[35]

Participation is no longer seen as threatening but is understood as a possibly different form of objectivity. The reader of anthropological writings must know the positionality of the author in order to grasp the context of production of any anthropological knowledge. From this viewpoint, the development of *autoethnographic* production by renowned anthropologists such as Paul Stoller (1989, 2004, 2008) and Michael Jackson (2006) is telling.[36] Indeed, the researcher is emotionally and

input of W. H. Rivers and other contemporaries in the history of the anthropological method.

34. Jeanne Favret-Saada's (1990) rendering of her ethnography in the Bocage is a perfect example.

35. See examples of such connections in Cesara (1982); Newton (1993); Wacquant (2004); Goulet and Miller (2007); Halloy (2007); and Fiskesjö (2010).

36. See also Weaver-Hightower (2012). The emergence of fictionalized versions of such accounts, such as Nigel Barley's notorious *The innocent anthropologist* (1983), should not be detached from such movements.

socially tied to the researched and this relation is at the core of the production of "intimate knowledge."[37]

However, the fact remains that for most contemporary anthropologists the practice of ethnography remains unresolved in itself. In many cases it has become the core of both anthropological inquiry and its ethical and epistemological implications. But one can argue that this has always been so, namely in what concerns the configuration of anthropology as a "science of alterity." Misunderstanding, disconcertment, and puzzlement continue to be power tools for ethnographic inquiry (Fabian 1995). From this perspective, as Eric Gable has recently argued (2011), the ethnographic "encounter," and consequent contrastive experience, propels anthropology as an intellectual production.

All these reflections lead us to question the ways in which anthropologists are affected or transformed by their ethnographic practices, and how these determine or are determined by ethical and moral stances. Clifford Geertz had already suggested, "an anthropologist's work tends, no matter what its ostensible subject, to be but an expression of his research experience or, more accurately of what his research has done to him" (1971: vi). Using Susan Sontag's wording, ethnography then becomes the metaphor of the anthropologist (1978). It is less about what is observed and more about recasting the reactions of the ethnographer in an analytical and significant framework (Devereux [1967] 1980).

Fieldwork leads to transformations of the self of the ethnographer, who is engaged in playing new roles and experimenting with new statuses in the different contexts he or she takes part in. From this perspective, the classic idea of "going native" is not necessarily destined to become part of anthropological folklore. In order to understand the various degrees of cultural conversion lived by anthropologists and grasp the effects of fieldwork practices on the self of the ethnographer, a short detour into social psychology may be relevant.

Social psychologists have studied the strong link between perception and action summarized by the concept of the *chameleon effect*. This metaphor is used to exemplify the human tendency to mimic others with whom they interact—even if chameleons primarily tend to alter their skin to express mood and not to blend in with different environments. We have all observed or lived the experience of "acquiring" accents, intonations, or bodily postures of particular places or social worlds we engage in as ethnographers. But some seem to have more chameleonic propensity than others.[38] Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh (1999) report that the functions of mimicry and behavioral coordination are adaptive. The chameleon effect facilitates social interaction and harmonious bonding. Empathy—the capacity to connect, to see, and to understand the other's perspective—seems to be at the

37. As discussed in Pérez-y-Pérez and Stanley (2011).

38. One brilliant exaggeration of the chameleon effect and its social implications is Woody Allen's mockumentary *Zelig* (1983). This has been recently explored by David Berliner in his article on the desire of ethnographic participation and "trying to become the other" (2013).

core of the perception-action mechanism.[39] This brings us to two dilemmas: empathy and conversion. Above we mentioned cases of anthropologists converting *to* or *in* the field. Here we are referring to a wider movement through which, during episodes of personal crisis, frustration, attempted integration, incorporation, or absorption into others' worlds and so on, the anthropologist becomes the trickster, a participatory agent in the context he is studying, and is able to engage in a process of mutual, creative understanding. It is in these situations that empathy and conversion (*sensu lato*) become operative. Some anthropologists have debated the concept of mutuality as a methodological preoccupation through which a dynamic of coresponsibility and participation occurs between researcher and researched, overcoming what has also been described as an incommensurability.

Thus, in the context of the ethnographic compulsion to see things from the native point of view, anthropologists have repeatedly tried to suspend their own egos in order to understand alternative human perspectives on the world. The immersionist experience in a social world different from his own knowledge and habitus impacts on the ethnographer in various ways but, as the auto-ethnographies and intersubjective proposals mentioned above show, some of the norms or particular values of the host society can often become part of the anthropologist's self (which is hybrid, multiple, situated, and shifting), or come to form new social repertoires.[40] The major competency of the "field self" is thus, above all, the ability to grasp how to behave according to each context. Therefore some anthropologists use the role of apprentice as a way of "recasting the self" in order to be accepted in new social worlds—as in the case of Loïc Wacquant learning to be a boxer in order to understand the condition of Black Americans in the Chicago suburbs, or Maria Pérez-y-Pérez learning the role of shift manager in a New Zealand massage parlor, among many other examples. The understanding of new codes is not always straightforward and may eventually affect the self (and body) of the ethnographer, beyond the classic and common unintentional negligence toward rule etiquette. Think, for instance, of the head-butt received by Katherine Smith during her fieldwork and the way she had to manage this in order to "respond in a socially appropriate manner" and not to hinder the process of her immersion in fieldwork (2009: 6); or of the tolerance of abuse testified by PhD anthropologists to Amy Pollard in order to not "lose informants"[41] (2009). Paul Stoller's recourse to the genre of Homerian "odyssey" to describe the anthropological career, both intellectual and personal (2008), is not, from this point of view, coincidental, and reveals the intellectual, experiential, and bodily whirlwinds involved.

39. Following Chartrand and Bargh, "perception causes similar behaviour, and the perception of the similar behaviour on the part of the other creates shared feelings of empathy and rapport" (1999: 897).

40. We refer here to the multiple and diverse ways anthropologists define themselves in connection with the way people behave during their fieldwork.

41. Ruth, a PhD informant of Amy Pollard, described the uncomfortable experience of a trusted informant leaping upon her at the end of the night. She explained: "I couldn't afford to lose him as an informant at that point. . . . I couldn't handle the stress of making a fuss about it. It was easier just to let him do whatever" (2009: 7).

Taking this argument further, and considering important theorists such as Jean Piaget (1932) or George Herbert Mead (1934), the ability to take the other's perspective (empathy) leads to more *satisfying* interpersonal relations. But can such psychologies be straightforwardly applied to the ethnographic endeavor? Are anthropologists more satisfied than others with their social relationships because of their use of and need for empathy in conducting their professional lives? We prefer to leave this question up in the air, to be responded to individually by the reader.

The conversational and critical aspect of ethnography frequently pushes the anthropologist (as a "half-blood") into becoming Stoller's "between" (2008), a boundary-crossing individual affected by the double experience of confronting both his or her own and alien lifestyles. This experience can also be accompanied by a sense of self-loss, as Hortense Powdermaker testified when working with African Americans in Mississippi between 1932 and 1934: "The constant participation and observation among negroes and whites had its costs, too. Occasionally, I wondered who I was, as I passed back and forth between the two groups" (1966). From this standpoint, one could argue that there is a continuity between the ethnographic and migrant experience, which produces what Amin Maalouf would call, somewhat dramatically, a "deadly identity" (1998), or what Abdelmalek Sayad framed as a "double absence" (1999). The French novelist and the Algerian sociologist each refer (in very different ways) to the psychological experience of migration, the sensations of loss and tragedy that emerge from the invisibility of the migrant as a *déplacé*—both in the host and original society. The migrant becomes invisible in the sense that he embarks on a situation (often self-imposed) of individual marginality vis-à-vis his or her own personal history and that of the people he or she attempts to reach. This sensation of invisibility is, we are sure, something that many of us have felt during several stages of our fieldwork—just as Clifford Geertz did upon his arrival in Bali in the 1950s (1973)—and it is in the very process of overcoming the invisibility that ethnographic knowledge emerges. Homesickness, loneliness, unease, discomfort—all become part of the methodological anxiety that produces an experience and knowledge that is inherently individual and is often difficult to frame for a wider audience.

Simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically, however,[42] fieldwork can also be seen to produce overexposure, notoriety, and senses of excessive protagonism. For instance, in his research among Moroccan migrants in El Ejido, a village in Southern Spain devoted to intensive greenhouse agriculture, Ubaldo Martínez-Veiga was forced to leave the site after he was denounced by the local authorities for being involved in union associations and strikes against the major entrepreneurs who exploited migrant labor (2006). In his case, becoming a public figure in his own research site prevented him from pursuing further fieldwork.

Finally, how do these transformations, conversions, and crises reverberate in anthropologists' writing and reports of their fieldwork experiences? If Johannes

42. Interestingly, this section of the article emerged after a disagreement between both authors regarding the relevance of the metaphor of invisibility to understanding the psychology of ethnographic experience. Our conclusion is that these moments are not mutually exclusive and are part of the same process of transformation.

Fabian (1983) has reminded us that anthropological writing is inherently autobiographic, Amanda Coffey later underlined the tendency of anthropologists to romance the field: "personal relationships and commitments are pervasive in the ethnographic and the romantic project. Both exemplify the complexities of engagement with and separation from people, places and memories" (1999: 97). She extends the metaphor of romance to describe fieldwork and discuss the way field experiences often come to be reported in the romantic genre. The correspondence of first fieldwork with our individual "first love" is useful and "significant in itself in trying to make sense of fieldworkers' sense of attachment to a field" (1999: 105). Remembering our "first ethnographic time" will often be characterized by romantic overtones or connotations. As Simon Ottenberg notes: "Frequently, toward the end of his first research trip, the budding scholar considers returning perhaps to complete some unfinished projects, to probe in new directions, or because he or she has fallen in love with the people and the country" (1994: 93).

Another example shows us the downside of the first fieldwork romance and the impossibility of reconnecting with it, producing feelings of deception. When Kenneth Read (1965) returned to the Guinean High valley ten years after his original research, he was disappointed by his inability to repeat the romance of his first fieldwork. Consequently, managing the way fieldwork ends might also be marked by romantic impulse: "To coin a phrase more readily associated with love affair, fieldwork can be difficult to live with and to live without" (Coffey 1999: 100). But in fact, as we often hear in the corridors of the anthropological academic departments, one never really *leaves* fieldwork.

In truth, there is nothing specifically anthropological about the transformative experience of ethnography. Anthropologists, like everyone else, are part of the "wider world" (Dresch, James, and Parkin 2000). Our reference above to the migratory experience reminds us that experiences of contact, adaptation, mimicry, and conversion are not exclusive to the ethnographic endeavor and that multiple, situated, contextual, and shifting identities are above all human characteristics.[43] The difference, and the subversion, occurs when we attempt to use that experience as a meaningful form of knowledge.

Militant anthropologies

The ethnographer's subjectivity, previously hidden or absent, is today at the core of what Todd Hartman (2007) has called a "responsible ethnography," revealed to be as human and humane as any other nonacademic inquiry into the world. Hartman points out new forms of emergent "anthropological heroisms," for instance activists

43. James Ferguson's invocation of the tragic story of the two African boys who died in an attempt to "become like Europeans" (2002) is also demonstrative of this. In an article concerning the images of Europe and modernity as seen from the African continent, Ferguson describes an episode that occurred in 1988, when two young West African boys were found dead in the landing gear of a plane landing in Brussels. The boys carried a letter with them in which they naively appealed to the "Excellencies, Members and Officials of Europe" for their rescue and explained their objective to "become like the Europeans" and thus be able to help the African continent (2002: 551–52).

and anthropologists working "at home."[44] There have been several different versions and incarnations of such heroisms throughout the history of the discipline, from the very turn of the century moment invoked by Stocking, Kuklick, Eriksen and others onward. There is a history of militancy in anthropology unlike that in perhaps any other social science.[45] We have mentioned that the emergence of *marginal objects* in anthropology at the turn of the nineteenth century was not detached from its protagonists' personal convictions. A fascinating coeval example of anthropological militancy is the so-called Société d'Autopsie Mutuelle proposed by the members of the Society of Anthropology of Paris, who embarked on a politically ideological production of scientific theory[46] and entertained an atheistic, freethinking model of anthropology against religious and clerical hegemonies in turn of the century France. As Jennifer Hecht describes, their antidogmatism and oppositional politics against prevailing ideologies were in essence avant-garde, and influenced both the French intellectual environment and what was then an emerging anthropological discipline (Hecht 2003). Through contestation and opposition, a specific anthropological practice developed. A few decades later, Malinowski's (1930) plea against administration and the rationalization of anthropology seemed somewhat prophetic of subsequent movements of anthropological protest and militancy against audit cultures. Malinowski was concerned with the effect of the "aimless drive of modern mechanization" (1930: 405) in anthropology, which to him was a "romantic escape from our overstandardized culture" (406) and not a "meretricious art" (405). Thus if for Malinowski anthropology was a withdrawal from progress and technification, for the French anthropologists it implied a land of opportunity, a space for rebellion and innovation. But both coincided in one thing: the *coincidentia oppositorum*, and their idealism, willing to tilt, like Don Quixote, against windmills—real or imaginary.

In subsequent decades, other examples of more overtly political militancy in the anthropological discipline could include the introduction of Marxist or Anarchist thought into social theory, which reverberated into specific understandings of the social.[47] Four cases in point are Georges Balandier's theories of social dynamics and disorder, which emerged from his political militancy as a member of

44. See for instance Speed (2006) and Maeckelbergh (2009) for such examples.

45. At this stage, some readers may think we are trying to overromanticize the discipline by ignoring other disciplinary militancies, and especially by skipping some less popular pages in its history, in which where other agencies have been involved in the production of anthropological knowledge—such as the enrolment assumed by anthropologists (as voluntary spies, "cultural translators," etc.) in different historical moments, from the colonial enterprise to the World Wars (see Boas 1919; Price 2011) and the Iraq war (Carrithers 2005; Robben 2009). At least one classic reading in anthropology—Ruth Benedict's *The chrysanthemum and the sword* (1946)—is an example of such involvements. We are aware of the multiple old and not-so-old skeletons anthropology is keeping in the closet, and, regardless of our personal disagreement with such practices, do not immediately reject them as expressions of anthropological militancy.

46. See Dias' (1991) and Hecht's (2003) fascinating accounts of the Société and the academic and intellectual context in which it emerged.

47. See Bloch (1975) for an account.

the French Communist Party and simultaneously counterbalanced hegemonic *systèmes de pensée* configurations in France[48]; Marshall Sahlins' (1993, 2004) concern with historical contingency and cultural transformation, and their translation into ethnographic and anthropological knowledge; David Graeber's (2004) fragments for an anarchist anthropology, which sketched a relevant anarchist theory for anthropology intended for a new outlook on social action; and the empirical acknowledgement of anarchism in the work of James Scott (1990, 2009), who developed an extraordinary ethnography and history of domination and (anarchist) resistance in Southeast Asia. If we were to note a common feature among such examples of political configurations of anthropology, it would be the *romantic pulsion* to recognize and map against-the-grain ontologies.[49]

Balandier's own personal and professional trajectory (which spans seven decades) is particularly revealing. Born in 1920 in a small village in eastern France to a railwayman and social activist, he began by studying philosophy, but with the outbreak of World War II he enrolled in the resistance movement. After the war he resumed his studies and became influenced by Michel Leiris' ideas of rethinking the French colonial enterprise in Africa. He became an active member of the French section of the International Workers Union, and began looking at the African continent as a scene of political turbulence. In the late 1940s, he embarked on a journey to West Africa (Senegal and Gabon) and later the Congo region, where he would combine ethnological research under the aegis of the ORSTOM (*Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer*) and political activism with indigenous liberationist movements.

Balandier was able to witness how the European colonial system produced a reaction on behalf of its subjects that forcibly contained its own downfall, carrying out fieldwork in the decade that preceded the political independence of Gabon and the Congo. Through a comparison of Bakongo and Fang late colonial societies, his book *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire* (1955) inaugurated a theoretical route that would have a strong impact on the French Academy, in particular sociology, history, and subsequent Africanist and political anthropology, moving beyond mere situationist ethnological description. He developed an historicist anthropology that discussed the "colonial situation" using a holistic approach (including historical, political, cultural, and psychological aspects), defending in the first place the need to understand society as a heterogeneous phenomenon, with individuals and groups interacting but pursuing different and often conflicting interests and goals, producing *dominant* (colonizer) and *dominated* (colonized) classes. He then began to address the divisions and fractures (or "turbulences," in his own words) in order to better understand the dynamics of social change produced in contexts of "cultural contact." From this moment on, Balandier would no longer conceive society without resorting to ideas

48. Such proposals can be found, for instance, in Balandier (1960, 1965, 1970); see also Blanes (2009) for a debate on Balandier's current relevance.

49. Here, the "romantic pulsion" also works against certain (in our view) hypocritical versions of anthropological militancy, such as the conveyance of the "necessity" of the social scientist to become more and more "professional self-marketers" under the pressure of corporate management techniques invading academia (see Graeber 2012).

of conflict and crisis, social change, and so on. This became a counterpoint to the prevailing structuralist and symbolic French anthropology,[50] and brought him closer to the conceptualizations of conflict and schism developed in the Manchester school.

Such commitments have not been confined to the political, partisan sphere. Rather, they have been part of a wider ethico-moral disposition that has accompanied anthropology throughout its existence—the inevitable reflexive speculation over its "uses" and "place in society" (Hymes 1969). Perhaps the incarnation of such dispositions that endured during most of the discipline's history is that of the "salvage anthropology" that struggled against vanishing races, cultures, folklores, objects, languages, et cetera, where the anthropologist becomes impotent, the witness of the end of a group, useful merely to archive the ultimate movement or cry of a desperate human group,[51] thus producing a version of a "museum anthropology" (Stocking 1985). But we have also seen other versions more recently, such as the triumph of cultural relativism, subsequent ideologies of difference, pluralism, cosmopolitanism, et cetera,[52] or the emergence of an "applied anthropology" (Kedia and van Willigen (2005). Latterly, we have seen proposals moving toward a "symmetrical anthropology" that performs an ultimate attempt to overcome we/them epistemologies,[53] and pleas for an egalitarian anthropology (Gable 2011).

But as these different heroisms have emerged a constant critique has developed concomitantly to question and undermine them. The quasi-nihilistic postmodern critique on ethnographic authority was an extreme example of this. This is demonstrative of the permanent state of reflexivity in the anthropological discipline, perhaps not unrelated to the methodological and experiential anxieties discussed above.

Be that as it may, the anthropologist-activist today seems to reactivate a sense of romanticism in a contemporary social configuration: he or she is not just or merely occupied by a mission of self-discovery, hardship, or adventure but engages in a movement trying to make changes "for the good" of the society under study. In this context, anthropology is no longer a "necrology" but has something in common with social activism. As Hartman (2007) suggests, "not only have these heroic activist anthropologists left for the most part, the easy confines of the Western academy, but they have selflessly risked life and limb to end the mistreatment of an indigenous Other." This activism does not necessarily involve the defense of underprivileged or endangered groups, but does involve a wider, conscious move toward a less observational and more participatory (re)action in multiple situations.

The other contemporary heroic figure is that of the anthropologist working at home. With the abolition of the compulsory geographical distance and of the exoticism of the context, the anthropologist can experiment with more egalitarian

50. See Balandier (2009) and Blanes (2009)

51. See for example Hester (1968) and Niezen (2000), as well as the famed BBC 1970s series *Disappearing world*, or Pierre Clastres' *Chroniques des Indiens Guayakis* ([1972] 2001) for a debate on "disappearing cultures."

52. Pina-Cabral (2006); Werbner (2008) could be invoked as recent examples.

53. Latour (1993); see also Giumbelli (2006).

interactional practices and avoid inscribing his work in the structural and historical dichotomy of the discipline that implies Western academics studying invariably foreign others from a hierarchical position.[54] Certain moral and political gaps are thus eliminated. One consequence of this has been the emergence of an "anthropology of ethics" in its multiple dimensions: from the discussion of anthropological humanitarianism to the study of cultural values and moralities.[55]

Nevertheless, the relationship between researcher and researched, as we described above, remains problematic, devoid of an updated "notes and queries" manual as an infallible resource for solving ethical and political dilemmas emerging throughout fieldwork.[56] From this perspective, the problem of mutuality also has a political dimension: if the researcher engages in interpersonal relations and attachments for scientific purposes, in the interest and within the timeframe of the research, his interlocutors welcome, accept, and consent to this relationship even if very often they read the immersion of the researcher in their world on the basis of diverse perceptions and motivations.[57] This consent is therefore not the linear process it could be portrayed as in ethical committees.[58] John Michael Roberts and Teela Sanders (2005) invite us to think of the informant's consent and engagement with the researcher as a form of gifting. Julia O'Connell goes further by describing this action as an uninterested and noncontractual act (2008). But can we afford to dismiss the political dimensions involved? In any case, the moral, ethical, and political stances that emerge from the way informants perceive ethnographic relationships and the shifting boundaries of intimacy produced within anthropological research remains a deserved field of reflection.

Conclusions

In 1969, speculating over the need to "reinvent anthropology," Dell Hymes urged colleagues to think about the personal, political, and critical uses of anthropology, and shared his weariness in accepting such a thing as a unified, "whole anthropology" to which all could refer with equal levels of understanding (Hymes 1969: 3). From this perspective, there are multiple anthropologies affected by traditions, practices, commitments, and institutional configurations, and from an individual perspective it often comes down to defining anthropology as "what we do" and

54. See Abu-Lughod (1991); Comaroff and Comaroff (1992).

55. See recent proposals for an anthropology of morality by Zigon (2008) and Fassin (2012), for instance.

56. All practitioner anthropologists have surely detected the absence of a unified deontology within the discipline, which is translated very heterogeneously in the codes of ethics (or lack thereof) proposed by the different national and international professional anthropological associations. See also Caplan (2003).

57. As an illustration of this point, both authors of this text have experience working with Pentecostal movements, and recall how in both cases our presence in the churches prompted different interpretations: that of the ethnographers (fieldwork) and that of the believers (God's will). See Blanes (2006) and Maskens (2013).

58. See Pérez-y-Pérez and Stanley (2011) for an illustration of these gaps, and the potential rebounding of consent in studying sex worlds.

"where we chose to belong to" (Hymes 1969: 3–10). His conclusion thus highlights the obvious yet complex and often difficult transitions between anthropology as a personal experience and a collective enterprise, incorporating institutional politics, material-financial constraints, academic cultures, trends, and fashions, et cetera. This is therefore a topic that, despite this obviousness, is *epidermic* to the anthropological ethos, even if just because all anthropologists seem to have something to say about what we do, how we do it, and what are the dangers and threats that loiter around the discipline: if Malinowski was concerned about the rationalization of anthropology, today we discuss its neoliberalization. From this perspective, what has changed through time has been the conceptualization of what the nonromantic is for us, translated into detected hegemonies, dogmatisms, external impositions, conformities, attacks, accusations, et cetera. In any case, virtually all of the quotes mentioned above come from anthropologists engaged simultaneously in ethnographic practice, reflexivity, and theoretical speculation, and eventually also anthropological politics.

In the preceding pages, we have chosen one specific path within this complex and heterogeneous history—one that portrays anthropology as a romantic discipline, populated by theoretical unsettlements, transformative experiences and personal/collective militancies. Such an itinerary reveals anthropology as a subversive discipline, one to some extent self-consciously placed at the margins of science in order to remain unsettled, reflexive, critical, and combative. But this subversion can be engaged against external *and* internal hierarchies, and thus often acquires a quixotic character. At its most consensual version, we argue, it is connected to what Stocking would call the "ethnographer's magic" (Stocking 1992): the ability to produce systematic knowledge through the personal and intellectual engagement in intensive and extensive fieldwork. But, as Alberto Corsin-Jiménez (2008: 2) has also noted, ethnography cannot be disconnected from political morality. Inasmuch as anthropology and ethnography are performed by human beings, one cannot place them (epistemologically, ethically, or politically) outside of *the world*. Michael Carrithers (2005) very rightly identified such complexities by describing anthropology as a "moral science of possibilities."

Returning to the Quixotic image we began this article with, we ask: are we anthropologists idealist chevaliers who, after reading too many *romances* (i.e., ethnographic monographs) have engaged in transformative experiences in search of our romantic destiny? Surely not all of us engage in such self-conceptions; nor should we delve into such a disciplinary exceptionalism. However, the romantic strains we have identified throughout this article have revealed the intersection between three fundamental elements of the anthropological endeavor: personal experience, political conviction, theoretical production. This intersection, which has often challenged the idea of anthropology as an *objective science,* has otherwise produced a creative, resistant discipline that challenges the pessimistic views concerning our disciplinary marginality and subalternisation—especially during an historical moment in which quantitative and utilitarian criteria are used to measure and define its relevance. Here, the work of Balandier and others becomes inspiring, as it is the outcome of militant anthropologists who produce militant concepts, seeking philosophical subversion and unrest, working from an antihegemonic position.

What we retain from such personal, theoretical and individual trajectories is precisely its subversive, against-the-grain character. And it is this subversion, a romantic subversion, that makes anthropology so unstable and simultaneously so uniquely productive. From this particular perspective, its *coincidentia oppositorum* can be seen as a form of humanitarian anthropology, one that does not become "silent" vis-à-vis the world outside and around the ethnographic object (Fassin 2006) and captures human voices, including our own. As anthropologists, we have nothing but to gain from recognizing from the inherent unsettlement that marks our discipline. We need not be afraid of the giants, windmills, or giant windmills.

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Le choix de Don Quichotte. Un manifeste pour une anthropologie romantique

Résumé : Dans cet article, nous nous proposons d'interpeller l'anthropologie en tant que discipline romantique. Revisitant des histoires particulières, nous décrivons la discipline anthropologique et sa méthode (l'ethnographie) comme imprégnée de sensibilités et militantismes qui la définissent comme une « subversion romantique », une attitude à contre courant des hégémonies et conformismes intellectuels. Nous le faisons en mettant l'accent sur trois points : la cartographie d'un programme conceptuel romantique en anthropologie, l'analyse de l'intersubjectivité ethnographique et la transformation personnelle comme héroïsmes romantiques, et la discussion d'une anthropologie militante anti-hégémonique. Nous conjecturons à propos d'un ethos anthropologique qui est intrinsèquement subversif et « Don Quichottien », suivant l'inspiration du roman de Miguel de Cervantes.

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