INTRODUCTION: ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE MUTUALIZING UTOPIA

MAÏTÉ MASKENS[1] and RUY BLANES[2]

Introduction

In 1937, in between the two World Wars (see Sarró, this issue), the British philosopher and author Olaf Stapledon published *Star Maker*, a remarkable account that was to become, post facto, one of the first staples of modern science fiction. In the book, the unnamed protagonist describes his involuntary travel through interstellar space until he arrives on the planet 'Other Earth', inhabited by the *other men*, a quasi-human race that is different yet in many ways very similar to earth's own.

The protagonist chooses to stay on this planet and to try and 'understand' it. Having experienced a process of disembodiment, he learns to inhabit the locals' bodies in order to see and feel through them. It is a long and complicated process:

> I must have spent several years on the Other Earth, a period far longer than I had intended when I first encountered one of its peasants trudging through the fields. Often I longed to be at home again. I used to wonder with painful anxiety how those dear to me were faring, and what changes I should discover if I were ever to return.

Through these words, the protagonist confesses his dual and conflicted frame of mind, in which he simultaneously longs for his familiar ground while being attracted by the discovery of new worlds. The process is not entirely intentional, and is affected by the interpersonal character of his experience. This occurs because of his relationship with one inhabitant of Other Earth: Bvalltu, the peasant.

> Bvalltu was partly responsible for my long spell on the Other Earth. He would not hear of my leaving till we had each attained a real understanding of the other's world. (…) I had come to feel a very strong friendship with him. In the early days of our partnership there had sometimes been strains. Though we were both civilized human beings, who tried always to behave with courtesy and generosity, our extreme intimacy did sometimes fatigue us. (…) In time each of us came to feel that to taste

[1] FNRS Postdoctoral Researcher, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains, Université Libre de Bruxelles.

[2] Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen; Principal Researcher, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon.

> the flavour of life in isolation from the other was to miss half its richness and subtlety.

Stapledon's protagonist, although sojourning in a planet millions of miles away from Earth, struggles to identify with his interlocutor, creating a space of intimacy and mutual recognition, aware that this is a process that can only occur within a mutualizing framework in which commonality is established by identifying each one's 'humanity'.

Stapledon's *Star Maker* is commonly read as a novel that critically addresses moral and philosophical themes such as the life, growth and decay of civilization and the particular insignificance of humanity in the universe. However, it is remarkably anthropological in the way it develops a distanced, reflexive gaze unto problems of social life and resorts to ethnographic experience (not just method) in order to present a moralizing philosophical argument concerning human diversity.

Due to its optimistic description of 'galactic utopias' as expressions of 'good community' in Chapter 9, *Star Maker* has also been referred to as one of the cornerstones of the utopian literary genre (e.g. García Landa 2002), also populated by well-known oeuvres such as H.G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905), B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* (1948) or Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974); or the dystopian counterpart *1984* (1949) by George Orwell, for instance. Fredric Jameson in fact refers to Stapledon as 'the Fourier of Science Fiction' (2005: 124) by analogy with the nineteenth-century French philosopher known for his utopian socialist proposals. Thus what is interesting for us is the fact that an 'ethnographic novel' becomes an illustration of utopian desire.

Here we propose to discuss the ethnographic endeavour as a method and experience that relies upon an expectation of mutuality—preliminarily defined an ideal of empathy and egalitarian reciprocity—which in turn has ethical, historical, political and epistemological implications. One such implication is the highlighting of a specific strain in anthropology: its utopian character (see Graeber 2004). This trait reveals itself in multiple fashions: in the moral, ethical and political implications of the anthropologist and his work; in the epistemological ambition to write ethnography as an attempt to 'do good' with our knowledge; and finally, in the egalitarian expectations and assumptions that we entertain in the process of fieldwork, which may or may not be realized.

Utopia and ethnography thus share a space of commonality, and it is our intention to explore some of the multiple dimensions of this connection in this special issue.[3] We will first explore the historical and theoretical dimensions of this connection, and then speculate on the potential for considering ethnographic fieldwork through a utopian perspective.

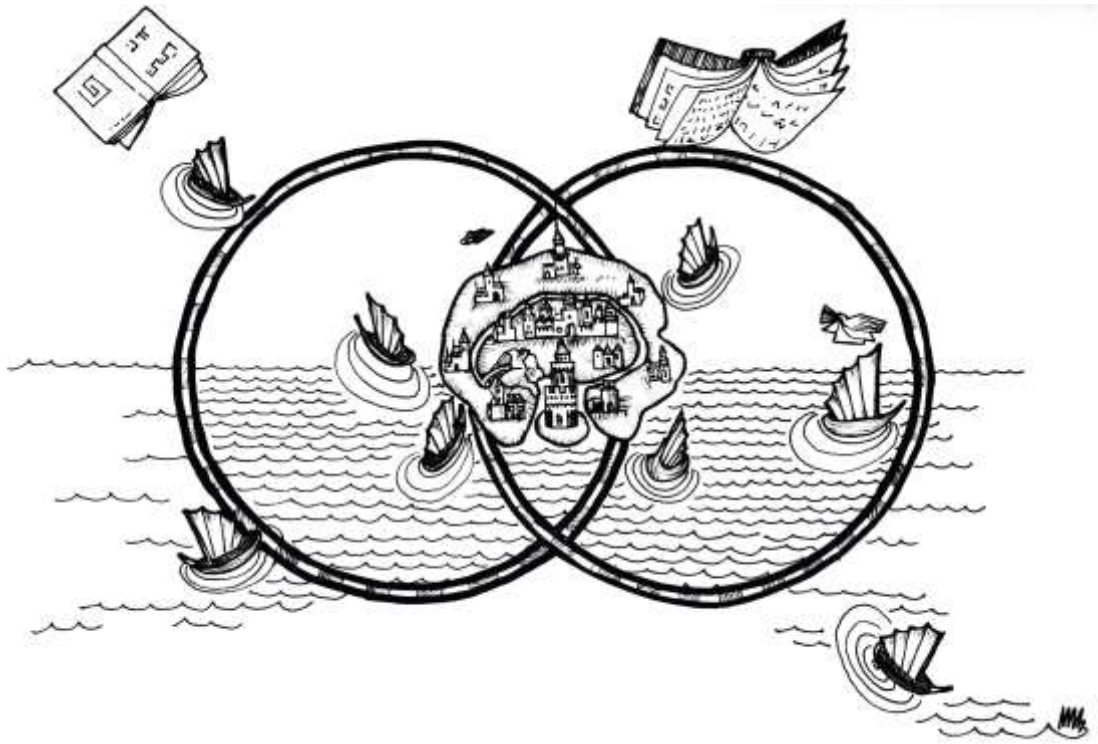

Figure 1. *Ethnography and Utopia*. By Monir Bestene (2016)

The invention of new worlds

Ethnography and utopia can be said to share a common foundation: what we can call the 'journey of invention'. On the one hand, as we have discussed elsewhere (Maskens and Blanes 2013), the practice of ethnography implies an act of (physical, geographical, mental, symbolic) separation from the ordinary in order to motivate a concomitant process of reflection and self-reflection. This process of separation is in itself generative, creating a space for interaction in the everyday that is ultimately an alteration of an already unstable social life (Greenhouse 2002). From this perspective, ethnography replicates the 'utopian move'. In 1516 Thomas More coined the concept

[3] This is part of a more ambitious project in which we are attempting to constitute an anthropological debate on utopia through its different dimensions – methodological, ethical, political, and heuristic. We would like to thank Dr Ramon Sarró for his continuous inspiration in respect of this project.

of utopia to name an island allegedly discovered in the New World by Hythloday, the central character in his masterpiece.[4] Playing with Greek etymology, More devised the island of Utopia, the 'perfect society', as both an 'ideal' (eu-) and 'non-existent (ou-) place (-topos). In the narrative, Hythloday discovered the island in the course of a fourth journey, having accompanied Amerigo Vespucci on three previous journeys. A friend, Peter Giles, introduced Hythloday to More in the following terms, a quasi-ethnographer: 'For there is no mortal alive today who can give more information about unknown peoples and lands, and I know that you are very eager to hear about them' (2014: 11).

More was ultimately intrigued and attracted to what was then a novelty: the discovery of the 'New World', subsequently known in Europe as the Americas,[5] which was informed by a historical moment of transformation. In Europe, the shaping of new geographies and the concomitant fascination for unknown countries, lands and societies was at its height, shaping the desire for encounters in many European individuals. Thomas More wrote his fiction a few years after Christopher Columbus initiated the Spanish colonization of the 'New World', and, as several specialists have recognized (e.g. Davis 2000), his work has been profoundly influenced by the geographical redefinitions motivated by the 'discovery' of the New World on behalf of European cultures (see e.g. Mann 2011). Besides the genre inaugurated by Thomas More, this 'discovery' opened the way to what Michel de Certeau qualified as a 'conquering mode' of writing where the *nuova terra* of America appeared as an unknown body – a blank, 'savage' page ready to host the Western will of expansion and civilization written unto it (1988: xxv-xxvi).

In what could be called the 'pre-history' of anthropology, this age of geographical reconfiguration also constituted a crucial period of self-questioning about identity and alterity in Europe. Travel books by explorers and other adventurers circulated and stimulated the imagination of non-traveller Europeans. One example

[4] As we also note below, More's book is also a pioneering oeuvre in its production of a narrative conjunction of fact and fiction, using real, historical figures and events to frame his fictional narrative.

[5] In 1515 Henry VIII sent More to Flanders, a place of trade and circulation, where he heard exotic narratives about other people living differently, for example, disregarding gold and individual property. There he read the *Quattuor Americi Vespucii Navigationes*, printed in 1505, in which Amerigo Vespucci described the four voyages he made to the *Mundus Novus* (in 1497, 1499, 1501 and 1503) in letters to friends in Italy (Davis 2000; Lacroix 2004).

that is relevant to our discipline can be cited: Bartolomé de Las Casas' famed *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (first published in 1552), in which a morally charged, accusing proto-ethnography of the Spanish colonization in the Antilles and La Hispaniola is given (see also Whitehead 2011). But before Las Casas, oeuvres such as Ibn Khaldun's famous *Muqaddimah* (1377), part of his attempt to conduct a comparative worldwide civilizational history (*Kitab al-Ibar*), also acted as imaginative sources for sociological and philosophical thought. In such cases, discoveries of 'other' societies encouraged wild and creative imaginations concerning the 'marvels of the world', in similar fashion to the curiosity stimulated by Marco Polo's travel diaries in the fourteenth century, which provoked equal doses of exoticisms and orientalisms. Such accounts are, from a contemporary anthropological perspective, necessarily problematic in their bias (see Clifford 1983), but they also spurred a will to approach and understand alterity, a form of empathy, as it were. This becomes particularly obvious in the work of Las Casas, a Dominican friar, for whom the description of the atrocities committed by the Spanish crown was the outcome of a recognition of humanity in the souls of the natives.

This sense of empathy, often described as a central exercise for the method of anthropology,[6] is also present in More's story:

> And so he told us how, after the departure of Vespucci, he and his companions who had remained in the fort gradually began to win the good graces of the people of that land by encountering and speaking well of them, and then they started to interact with them not only with no danger but even on friendly terms, and finally they gained the affection and favour of some ruler, whose name and country escape me. He told how, through the generosity of the ruler, he and five of his companions were liberally supplied with provisions and ships on the sea and wagons on the land—together with a trustworthy guide who took them to other rulers to whom he heartily recommended them. (More 2014: 12-13)

Gentleness and friendship were the attributes chosen by More to describe the relationship these fictive Europeans maintained with the natives. Some four centuries later those same attributes would become a methodological injunction in the writings

[6] As we have suggested elsewhere (Maskens and Blanes 2013), this notion of empathy does not necessarily imply a naïve acceptance of the myth of the 'good savage', but is rather an attempt to take complexity beyond the stereotype of the other, even when, for instance, we find ourselves having to work with people we disagree with.

of some grandfathers of the then emerging method of anthropology. Alfred Cort Haddon, for instance, in his President's Address to the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, highlighted that 'efficiency and economy as well as kindly and righteous dealing in the government of other peoples are the practical result of a sympathetic study of those peoples…' (1903: 20). In a context in which the notion of ethnographic fieldwork was still a mere hypothesis and expressions such as 'participant observation' were unheard of, William Rivers, in the revised version of the *Notes and Queries* of 1912, described the posture of the investigator who has to work with real 'sympathy and tact' with natives unaccustomed to Europeans in order to 'break their reticence' (1912: 125).

But obviously, it was with the establishment and legitimation of the empirical ethnographic method, with staple references that all students of anthropology have been asked to read—Bronislaw Malinowski's *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) and, to a lesser extent, Radcliffe Brown's *The Andaman Islanders* (1922)—that such concerns became central to anthropology's heuristic project, henceforth referred to as 'systematic fieldwork'. As we all read in Malinowski's introductory chapter, this systematic fieldwork included 'the feeling of hopelessness and despair after many obstinate but futile attempts' to get 'into real touch with the natives' (1922: 4), as well as attempts to go beyond the 'biased and pre-judged opinions inevitable in the average practical man, whether administrator, missionary, or trader' (ibid.: 5), in order to achieve the 'ethnographer's magic' (ibid.: 6; see also Stocking 1992).

After such pre-historical, precursory and foundational moments, the story of ethnographic empathy knows several famous twists and turns, the publication of Malinowski's diary (1967) being a case in point. It is not our goal to perform a systematic review of those histories (for that, see Stocking 1992; Krotz 2002). But we insist that the notions of empathy and connection remained central to the disciplinary ethics of anthropology. Here we feel somewhat obliged to return to Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, in which we discover, among a myriad of recollections and connections, a puzzlement in the acknowledgement that 'our world has suddenly found itself to be too small for the people who live in it' (1961 [1955]: 23), mourning what Marshall Sahlins (1993: 7) described as the rusting of shanty towns in the tropics and the sadness provoked by the West's destructive hegemony both

economically and epistemologically. This sensation is precisely what David Berliner (2014) has recently described as 'exonostalgia', the vicarious sentiment of shame and longing for disappearing worlds and vanishing cultures that continues to pervade the way anthropologists conduct fieldwork and write anthropology.

We also observe other conceptualizations that engage, in one way or the other, with the problem of empathy. For instance, Eric Gable's proposal (2011) for a 'egalitarian anthropology' that emerges from the ethnographic encounter, one in which 'professional anthropology' (what is produced in academia) is not authoritatively exclusive, but instead is on a par with what Gable calls 'vernacular anthropology', the cultural account that is produced by the 'professionals'' own interlocutors. Here, ethnography emerges as a particularly powerful way of accounting for the competition of worldviews and the subsequent pluralist contexts in which they dwell. Gable thus sees ethnography as 'part philosophy'—or theoretical assumption—and 'part confession'—or personal implication (ibid.: 9). It is this particularity that allows for an explication of inequality, but also the generation of a space for ethical interlocution. Johannes Fabian (1995, 2001), Michael Carrithers (2005), Marshall Sahlins (2011) and João de Pina-Cabral (2013) have explored this problem in terms of ethnographic mutuality and its methodological, theoretical and ethical consequences. In such approaches, questions of co-responsibility emerge from the process of enticing and provocation (Pina-Cabral 2013: 261) that characterizes ethnographic presence, encounter and interlocution. However, as Fabian noted, the idea of ethnographic mutuality is in fact 'the promise of nontrivial understanding' (1995: 47), what João Pina-Cabral calls 'shared revelations' (2013: 258). This has found fruitful outcomes in ethnographic genres that have grounded themselves in the mutual alteration between ethnographer and interlocutor (see e.g. Behar 1993). Catherine Besteman, for instance, pushes this argument further when she exposes the emotional and interpersonal dimensions of the experience of mutuality in her debate on ''ethnographic love' (2014). For her, the experience of mutuality is what makes anthropology unique: 'the process of doing anthropology is the process of creating our own humanity. (…) It is a creative, imaginative process of becoming' (ibid.: 268). The key point here, we feel, is that of the 'promise', which invokes ideas of 'full' understanding but is nevertheless subject to a process of communicative

indeterminacy that characterizes intersubjective relations, ethnographic (Duranti 2010; Fabian 2014) or otherwise.

We could thus argue that there is in such cases an ethical continuity where we discover what we could call a 'desire', a will for commonality and equality that is no different from what Samuel Moyn described concerning the story of Human Rights: a utopia (2010) which is an acknowledgement that—so the slogan goes—'another world is possible'. But this 'other world' can be a product of a desire for transformation as well as of nostalgic longing. This statement, we concede, is obviously problematic from a political point of view. We contend that this politics is not only inescapable but should also be at the centre of ethnographic reflection.

Writing ethnography, writing utopia

> Our minds are flooded with images of places we have never been, yet still know, people we have never met, yet still know and in accordance with which we, to a considerable extent, live our lives. The feeling this gives that the world is small, tightly enclosed around itself, without openings to anywhere else, is almost incestuous, and although I knew this to be deeply untrue, since actually we know nothing about anything, still I could not escape it. The longing I always felt, which some days was so great it could hardly be controlled, had its source here. It was partly to relieve this feeling that I wrote, I wanted to open the world by writing, for myself, at the same time this is also what made me fail. The feeling that the future does not exist, that it is only more of the same, means that all utopias are meaningless. Literature has always been related to utopia, so when the utopia loses meaning, so does literature. (Karl Ove Knausgaard, *My Struggle*, Book 1)

We thus understand how utopia, as a model of relationality, incorporates notions of empathy and egalitarian interaction that are in many ways similar to the way ethnographic practice, as the cornerstone of the production of anthropological knowledge, has been configured since the very beginning.

But perhaps what is more striking in this connection between ethnography and utopia is the critical juncture of the genres of both imaginative *and* concrete, historically informed experience that envelope the process of writing. In the epigraph above by Norwegian author Karl Ove Knausgaard—master, in his *My Struggle* volumes, of combining the description of the mundane with philosophical rumination

in ‘apparently autobiographical’ style—is, although invariably pessimistic in its rationale, a contemporary literary example of such a juncture. In the eponymous novel of Thomas More, the first part is devoted to a precise and detailed list of European social ills resulting from English feudalism and nascent capitalism, while Book 2 is often interpreted as an answer to the defects, vices and pleas of sixteenth-century England: the perfect state of *Utopia*, thought as a framework for the exercise of virtue, organized as such in order to discourage pride and erase competitive spirit.

Within this framework, as Laurent Loty (2011: 85) noted, the new genre inaugurated by More was above all a cunning textual apparatus. *Utopia*, as a genre, rests on three major operations: first, the writings of More ‘denounce’; then his words kindle political imagination; and finally, his text engages in a paradoxical and ambiguous statement, such as the idea that ‘there is a superior imagined world but this last doesn’t exist, it’s a fiction!’ (Loty 2011: 94-95). In any case, More plays with the gap between reality and fiction as a productive process. He never makes claims for absolute realism but constantly blurs the boundaries or clear oppositions between the Old and New Worlds, between Europe and Utopia, suggesting affinities and continuities between these real and imagined places (Davis 2000: 112). Indeed, Hythloday, unlike Vespucci, succeeds in establishing friendships with the local inhabitants, achieving another connection between the two worlds involved, another kind of integration and therefore another way of envisaging what was conceived as an alterity. This may be why, as we noted above, he is given unquestionable authority on behalf of Peter Giles. The upcoming journey, unlike the past ones, takes another direction; it is no longer a case of the absorption of the New World in the Old, in a reduced alterity, but the replenishment of the old by transformation (Lacroix 2004: 28). In this sense, and as Letonturier suggests (2013: 20), *Utopia* promoted both cultural relativism and contrasted ideologies of ethnocentrism by showing other ways of being, living or existing. Alterity, therefore, is no more about radical difference, but instead about mutuality, connection and comparison.

This particular utopian genre is thus profoundly political in essence, and the fictional form could ultimately be understood as a mechanism to downplay its critical drive, a way to avoid an evident transgression or direct confrontation between the writer of *Utopia* and the authority of his time. It is worth remembering here that

Thomas More was an important councillor to Henry VIII and Lord Chancellor from 1529 to 1532 and was thus part of the sphere of power.

In any case, this writing process is articulated above all else in order to produce effects on the readers:[7] awakening their utopian 'impulse', as Ernst Bloch (1989: 214) formulates it. More's goal was thus to destabilize his audience, to push into action, to engage with multiple realities, to refuse political fatalism, to encourage the reader to take destiny in his or her hands. From this perspective, this genre must be considered a call for action. What was once described as 'oblique writing' (Lallemant and Ramos 2010) encourages the reader to apply a mental exercise to realities and its 'lateral possibilities' (Ruyer 1950) by questioning the apparent evidence of our surroundings, going outside the real or establishing a distance from the political realities as they emerge, and decentering oneself in the world because other humans live differently and we can learn from them. And finally, to appropriate a recent and actual formulation of the utopian impulse in radical politics, the question 'What if another world were possible?' illustrates how these mental operations stimulate the political imagination and conduce to the refusal of apathy and fatalism. The 'utopian spirit' could be considered as a medium for the emergence, appearance, spouting and eruption of potential changes and transformations.

Such intellectual configurations also gave an impulse to multiple and creative operations with temporalities: by 'opening a breach in the thickness of the real' (Ricoeur 1997: 405), the genre of utopia mobilized or destabilized temporal imaginations and produced a range of new concepts by putting present realities into effervescence. In 1857 Charles Renouvier coined the term *uchronie* ('alternative history') by suspending the historical past time in order to interrogate what we could have become if other options had been chosen (Lallemant and Ramos, 2010). Decades later, Michel Foucault stated that the heterotopias he detects within our society are often associated to *hétérochronies*, specific spaces where humans are in rupture with traditional linear times. Dystopia is also an imaginative operation on future time, a

[7] At this stage, we may wonder why the commonsense understanding of utopia undermines this process and its effects on readers, associating it with a wider feature of 'unrealism'. For Loty (2011: 91), we can find culprits in More's contemporary political opponents – Christian philosophers who are carriers of an optimistic theology according to which God created an optimal world winning the semantic war, which was also a political one: it was neither possible nor desirable to transform society because it was perceived a godly creation.

kind a future (im)perfect based on a logic of alert: to anticipate the worst in order to avoid its realization (Claisse 2010). Therefore, this genre is ultimately a 'revolt against history fixed in destiny' (Godin 2000).

All those operations, potentially provoked by utopia as a literary genre, may also be provoked by the specific genre of ethnography. For the philosopher Patrice Maniglier, 'the highest promise' of anthropology is that of 'returning us an image (of ourselves) in which we do not recognize ourselves' (2005: 773-4; our translation). But simultaneously, as Jorge Luis Borges once suggested, every description of an 'other' carries the risk of transforming itself into a self-portrait (1983). There is no ultimate separation between the two movements. Ghassan Hage (2012) recently pointed out that critical thinking enables us to move outside of ourselves reflexively. For him, while the critical dimension of historical knowledge can 'take us outside our ourselves' in time and 'permit [us] to compare ourselves with past versions of ourselves', sociology allows us 'to capture the existence of forces that exist outside of ourselves', and psychoanalysis 'takes us outside of where our ego dwells', there is a further specificity to critical anthropological thought (2012: 287). The initial project of anthropology resides in the study of radical others, the study of human culture situated outside the dynamic of our capitalist modernity. If the primitivist anthropologists were thus first disoriented by the study of radical alterity, they began a process of re-orientation that widens the sphere of what is socially and culturally possible. This process of trying to understand others' ways of living, being or existing results, according to Hage, in the idea that 'we can be radically other than we are. (…) Anthropology works critically through a comparative act that constantly exposes us to the possibility of being other that what we are' (ibid.: 6-7). Thus, the utopian assumption that 'another world is possible' finds concrete grounding in the anthropological idea that 'others worlds do in fact exist'.

Ultimately, this recognition produces an effect, not only in how we do ethnography, but also in how we write it. After the postmodern turn of the 1980s and 1990s, when several anthropologists explicitly questioned the anthropological style of writing (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Clifford 1988; Geertz 1988), almost every anthropologist easily recognizes the fictional element in all cultural description. But long before that turn, in the French academy, Michel Leiris's *L'Afrique Fantôme* (1934) had already opened up the field for an understanding of ethnographic writing

as genre and experiment, where analysis and self-analysis become part of one and the same effort (see Clarck-Taoua 2002; see also Augé 1997). Such recognitions of the constructed and fabricated dimensions of the anthropological text helped erode the binary and mutually exclusive oppositions between the invented fiction and the 'truth' on which social science relies. The boundaries between fiction and ethnography were definitively blurred and gave birth to reflexive and intense debate in the discipline. Within this framework, Clifford (1988) talked about ethnography as an 'emergent interdisciplinary phenomenon' involved in diverse economies of truth situated between powerful systems of meaning. From this perspective, truth in ethnography is necessarily partial, like any other analytical/compositional tradition or art form, but it is also creative and generative.

Here, through the different case studies below, we propose to expose these dynamics of ethnographic mutuality, empathy, experiment and creation through a utopian lens.

Ethnographies of mutualizing utopias

The case studies presented here reveal the range of possibilities that emerge from a utopian configuration of ethnography in respect of its relational potentiality, its egalitarian expectation and its creative dimension. Together, they explore three different moments of the ethnographic endeavour: from the inaugural expectation that marks the initial stages of our work to the serendipitous moments of intersubjective interaction, and finally the creative moment of writing.

In her 'Snapchat essay', Karen Waltorp assumes that mutuality is a prerequisite for building the kind of knowledge that people share with the anthropologist, often configured in the same transitory and experimental terms as a smartphone 'snap'. Concerned with ethnographic practice as empathic relational mutuality in her fieldwork with young Muslim women in a social housing area in Copenhagen, Karen Waltorp presents us with a case study of what she calls a 'moral laboratory', that is, a collaborative and experimental form of ethnographic fieldwork in which ideas of reflexivity, creativity and mutuality are confronted with specific limits, from privacy to publicity, from intimacy to scrutiny, etc. In her case, the hyperbole emerges from the fact that the 'moral laboratory' is inherently 'mediatic', emerging from the

continuous and quotidian production of audiovisual statements on behalf of ethnographer and interlocutor alike.

In turn, Sergio Varela and José Luís Flores act as 'inhabitants' of a utopian world devised by their main interlocutor in their fieldwork among the indigenous Otomí community of central Mexico, the charismatic Don Pancho. In their case, their mutualist ethnographic expectations are confronted with their interlocutor's own utopian understanding of anthropology and the academic endeavour as a way of producing knowledge—and, ultimately, 'culture'. For Varela and Flores, Don Pancho shares the same kind of utopian drive towards resistance and protest as can anthropology (see e.g. Graeber 2004).

Rodolfo Maggio, in turn, addresses in critical fashion the problem of 'writing ethnography' as a utopian function that creatively allows for the inauguration of possibilities through the multiple expectations involved in the ethnographic endeavour, but also the recognition that our literary ambition towards perfection, coherence or wholeness is challenged by the open-endedness of the intersubjective and the 'loose ends' that mark the ethical dimensions of ethnographic practice. From this perspective, his contribution, nurtured by his ethnographic encounter with the Kwara'ae of the Solomon Islands, dwells in the space of emergence mentioned above, where meaning and truth are inscribed within ethnographic writing in complex fashion.

Albert Piette and Gwendoline Torterat depart from the kind of questionings rehearsed in the other articles in this issue by proposing what is assumed explicitly as a 'utopian anthropology', one that inserts ethnography within a complex that includes the discipline's pedagogic and ethical role. Deliberately experimental and thought-provoking, their essay advances anthropology's 'attention to singularity' as its most relevant, yet most provocative and radical contribution to the social sciences and humanities. While doing so, they incorporate a very utopian *dispositif* of questioning and transforming the philosophical and political status quo: what happens if, instead of focusing on the common, collective traits that produce 'social formations' (which in turn ''de-humanise' the human), we focus on what is distinctive, singular, personal?

Finally, Marie-Pierre Gibert incorporates the transformative potential of utopia by proposing an ethnographic experiment: conducting an ethnography of the tension between work and pleasure in the 21st century through the lens of a famous

nineteenth-century utopianist, the French philosopher Charles Fourier. She invites us to consider the ethnographic valence of pleasure as an epistemologically productive element in two professions marked by an apparently contrasted connection with pleasure (artists and waste-workers).

Pleasure, in terms of the expression, consequence or pretext of love and friendship, is also at the core of Valerio Simoni's contribution, in which we learn how, in the Cuban tourist industry, intersubjective, personal relationships emerge precariously in between commodified, rationalized ideologies of suspicion and monetary exchange. Through the recollection of various – serendipitous or planned – encounters with foreign tourists and Cubans engaged in the tourist industry, Simoni unveils how utopia appears as a model of relationality, one that counteracts the 'imperfect present' of tourism-mediated relationships. Interestingly, the utopia that emerges from the encounter with the 'other' (be it the tourist, the Cuban or the ethnographer) involves the recognition of the possibility of plural understandings – and thus the rejection of totalizing, normativizing formulations – of what personal relationships are about, what they can generate.

Simoni's article explores a point that appears in the centre of Ramon Sarró's highly evocative afterword: the positional problem of the 'point of view'. Evoking post-WWI fiction, anthropological forefathers and his own fieldwork recollections in Guinea-Bissau and DR Congo, he takes the reader into a journey through utopian-anthropological islands and mountains – from the Trobriands to Zomia – that ultimately become heterotopian geographies of (personal, intellectual) unsettlement.
What emerges from these contributions is a significant practical complication of the problem of mutuality, which we preliminarily defined as an ideal of empathy and egalitarian reciprocity. With its empirical testing, as it were, we realize that, more than establishing a horizontal, dyadic relationship, acknowledging ethnography as a 'mutualizing utopia' in fact involves 'opening up' and creating a space of interaction – the island, the mountain, as Sarró (this issue) puts it – that is inevitably serendipitous but ultimately creative, generative.

References

Augé, Marc 1997. *La guerre des rêves: exercices d'ethno-fiction*. Paris: Seuil.

Behar, Ruth, 1993. *Translated woman: crossing the border with Esperanza's story*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Berliner, David 2014. On exonostalgia, *Anthropological Theory* 14 (4): 373-386.

Besteman, Catherine 2014. On ethnographic love, in Roger Sanjek (ed.) *Mutuality: anthropology's changing terms of engagement*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 259-284.

Bloch, Ernst 1989. *The utopian function of art and literature*. Boston: MIT.

Borges, Jorge Luis 1983. *L'auteur et autres textes*. Paris: Gallimard.

Carrithers, Michael 2005. Anthropology as a moral science of possibilities, *Current Anthropology* 46 (3): 433-456.

Claisse, Frédéric 2010. Futurs antérieurs et précédents uchroniques: lanti-utopie comme conjuration de la menace, *Temporalités* 12 (online). Accessed October 2014. URL: http://temporalites.revues.org/1406

Clarck-Taoua, Phyllis 2002. In search of new skin: Michel Leiris's *L'Afrique Fantôme*, *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 167: 479-498.

Clifford, James 1983. On ethnographic authority, *Representations* 2: 118-146.

— 1988. *The predicament of culture: twentieth-century ethnography, literature, and art*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Clifford, James, and George Marcus (eds.) 1986. *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Davis, James C. 2000. Lutopie et le Nouveau Monde 1500-1700, in *Utopie: La quête de la société idéale en Occident*. Paris: Fayard, 104-125.

De Certeau, Michel. 1988. *The writing of history*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Duranti, Alessandro 2010. Husserl, intersubjectivity and anthropology, *Anthropological Theory* 10 (1-2): 16-35.

Fabian, Johannes 1995. Ethnographic Misunderstanding and the Perils of Context, *American Anthropologist* 97(1): 41-50.

— 2001. *Anthropology with an attitude: critical essays*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

— 2014. Ethnographic intersubjectivity: loose ends, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4 (1): 199-209.

Gable, Eric 2011. *Anthropology and egalitarianism: from Monticello to Guinea-Bissau*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

García Landa, José Angel 2002. An apocalypse of total communication: utopian and dystopian perspectives in 'Star Maker' (1937) and 'The Matrix' (1999), in Constanza del Río-Álvaro and Luis Miguel García-Mainar (eds.), *Memory, imagination and desire in contemporary Anglo-American literature and film*. Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 253-268.

Geertz, Clifford 1998. *Works and lives: the anthropologist as author*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Godin, Christian 2000. *Faut-il réhabiliter lutopie?* Nantes: Pleins Feux.

Graeber, David 2004. *Fragments of an anarchist anthropology*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press.

Greenhouse, Carol J. 2002. Introduction: altered states, altered lives, in Carol Greenhouse, Elizabeth Mertz and Kay Warren (eds.), *Ethnography in unstable places: everyday lives in contexts of dramatic political change*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Haddon, A.C. 1903. President's Address: anthropology, its position and needs, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 33: 11-23.

Hage, Ghassan 2012. Critical anthropological thought and the radical political imagery today, *Critique of Anthropology* 32 (3): 285-308.

Jameson, Fredric 2005. *Archaeologies of the future: the desire called utopia and other science fictions.* London and New York: Verso Books.

Krotz, Esteban 2002. *La otredad cultural entre utopía y ciencia: un estudio sobre el origen, el desarrollo y la reorientación de la antropología*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Lacroix, Jean-Yves 2004. *Un autre monde possible? Utopie et philosophie*. Paris: Bordas.

Lallemant, Michel, and Jean-Marc Ramos 2010. Réinventer le temps, *Temporalités* 12 (online). Accessed October 2014. URL: http://temporalites.revues.org/1315.

Leiris, Michel 1934. *L'Afrique fantôme.* Paris: Gallimard.

Letonturier, Eric 2013. Lutopie ou le (mauvais) rêve social, in Eric Letonturier (ed.), *Les Utopies*. Paris, CNRS.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude 1961 [1955]. *Tristes tropiques*. London: Hutchinson & Co.

Loty, Laurent 2011. L'optimisme contre l'utopie, *Revue Europe* 985: 85-94.

Malinowski, Bronisław 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: an account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea.* London: George Routledge.

— 1967. *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Maniglier, Patrice 2005. La parenté des autres: sur métamorphoses de la parenté de Maurice Godelier, *Critique* 701 (October): 758-774.

Mann, Charles 2011. *1493: uncovering the New World Columbus created*. New York: Alfred Knopf.

Maskens, Maïté, and Ruy Blanes 2013. Don Quixote's choice: manifesto for a romanticist anthropology, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (3): 245-281.

More, Thomas 2014. *Utopia* (2nd edn.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Moyn, Samuel 2010. *The last utopia: human rights in history*. Cambridge MA: Belknap Press.

Pina-Cabral, João de 2013. The two faces of mutuality: contemporary themes in anthropology, *Anthropological Quarterly* 86 (1): 257-275.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. 1922. *The Andaman islanders*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Renouvier, Charles 1857. *Uchronies: l'utopie dans l'histoire*. Paris, Bureau de la critique philosophique.

Ricoeur, Paul 1997. *L'idéologie et l'utopie*. Paris: Seuil.

Rivers, William H. 1912. A general account of method, in VV.AA., *Notes and queries in anthropology* (4th edn.). London: British Association for the Advancement of Science, 108-127.

Ruyer, Raymond 1950. *L'utopie et les utopies.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Sahlins, Marshall 1993. Goodbye to tristes tropes: ethnography in the context of modern world history, *The Journal of Modern History* 65 (1): 1-25.

— 2011. What kinship is (part one), *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (n.s.) 17: 2-19.

Stocking Jr., George 1992. *The ethnographer's magic and other essays in the history of anthropology*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Whitehead, Neil 2011. *Of cannibals and kings: primal anthropology in the Americas*. University Park, PA: Penn State Press.