

need to take further distance from North Atlantic universals as carriers of that legitimacy. As a discipline, we have launched the most sustained critique of the specific proposals rooted in these universals within academe. Yet we have not explored enough how much these universals set the terms of the debate and restricted the range of possible responses. In the context of this much-needed reformulation, the Caribbean's most important lesson is a formidable one, indeed. That lesson, as I see it, is that modernity never was—never could be— what it claims to be.

## Chapter 3

# A Fragmented Globality

What, if anything, is truly new about our times? The routine answer to that question is globalization. But what is globalization? While the word “modernity” dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century, globalization is a hundred years younger. Yet as a potential North Atlantic universal, globalization is already as murky as modernity. Like modernity, it cannot be all it claims to be. We have already seen that much of the newness it celebrates is fictitious and that this celebration silences much of world history.

We may further relativize its alleged newness with this quote:

International finance has become so interdependent and so interwoven with trade and industry... that political and military power can in reality do nothing... These little recognized facts, mainly the outcome of purely modern conditions (rapidity of communication creating a greater complexity and delicacy of the credit system) have rendered the problems of modern international politics profoundly and essentially different from the ancient (Angell 1910).

The main elements of a dominant version of globalization narratives are there: New technology—especially the speed of communication—creates an interdependence that weakens political institutions, and in turn leads to a fundamentally different world. Does this suggest a radical break? Yes, except that the quote is from Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion*, published in 1910. By the first decade of the twentieth century, some knowledgeable observers had already proposed that the main features we associate today with the word globalization fully obtained in the world of finance and politics. Yet we cannot easily discard the word, in part because, just like modernity, it seems to point to phenomena not easily covered by other words. That is because globalization as a word hides as much as it reveals— like the North Atlantic universals that it may eventually join. The task once more is to revisit the story and discover the silences between the lines.

If by globalization we mean the massive flow of goods, peoples, information, and capital across huge areas of the earth's surface in ways that make the parts dependent on the whole, then the world has been global since the sixteenth century. To acknowledge these earlier global flows is not to claim that there is nothing new under the sun. On the contrary, by helping us screen out that which passes for new and may actually be quite old, the reference to a massive empirical

record of five centuries highlights the more profound changes of our present. Having discovered the silencing of the past on a world scale, we are better poised to discover the production of silences about our present. We may realize that some of these silences are deliberately and cynically produced, and that what I call "globalitarism" is a dominant ideology of our times, an ideology that aims to propose the teleology of the market as the new master narrative of Western modernity. As we identify the effects of these combined silences on the lived experience of millions of human beings, we may realize the moral duty that the political and scholarly have to establish a critical distance from that ideology and from the visions of humanity that it proposes.

If we approach globalization as naïvely as the recent rise of "a world without boundaries," we find ourselves repeating advertising slogans without knowing how we ended up there. We miss the fact that words like "global" and "globalization" in their most current uses were first broadcast most aggressively by marketing agents and marketing schools. Kotabe Masaki and Kristiaan Helse (1998) locate what they call candidly "the globalization imperative" in the search for new marketing strategies.<sup>1</sup>

Scholarly analysis needs to go beyond the slogans, clichés, and narratives that sustain these strategies. These tropes not only silence the histories of the world, they also veil our understanding of the present—including their own conditions of possibility—by hiding the changing story of capital. Yet changes in the composition and spatialization of capital are crucial in shaping the uniqueness of our present. Henceforth, I reserve the word globalization for the conflation of these changes and their most immediate consequences.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, three processes will receive special attention: the reshaping of the respective markets for capital, labor, and consumer goods; the ongoing rise of finance capital and the social and ideological ramifications of that domination; and the extravagant increase in inequality both within and across political boundaries.

### A New Design for Capital

Capitalism has always been transnational. Crossing political borders is inherent in its historical trajectory. Some analysts have long suggested that capitalism is necessarily prone to cross borders inasmuch as it must find new places to integrate in the sphere of capital (Luxemburg 1951 [1914]). Today as in the past, most firms that operate in more than one country have a distinguishable home base, most often in the United States, Japan, Germany, France, or the United Kingdom. What is new today is not the internationalization of capital as such, but changes in the spatialization of the world economy and in the volume and, especially, kinds of movements that occur across political boundaries.

Recent world history is characterized by a series of fundamental changes in spatialization. Changes in the spatialization of markets—the market for capital (both financial and industrial), the market for labor, and the market for consumer goods—create overlapping spatialities that are not synchronized but together contribute to give the world economy its current shape. Second, and as

importantly, the domination of finance capital over the kinds and volumes of global flows now gives the world economy its main directions and trends. Third, predominant among these trends is increased inequality within and across political boundaries.

### Three Markets for Inequality

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, the world economy increasingly looked like a Triad (Ohmae 1985), a triangle with three major regional centers as its poles: one in North America (the United States and Canada), one in Asia (with Japan at the epicenter), and one in Western Europe (with Germany as the epicenter).<sup>3</sup> Since then, China's spectacular growth has made it the world's second largest economy, with a 1998 Gross Domestic Product of US\$3,846 billion (up from US\$821 billion in 1985). That growth increased the intensity of flows both within the Asian pole of the Triad and between that pole and the North American one. Yet since Japan remains China's main commercial partner and since China itself has become Japan's favorite client—second only to the United States—China's growth has not affected the reality of the Triad itself, although it has affected the relative weight of Western Europe in the world economy.

A unique feature of our times is the dynamism of international investments, especially within the Triad. The magnitude of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment)—for instance, capital deployed from one country into branches and subsidiaries located in another country—was reportedly US\$317 billion in 1995, dwarfing records from all past eras. Despite yearly fluctuations, notably in 1992 and 1998 after the Asian crisis, as well as in 2002 after the sudden decline of the U.S. stock market due to corporate accounting scandals, the long-term rise seems continuous. Even the risks of temporary recessions in individual countries do not threaten the relative value of FDI within the Triad. Indeed, FDI is becoming the primary form of exchange across state borders, a place traditionally occupied by commerce, and is influencing more than ever the rhythm and direction of international exchanges. This does not mean that capital moves freely across borders. Rather, its spatial distribution is increasingly selective. Most of the world's economic movement, and especially FDI, occurs between or within the poles of the Triad, which alone contained 88 percent of all capital flows in the 1980s. Meanwhile, all but 25 developing countries are excluded from the market for private capital (Passet 2000:136–7). The capital invested across political borders tends to come from six countries: the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the Netherlands, more or less in that order. Investments reach mainly the same countries with the notable addition of China. Of the US\$317 billion invested across state boundaries in 1995, US\$194 billion stayed in the North Atlantic (within the United States, Canada, and the European Union).<sup>4</sup> Outside of the Triad, exchange tends to take the minor form of subcontracting.

That global exchange remains concentrated among a few countries, mainly within the North Atlantic plus China and Japan, is one of many aspects of the increasing concentration of economic power that characterizes our

times—a point to which I shall return. Exchange occurs primarily between the same countries, between firms of the same sectors, between branches of the same firm. Far from moving toward more open markets, the world economy witnessed in the 1980s and 1990s the rise of “private markets,” of monopolies and oligopolies that now dominate its most important exchanges, notably that of capital.

Likewise, we have not witnessed the global integration of the price of labor that some optimists promised in the 1960s. On the contrary, the world labor market has become more differentiated. It is differentiated by region, with the highest prices in the North Atlantic and the lowest in rural Asia, Latin America, and especially Africa. A mobile elite has emerged at the very top of every specialization and its visibility often creates the impression that anyone can work anywhere. But while many governments keep the door ajar for members of this elite, the same governments are raising the gates to keep away the vast majority of potential foreign laborers. The speed in communications contributes to reducing the mobility of labor in relation to that of capital, adding to the global differentiation of the labor market. Capital can now find the right laborer in her place of birth and spread the labor process for a single product over countries or even continents. This is true not just for traditional manual labor in agriculture or industry. Credit cards can be processed in a Caribbean country such as Barbados, where literacy rates higher than in the United States guarantee that equal competence can be bought at a lower price. Some Ford cars are now designed simultaneously in a virtual work space by teams of engineers spread over many countries but linked by computers. California-based computer companies that once used to charter flights to recruit programmers and engineers from Bangalore, India, now prefer to subcontract them in situ because salaries are much lower there. Sophisticated communication systems nullify physical distance; Indians and Californians can work together, though with different incomes. The result is increased differentiation across political borders. The material and social prospects of a computer scientist performing the same tasks in Silicon Valley, California, and in Bangalore, India, vary considerably. Finally, labor market differentiation also occurs within political borders. While the prospects for medical doctors or computer scientists vary according to the country in which they live, in no way does the market for agricultural laborers in India compare to that for computer scientists in size, saturation, or life prospects. Few, if any, can cross from one labor market to the other. Only at a lower level, that of consumer products, is the global economy moving at great speed toward a single integrated market. An increasing number of buyers from all continents now have access to some of the cheapest products of the world economy at more or less equivalent prices.

In short, globalization does not mean that the world economy is now integrated into a single space within which capital, labor, and commodities freely flow. Rather, that economy is developing three contradictory yet overlapping modes of spatialization: 1) increased, though selective, flexibility of capital, mainly finance capital within or between the poles of the Triad; 2) differential labor markets within and across national borders; 3) increased yet uneven integration of consumer markets worldwide.

**The age of creditors.** These changes in spatialization parallel the increasing domination of finance capital, which now tends to impose its own logic on the entire world economy. We have entered an age where rentiers of all kinds, including creditors, are backed by the most powerful governments and institutions of the world, notably the United States, England, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and can impose their appetite for quick profits as a natural and irreversible outcome of the human condition. As *The Economist* put it on October 7, 1995: “Financial markets have become judge and jury of economic policy-making.” Hans-Peter Martin and Harald Schumann (1997 [1996]:61), who cite these words, rightly add that this new tribunal is also without law and its new dictatorship entails little responsibility. The consequences are awful.

The first is the relative decline of productive investment. Within FDI itself, major transfers have moved away from manufacturing to target “non-productive” assets such as real estate, tourism, department stores, banking, and insurance (Weiss 1997:8). By the late 1990s, among the leading countries only Japan’s foreign investments remained relatively high in manufacturing. The major profits, national and transnational, are now in rent-form, notably in the financial markets. As many transnational holdings involved in manufacturing become “financial groups with an industrial concentration” (Chesnais 1994:61–6), the logic of finance capital—which, as both Marx and Keynes warned us, is close enough to the logic of usury—becomes the dominant logic of the system.

The bulk of capital now deployed in the world economy does not target new production. Since the mid-1970s capital accumulation is realized mainly through the annexation of already existing firms via buyouts or fusions. These transactions reached US\$411 billion in 1998, an increase of 74 percent over 1997, which was itself an increase of 45 percent over 1996 (Passet 2000:84). To be blunt, capital is not generating new ventures: It combines or reshapes old ones. Enterprises themselves become commodities with indeterminate use values. Their exchange value attracts the raiders who buy them often only to break them down and sell the pieces at huge profits. Similarly, currency transactions, which totaled US\$18 billion a day in 1970, climbed to US\$200 billion in 1986 and US\$1,300 billion in 1995. By 1998, currency transactions had reached the now broken record of US\$1,800 billion a day, 60 times more than the exchange value of goods and services (Passet 2000:98). It is as if we have returned full circle to the speculative explosion that accompanied the birth of capitalism, but with the added irony of time lost and gained and the added power garnered through the age-old deployment of capital itself. As merchant capital once defined the direction of deployment only to be overthrown by industrial capital, industrial capital is now being subsumed by finance capital.

Many economists see the mobility of finance capital and the tremendous power unleashed by this freedom as the most important feature of our times. We have entered the age of speculative capitalism. The fragility of unregulated financial markets mixes rumors of immediate doom—and the reality of spectacular crashes, some of which, as we saw in 2002, resulting from the willingness of some corporate managers to engage in deceit on a massive scale—with hopes

for extravagant profits. Quick profit, anywhere, by any means—licit or illicit—becomes the explicit ethos of managers; That goal is inherent in the logic of capital, but the increasing domination of finance over industrial capital changes the dynamics of accumulation by introducing a new temporality that now extends beyond the world of finance.

David Harvey (1982) has reminded us of capital's tendency toward acceleration and of the capitalists' strategies to use time against space. Marx—who first exposed capitalism's tendency toward acceleration—and Harvey both insist on this feature as an aspect of industrial capital. The pattern holds even truer for finance capital today. Increasingly freed from bulky physical holdings, further empowered by prompt means of exchange that deny its materiality and challenge our very notion of time, finance capital is picking up the baton from industry because it now epitomizes capital's tendency to erase space. Its new speculative spirit is backed by the increasing speed of information, which it in turn accelerates.

The currency market provides a telling example. Huge amounts of money can be made or lost in a flash. James Tobin's now famous cite of an operator that "my long-term is the next ten minutes" rightly captures the new temporality that finance capital has introduced into the world economy. The logic of finance capital rests on a bet with both time and perception, or better, with perception through time. As an investor I must guess *now* what a majority of people with means will consider *tomorrow* to be a prime source of revenues in an unforeseeable yet dreamable *future*. The point is to buy *now* and to sell *before tomorrow*. Let others wonder about whether the dream was indeed viable and how it will stand up in the long-term future. The more distant and vague the future, the better for me as speculator. Implied in that logic is the need to constantly reduce the gap between now and tomorrow, to play the guessing game faster than the guy next door, while further increasing the distance between near and far futures. In postponing *ad infinitum* the long-term future, yet decreasing the distance between now and tomorrow, the logic of finance capital is accelerating the speed of the world economy, down to those single business firms that must now pay full attention to their short-term performance at the expense of their long-term projects and possibilities. Anything that takes time to show results—research, slow yet reliable growth, calculated yet potentially rewarding risks—become secondary, engulfed by the rapidity of daily stock market assessments.

The cost of that domination is not only economic. It is also social and political. Inflation ranks highest among a creditor's fear, for obvious reasons: As the value of money decreases, time works against the creditor who collects payments of decreasing worth. The domination of creditors means increased pressure against economic recovery programs that risk provoking inflation within a currency sphere, from raises in the minimum wage to massive government projects. Conversely, the political pressure of capital now pushes national governments, especially those in the North Atlantic, to combat inflation notably by keeping wages and salaries low. These pressures to keep wages and salaries low, except at the very top, are not only due to the financiers' fear of inflation. They also reflect the particularities of the relation between finance capital and labor, and the increased distance between human beings when the market place determines the quality of human relations.

The welfare of the labor force was never a high priority of investors. The only relevant exception in the history of world capitalism is—ironically—plantation slavery in the Americas, when masters had some interest in reproducing the labor power of the slaves they had bought, at least until they received a full return on their investments. Yet it is fair to say that the labor movement under industrial capitalism brought a social consensus, backed by most North Atlantic states and quite a few others, in which national populations were seen as both workers and consumers. Unionization, the shrinking of the work day, the recognition of vacation time, differential pay for overtime, and equal pay for women are all part of this consensus about the right of the labor force to reproduce itself. Furthermore, even with flexible production, industrial capital maintains some relations of proximity between those who control—if not those who own—the means of production and the laborers. Capital never had a human face, but with industrial capital at least it wore a human mask.

With finance capital and the intricacies of multi-layered connections in the world economy today, capital takes off its human mask and seems to act with its own merciless logic away from the workplace and the workers. Finance capital emerges as a protagonist in its own right who defines anew the realms and purposes of productive ventures now integrated in its orbit. Yet since finance capital has no particular regard for new productive ventures as such, it has absolutely no qualms about the status of the labor force. This is particularly true in a context where the phenomenal technological advances of the last few decades mean that increased material wealth is now generated with fewer and fewer laborers. Corporate managers can quite honestly speak the depersonalized language of "the market" and reject all responsibility for the human disasters that this language masks. The dominant discourse of political and economic elites projects national populations less as a single potential source of differentiated labor than as differentiated pools of potential consumers. Here again the logic is speculative: Whether or not a number of these laborers starve to death, one is betting that a minority will survive within the targeted consumer pools long enough to purchase whatever one has to sell—at a profit, of course. From this to an ideology of market extremism, the bridge is rather short. Many have crossed it.

**The morality of growth.** The unabashed defense of the market today flaunts an extremism that Adam Smith himself would not recognize. One of Smith's central arguments is that uncontrolled economic exchange is the only guarantee of growth since the invisible hand of the market is its own regulator. Market extremists today carry that argument to the radical proposition that this regulating function of the invisible hand is at work in all human activities. Uncontrolled economic exchange is the sole guarantee of growth and productivity in all spheres of life. Therefore all the social and cultural preferences eventuating in political controls that may prevent or mediate such exchanges should be abolished. The market is not only the best, but the only reliable social regulator. It does not require political judgment and therefore its activities and the results of such activities do not need to be submitted to political judgment let alone political consensus. Is the educational system of a society declining or nonexistent? Discard

political debates on the long-term purpose of education. Reduce government's role in setting educational policy and mid-term goals. Allow entrepreneurs to set profit-oriented schools and universities: The best institutions will survive as parents and students exercise their choice as consumers. With minor variations the formula can be extended to all realms of life: Social harmony will result from the individual decisions of millions of consumers. Politics is out, and with it government intervention. Political consensus need not express itself through government institutions: It expresses itself in the shopping centers. Government's role is to give and protect free access to the malls.

Some observers insist that these extreme positions are coherent with all forms of liberalism (Rosanvallon 1999; St-Onge 2000). Pierre Rosanvallon argues that once we stop thinking of liberalism as a doctrine and assess it as a mode of thinking or a field of vision (*un champ problématique*), economic liberalism, political liberalism, and anthropological liberalism appear as intertwined if not inseparable. Thus the position of market extremists could be read as a logical continuation of the ideas of John Locke or Adam Smith.

This line of argument is relevant only in the field of intellectual history, where ideas can be studied independently of their deployment. I agree that in all three cases liberalism introduces an ontological break between a phenomenon and its context. What could be conceptualized as a process becomes a fixed entity—the market is severed from society, justice is severed from politics, and the individual is severed from history. In their concrete historical deployment, however, economic liberalism, political liberalism, and anthropological liberalism did not always coalesce. Indeed, they often contradict each other. Thus the distinction is crucial to understanding not only times gone by but a present where market extremists are taking the political and ideological lead of the liberal rainbow. There are millions of people today who have not read Locke or Smith, who believe in civil rights and the market, and yet who do not like the idea that one should be able to buy a kidney, a spouse, a child-laborer, a child as sex object, a shot of crack, a uterus, a term paper, a family name, a bag of heroin, rotten meat, biological weapons, or a self-help suicide kit just because someone else is willing to sell them. In short, liberalism also carries its inherent contradictions.

As some critics have noted, carried to the extreme the argument for the market is actually an argument against liberal democracy (Martin and Schumann 1997; Passet 2000). Just imagine political parties selling ballots at the election booth! Yet aberrant as it is, the fundamental proposition behind such a scheme—the social infallibility of the market—is increasingly trumpeted by scholars, corporate lobbyists, and politicians. This repetition has a purpose: To make the aberration sound normal. After all, the strategy worked with some North Atlantic fictions in other times. Thus it may be worth exposing, albeit in schematic form, some of the assumptions behind market extremism. These include:

- A conception of history as preordained and regulated, thus escaping human intervention (i.e., a naturalist view of history).
- A conception of the individual as an atomized self merely placed in a socio-historical context, as opposed to a being partly constituted by that context.

- A conception of society as a mere addition of such atomized individuals, that is, as an entity in no way greater than the sum of its parts.
- A conception of the social good—the meaning and purpose of specific human collectivities—as the smallest degree of interference between exchanges among such atomized and self-serving individuals.
- A conception of the moral good—what is just, fair, and good for humankind—that does not require any debate about the nature and purpose of humanity as a whole or about the value of any single human life. Growth becomes an end in and of itself, a universal moral value.

Each of these propositions can be proven false both theoretically or by reference to distant or recent history. Even the initial proposition that uncontrolled economic exchange is the sole guarantor of national growth is belied both by the history of the economic take-off of most North Atlantic countries and more recent developments in the world economy. Centuries of political controls over economic flows made North Atlantic countries the world powers they are today. Europe recovered from World War II largely because of the massive state intervention of the U.S. Marshall Plan. The quick recovery of the Asian Tigers at the end of the twentieth century shows that government intervention is not obsolete. They overcame their economic crisis much faster than anyone expected by snubbing the IMF and using massive government intervention to rectify their economy. Argentina, in contrast, took the unregulated route with disastrous results.

Market extremists rarely follow their own prescriptions. The same groups and individuals who argue against government intervention actually constantly solicit that intervention when financial interests are at stake. In 1995, about a dozen powerful individuals, including President Clinton, White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, and IMF President Michel Camdessus, raised US\$50 billion in record time to back the Mexican peso. A banker from J. P. Morgan described that operation, dubbed "Peso Shield" by the *Washington Post*, as "a bail out for speculators" (Martin and Schumann 1997:41–6). Finally, all the operations of finance capital assume a social structure and a technological infrastructure that are maintained and reproduced by massive government interventions. Since at least the 1980s Savings and Loans debacle in the United States,<sup>5</sup> capital is increasingly socializing its risks and losses while managers loudly denounce government interventions that have social goals.

But economics is not the final frontier in this argument, even if profit is its main rationale. Professional economists continue to argue over the balance of market deregulations and state interventions most likely to generate growth in any society at a specific historical moment. Even more importantly, many argue over the relevance of growth in relation to equality within and across political borders. Thus, in the late 1990s a reader in development economics (Lundahl and Ndulu 1996) fully recast the notion of development in terms that explicitly accounted for the relation between growth and equality. The lead authors write:

Development takes place when the gross national product (or income) per capita grows at a sustained pace over a long period of time without simultaneously worsening the distribution of income and increasing the number of absolute poor... to these

requirements should also be added a condition with respect to sustainability. . . . Growth should not be hampered, but resources must be left to future generations as well (Lundahl and Ndulu 1996:1, emphasis added).

In short, professional economists do know that the study of the economic process is irrelevant without a democratic consensus on its aims. A few even acknowledge that these aims and this consensus are, in the short term, political and, in the long run, moral (Sen 1992, 1999). Such acknowledgments are anathemas to market extremists who claim that their proposals have little to do with ethics or politics.

But if we look closely at the assumptions behind neoliberal extremism, we quickly discover that what we are being sold is not just an economic program. We are being asked to endorse growth as a moral value. We are asked to take as a religious—that is, unquestionable—tenet the proposition that productivity in any domain, anywhere, anyhow is good for humankind as a whole. We are being asked to forget that productivity without a consensus on its distribution is another name for sheer profit and that whenever profit is sheer only a few can collect it. We are being asked to renounce worldviews that suggest the ethical solidarity of humankind. In short, we are being asked to accept a prepackaged formula about what it means to be a good and proper human being in all times and places, to endorse one vision of humanity, and an odd one at that. Visions of humankind are, of course, among the favorite topics of sociocultural anthropologists. We have spent much disciplinary energy over more than a century in showing how such visions vary across time and space. We should have a say in that debate. We should at least demonstrate that this vision of humanity is culturally located.

Nor is that vision politically innocent or morally benign. Behind the unabashed praise of the market as social regulator and growth as a moral value is a total disregard for the rest of humankind. German journalists Martin and Schumann offer a chilling critique of globalitarism, the term I apply to the optimistic theory that naïvely posits that the political, economic, and personal interconnections forged over the last 50 years are unprecedented, and that they presage the happy transfer of what were previously state functions to free market mechanisms (see chapter 4). At the 1995 closed-door meeting of the Gorbachev Foundation in San Francisco, members of what has become a global oligarchy calmly agreed that at some point in this twenty-first century only two-tenths of the world's active population would be necessary to sustain the world economy. The middle classes as we know them are likely to disappear. Chunks of humanity will become irrelevant. John Gage and Scott McNealy of Sun Microsystems suggest the motto of that future: "to have lunch or be lunch." And how will the prosperous fifth appease those who may not want to be someone else's lunch? Former U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, the very one who coined the word globalization, provides the most successful answer: *tittytainment*—titty as in tits and motherhood, that is, enough milk for the poor to survive poorly and plenty of entertainment to maintain their good spirits (Martin and Schumann 1997:1–5).

The coincidence in authorship reveals much more than Mr. Brzezinski's talent for neologisms. It suggests that one does not need a conspiracy theory to

document the fact that parts of the discourse of globalization are deliberately produced for the management of imagination. There is such a thing as globalitarism as a loosely concerted effort—a gentleman's agreement, though Ms. Thatcher was at the Gorbachev Foundation, to renew faith in a revitalized Western metanarrative against postmodernist despair. The internal limitations of academic postmodernism aside, its rather fast displacement into scholarly discourse—including anthropology—is best read against the background of a public campaign on the benefits of globalization. That this public campaign has been discussed in closed-door meetings at think tanks and in other policy-making centers is more than likely.<sup>6</sup> Yet it is also likely that most of the scholars who contribute unwittingly to that campaign do not even know of such meetings.

The strategies devised at closed-door meetings such as that of the Gorbachev Foundation are backed by public pronouncements such as the increasingly explicit condemnation of the poor as the cause of their own poverty. Revamping old arguments in a new vocabulary, many explanations of poverty now blame the victims of globalization. The poor are poor because they deserve it: They have the wrong culture, the wrong values, or the wrong kind of behavior (Gilder 1993; Harrison and Huttington 2000). The move is again moral—or rather, amoral to the extent that it absolves those with political and economic power from any kind of guilt or responsibility. But by that same token it is also blatantly political. It is a preemptive strike against those who may wonder why, if globalization is so good for humankind, it has created so much misery. Indeed, new to our times is a massive increase in inequality both within and across political boundaries.

**Global polarization.** Today's world is a polarized one. That polarization takes many forms. Between sellers and buyers, we are witnessing the rise of world oligopolies: A few firms now control the world market for most major commodities. Rather than the level-playing field vaunted by market extremists, this concentration of power eliminates smaller competitors and excludes new entrants. Polarization has also increased between countries. Gone are the developmentalist dreams that assumed all countries to be on the same path. A majority of countries and some continental chunks (notably sub-Saharan Africa) are becoming poorer each day. Even more importantly, their state of affairs is becoming irrelevant to the world economy. Given the declining significance of geopolitics in the post-Cold War era, this means quite concretely that chunks of humankind are seen as superfluous to world political and economic leaders. The global map has increasingly large black holes.

Striking is the concentration of resources of all kinds in a few hands, most often in the North Atlantic. In 1998, 74 of the 200 top international corporations were based in the United States, 41 in Japan, 23 in Germany, 19 in France, and 13 in the United Kingdom (Clairmont 2001). The turnover for only half of them then exceeded France's national product and dwarfed that of Mexico by a ratio of six to one. Whatever the domain, from communications to energy, from transportation to biotechnology, from cereals and bananas to clothing, a smaller number of actors seem to hold most of the cards, and these actors are usually located in the North Atlantic or in Japan.

This massive concentration of economic power, and the polarization, fragmentation, and related increase in inequalities of all kinds that accompany it, rarely make headlines. A rare and eloquent warning was raised in the pages of the usually conservative magazine, *The Economist*, by guest commentator Robert Wade of the London School of Economics. Wade's presentation of the data on purchasing power parity (PPP), drawn from two World Bank studies, is worth quoting at length. He writes (2001:72):

The distribution has two poles. One, at the bottom end, is at an average income of less than \$1,500 a year. It contains the populations of most of Africa, India, Indonesia and rural China. At the other pole, with average PPP income of more than \$11,500, are the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Britain and Italy. Some of the space between \$1,500 and \$11,500 is occupied by countries such as urban China, Russia and Mexico. But notice the strange "missing middle": relatively few people live in countries with average PPP incomes that fall between \$5,000 and \$11,500.

Increased polarization of incomes between countries now characterizes the world. To start with, the very poor and the very rich tend to live in different countries. The president of Morgan Stanley collected US\$14 million in bonuses in 1996 alone, more than many Third World countries received in aid from the United States in the same year. In 1993, the salary of the chief officer of the Disney corporation was 325,000 times higher than that of the average Haitian worker toiling for Disney subsidiaries, and by 1998 the three richest personal fortunes in the world were higher than the national product of the 600 million people living in the 48 poorest countries of that same world (Passet 2000:138-9; see also Clairmont 2001).

The figures that tell these tales of tycoons and scions are so indecent that their trumpeting in the likes of *People* magazine may actually distract from the geographical distribution of global inequality. Few readers of this book can hope to make US\$14 million in a year. Thus many North Atlantic residents may feel that they are also on the other side of global richness. That is simply not true. Where one lives today makes the most crucial difference for what one's income is likely to be, both in absolute and in relative terms. Since at least the mid-1980s, the richest ten percent countries have been getting richer at a faster pace and the poorest ten percent have also been getting poorer at a faster pace, furthering trends inherent in the development of world capitalism. The ratio of per capita income between poorest to richest countries was only 3 in 1820, and 11 in 1913, but already 35 in 1972. It has more than doubled to 72 by 1992. The per capita income of 80 countries was lower in 1998 than ten years before (Passet 2000:138). Some economists estimate that it will take 40 to 50 years for most countries in sub-Saharan Africa—but Haiti or Honduras also come to mind—to reach the mediocre levels of real income they enjoyed in the 1970s. Furthermore, as Eric Toussaint (1999) puts it, "an infernal spiral of debt" tremendously increases the woes of the countries of the South. The restrictions and regulations imposed together by the IMF, the World Bank, the Paris Club (comprised of the North Atlantic states in their capacity as creditors), and the London Club (which regroups the most important private lenders) put peripheral countries in the

absurd situation of having to fill a bottomless barrel. As Toussaint (1999) shows, between the 1982 debt crisis and the late 1990s, peripheral countries had, together, reimbursed more than four times what they owed. Even so, the sum of their external debt was four times greater in 1998 than it was in 1992. Interest payments on the debt, low ratings of currency, low wages, and structural adjustments imposed from the outside are among the many factors that contribute to the increased poverty of the South and the increased richness—in both real and relative terms—of the countries within the Triad. More than ever before, both richness and poverty have a geographical face. Citing the work of the World Bank's Branko Milanovic, Wade writes: "By 1993 an American of the average income of the poorest ten percent of the population was better off than two-thirds of the world's people." By virtue of being born in the United States, even a poor American is likely better off today than two thirds of humanity. By virtue of being born somewhere else, say in sub-Saharan Africa or in rural India, one is also automatically targeted for poverty. Not surprisingly, the gap between the median and the poorest ten percent countries is also widening (Wade 2001:73-4).

At least some economists argue that inequality is also on the rise within countries, although the evidence of a long-term trend remains disputable. Wade sees the gap between urban and rural sectors in both India and China as wide enough to warrant treatment of these two countries as four different entities. Indicators of polarization also obtain in the North Atlantic where the percentage of families with middle-class incomes is decreasing. In Québec alone it decreased from 60 percent of the population in 1973 to 41 percent in 1996 (cited in St.-Onge 2000:30). According to the former U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich (1991), by the early 1990s one-fifth of the population of the United States was doing increasingly well while the remaining four-fifths were on a downward path. By the end of that decade, the 2.7 percent richest Americans owned as much as the poorest 100 million of their fellow citizens (Passet 2000:127). Socialist-oriented programs have slowed similar trends in Europe, but they are under serious political attacks from big business and their allies. The United Kingdom, where the political power of business has most eroded the role of government as regulator and redistributor of wealth on that side of the Atlantic, has registered one of the most serious increases in inequality in Europe. It has also seen one of the highest increases in corporate profits. There as here, the debate continues about the number of citizens who will fall on the bad side of the gap. Some economists insist that polarization within countries remains rare and quite temporary. For Alberto Figueroa, "the empirical evidence shows an increase in the degree of inequality between countries but a viscous change in inequalities within countries in the long run" (personal communication 2001). Still, the public acknowledgment that populations within the same industrialized countries might be headed in different directions is itself a new feature.

The possibility of multiple and divergent futures increases a political apathy already premised on the distribution of inequality. In a context where the average of the most poor in the United States still has more purchasing power than two-thirds of humanity, it becomes much harder to motivate the population of this country about the woes of citizens elsewhere. If these woes are presented as both

inevitable and irreversible, dictated by the laws of nature—the inevitability of the market as social regulator—rather than as the consequences of ongoing deployments of power, then quite understandably the average American citizen would rather not hear about them. She has her own uncertain future in mind. To make matters worse, academic, political, and corporate leaders throughout most of the world have joined in what Linda Weiss (1997, 1998) calls “the political construction of hopelessness,” telling citizens that they cannot do anything about the social consequences of globalization. Once unequivocal assumptions that citizens of Western democracies had some control over the fate of their neighborhoods, towns, or children are now being questioned. Right-wing populism feeds on that despair, silencing the fact that social polarization was not handed down to us by an anonymous world market but is the partial and predictable result of conscious political decisions made by North Atlantic states since the Reagan-Thatcher era.

We are far from the idyllic vision of a global village where everyone is connected to everyone else. Rather, our times are marked by the growing awareness of global flows among ever more fragmented populations. World histories and local histories are becoming both increasingly intertwined and increasingly contradictory. Homogenization is at best superficial. The world is global indeed; but it is also more fragmented than ever.

To be sure, a few corporations from the United States, Japan, Italy, and France now seem to share global cultural control through the distribution of entertainment and clothing. The planetary integration of the market for cheap consumer goods does tie world populations into a web of consumption in which national ideals are becoming closer even as the means to achieve them wither for a growing majority. The integration of that market, the speed of communications, and the oligopolies in media and entertainment contribute to projecting the same image of the good life all over the world. Prompted by global media, more human beings than ever before share similar lists of the products they need to consume and the objects they need to possess in order to achieve individual satisfaction. In that sense we are truly witnessing for the first time, especially among the youth, a global production of desire.

This global production of desire and the integration of the market for consumer goods upon which it rests have lured many analysts into two related illusions. The illusion that a single-market society is both desirable and possible rests on an emphasis on the development of a global market for consumer goods and a total neglect of the processes of differentiation unleashed or reinforced by the financial and labor markets.<sup>7</sup> The related illusion of a single global culture builds upon that emphasis. It singles out the most obvious similarities in consumer behavior and reduces culture, at worst, to consumption patterns, or at best to style. The concentration of economic power and the integration of the retail market within the clothing, food, and entertainment industries provide the empirical basis for this latter illusion.

Yet even the integration of the global market for consumer goods does not produce harmonious borders, let alone harmonious directions. The very same processes that link populations often provide them with the means to affirm differences that crisscross political, economic, and cultural fields. There is no

theoretical ground to claim and no empirical evidence to suggest that similar consumption patterns necessarily lead to cultural or political homogeneity. Nor can we assume that economic exchange alone necessarily fosters social integration, even when that exchange takes the form of face-to-face encounters. Thus, for instance, the proportion of individuals born in Senegal and living in France or in Italy today as compared to earlier times is less significant than the perception of that presence as an invasion—a perception enhanced by the visibility of the few Senegalese peddling cheap wares on the street. Proximity here does not mean automatic acceptance on the part of the natives. Nor does it imply a desire on the part of the Senegalese-born residents to become French or Italian as defined by most natives. Indeed, equally significant is the immigrants' increasing refusal to blend and disappear culturally into France or Italy, and their material capacity to sustain that refusal. To be sure, a vision of the good life in France and Italy was what attracted them there in the first place, but their material capacity to both accept and reject parts of France or Italy is reinforced by a number of global processes, including the development of a global market for consumer goods that includes the airline tickets they bought as well as the Chinese-made watches that many of them sell on the streets of Turin or Paris.

To put it more simply, the market economy itself prevents the rise of a global market society because, contrary to the philosophical assumptions of market extremists, human beings everywhere have had and will have goals that are not market-oriented. These goals and the moral values, cultural codes, and social ideals that sustain them ensure that the effects of economic processes can never be reduced to the economic sphere.

From Islamic fundamentalists and Christian evangelicals to the followers of Reverend Moon and of the Church of Scientology, the late twentieth century abounds with individuals who engaged in economic practices to fulfill what they saw as primarily religious goals. Even when the decision to engage in such practices stems primarily from immediate material needs, economic returns are deployed in all spheres of life. Market women from Haiti who buy cheap goods in Florida or St. Marteen to resell in Port-au-Prince or elsewhere in the Caribbean may use substantial parts of their otherwise meager profits to restore vodoun temples in their village of origins. Profits made in Turin, Nice, or San Francisco through the global network of the Mourid followers of Cheik Amadou Bamba help launch small ventures in Dakar, from taxicabs to food stalls and tourist shops. The global economic strength of the Mourids reinforces their socioeconomic power at home. Their increased influence on the local Senegalese scene reinforces ethnic, religious, and cultural divisions that could eventually threaten the Senegalese state itself.

While the integration of the market for consumer goods and the global production of desire enforce homogenization, both also contribute to the exacerbation of tensions through the differential use of opportunities, the social polarization noted above, the unequal means available to satisfy new desires, and the always-specific discrepancies between global models and local ones. There is no global cultural model to attenuate those discrepancies in part because there is no agreement on the long-term meanings of social life—a point to which I shall



return. Within and across state boundaries, polarization and entanglement now create new ways of perceiving distance—temporal, spatial, social, and cultural—thus shaping a new horizon of historicity that is an inherent part of the “fragmented globality” that marks our times.

There is a paradox in that coinage, but ours are times of paradox and irony. On the one hand, the global village cliché rings true for a larger proportion of the world population that is increasingly aware of global flows and their impact on daily routines. At the same time, most human beings continue to act locally, albeit with less confidence that their actions might affect the global order. This perceived powerlessness simultaneously accentuates cultural openness and chauvinism. World histories and local histories are perceived as intertwined and contradictory at once. The twenty-first century is likely to be marked by the speed and brutality of these contradictions as the global village becomes an ever more constant, yet more elusive presence.

### Living in a Fragmented World

**The perception of powerlessness.** Even the most sublime narratives of globalization cannot easily reconcile their glorification of the present and the perception of individual powerlessness that they themselves help to nurture. Because “the market” is said to have become one of the most powerful actors on the world scene today, albeit still an invisible one, prominent individuals, from corporate leaders to chiefs of state, now routinely claim their inability to control events. Commenting on Operation “Peso Shield,” IMF President Michel Camdessus voiced his own powerlessness vis-à-vis the financiers, claiming, “the world is in the hands of these guys” (Martin and Schumann 1997:45).

More often than not these claims are convenient shields for choices that protect capital accumulation (Weiss 1998). Political decisions made by elected leaders of the North Atlantic between 1972 and the late 1990s led to a situation where financial markets appear all powerful and where humanity is controlled by a rising class of anonymous global speculators. Even now that the domination process has gained its own momentum, the powerlessness of political leaders remains a choice. But claims of powerlessness from the mighty ring true to millions of individuals all over the world who feel that they have little control not only over their own destiny, but also over the terms under which to negotiate their present. In spite of the rosy promises of globalization, for an increasing number of human beings ours are times of uncertainty. For the poorest, some of that uncertainty inheres in the economic polarization described above—because they are on its wrong side. The increased impersonal nature of life outside the household, the increased weight of institutions—indeed, the increasing need for institutionalized forms of organization, public or private—and the related growth of government bureaucracies reinforce the sense of vulnerability for many poor and not so poor. But there is more to the story.

We have seen earlier that human beings were surprisingly swift in adopting materials, crops, animals, and customs during the first moment of globality.

Yet nothing could have prepared our predecessors for the dazzling speed at which information moves today. That I am able to write these lines in the south of France, have my research assistant in Chicago verify facts and references, and—given her diligence—receive the correct citation and incorporate it in my text all within half an hour is something few of them could have imagined, especially before the mid-nineteenth century, as Jules Verne’s works remind us. It is unlikely that even these futurists could envision the back-and-forth flow of information that I just described as a routine part of their life. From the time of the Roman Empire down to the nineteenth century, news moved at speeds that look sluggish today. At the beginning of the sixteenth century it took four days to deliver a message from Nuremberg to Venice. From the 1490s to the 1730s, the average distance one could cover by any means of transport in 24 hours was about a hundred kilometers (Braudel 1967:318). Historian Fernand Braudel, who provides this estimate, adds: “Mail took weeks, months, to reach its destination” (1967:416). Extraordinary advances in sea travel “created a global network of communications” (Braudel 1967:415) but only in determining how far people could go, not how fast they could get there. And since information moved at the same rhythm as its human carriers, it moved slowly. News of the Haitian Revolution, important and silent as it was, took five weeks to reach Europe by way of Jamaica. News of the French Revolution, thought then as it is now to be a most important event, moved slowly through Europe and even through France itself. According to Eric Hobsbawm (1962:10), “the news of the fall of the Bastille reached the populace of Madrid within thirteen days; but in Peronne, a bare 133 kilometers from the capital, ‘the news from Paris’ was not received until the 28th.”

In the midst of that revolution, the linking of Lille and Paris by way of the Chappe brothers’ optic telegraph in 1793 first broke the tie between the speed of human travel and that of information. But the real impact of both the optic and electric telegraphs started to be felt only in 1857 when the first underwater transatlantic cable linked Ireland to Newfoundland. Thirteen years later, an underwater cable linked Brest to Duxbury. The spread of radio, telephone, air travel, and television considerably accelerated planetary flows of communications in the twentieth century and made transcontinental information accessible daily to millions of individuals. Since the last quarter of that century, satellite communications and related developments such as the spread of the Internet signaled the beginning of another era. Even when the old means of communications seem unchanged, new technology makes them more efficient, and thus faster or cheaper. In 1990 dollars, the cost of the same phone call between New York and London went down from US\$245 in 1930 to US\$3 in 1990. By 1999, it was a mere 35 cents (Passet 2000:83).

The individual use of these means remains extremely unequal. By 1997, three-quarters of the world’s telephones were concentrated in the eight richest countries. At about the same time, nearly 80 percent of all Internet users were in the North Atlantic (57 percent in North America and 20 percent in Europe). This inequality both reflects and reproduces the economic polarization that divides continents, countries, and populations. In the United States alone, where individual access to the Internet dwarfs figures for the entire world, ethnic minorities have much less access to computers than whites both within and across income

categories. Thus the fundamental change is not in the number—or even the proportion—of individuals who have direct access to these new means of communications, even though such numbers are increasing everywhere. Rather, the magnitude and velocity of planetary flows of information now affect routine practices of millions of individuals who themselves are not necessarily wired. In so doing, they contribute to the fragmented globality of our times. A major consequence of the magnitude and velocity of these flows is an increasing difficulty to reconcile time and space—not only analytically but also ethnographically and phenomenologically—in the lived experience of ordinary human beings.

If I am correct that massive global flows have been part of world history since the sixteenth century, it follows that millions of human beings before us had to negotiate various temporalities and spatialities. As we have seen, efforts to locate, define, and come to terms with modernity all have to do with probing or redefining relations between time and space. While such explicit efforts engaged mainly theorists and philosophers, the majority of individuals routinely faced these issues on the ground. With limited modifications to the work of Braudel and other historians associated with the *Annales*, one could generate models that would account for time-space convergence and divergence in different historical eras, compare the velocity of particular flows, identify what sorts of *durées* or micro-*durées* applied to particular aspects in life, find out how long particular news from certain areas took to reach others, and how the locals assimilated this information. Whatever the results of this exercise, we know enough from the historical record to suggest that most individuals and groups reconciled *bon gré mal gré*<sup>8</sup> these divergences in their lived experience through adjustments that were possible in part because of the practicalities of daily life. I will draw once more from the history of plantations to sketch an example.

A resident plantation owner in seventeenth-century Barbados, eighteenth-century Saint-Domingue, or nineteenth-century Brazil, Mauritius or Ceylon was necessarily enmeshed in multiple spatialities and temporalities. The space of the colony, the space of the empire, the space of the plantation itself, the rhythm of the market, the rhythm of the work process, and the temporariness of his own presence, often exacerbated by the desire to be in the metropolis, were all necessary parts of his lived experience. Fortunately we have enough journals and personal testimonies from such planters to suggest that they made sense of these fragments by tying them together around what we may call a dominant space-time unit.

To simplify a complex story, for that resident plantation owner the space of the plantation and the rhythms associated with it not only came to dominate the daily routine, but often also provided the terms under which to reconcile, however temporarily, other otherwise irreconcilable spaces and times. The reconciliation of multiple temporalities and spatialities was accomplished through their partial reduction in or around a central space-time unit, a phenomenological one, which in this case we can call, for short, “plantation life.” The family or household may have played that same role in other contexts or for other individuals, just like the work place, the village, the neighborhood, the city, or the nation do in other contexts.

The deployment of this dominant space-time unit was made possible by the necessary delays that obtained between the appearance of events and processes

in other—more distant—units and their intrusion in the dominant space of lived experience. However much of our plantation owner’s attention may have been pulled towards price changes on the global markets for tropical commodities in Bordeaux or Liverpool (Braudel 1992:96, 141, 229), or the fluctuations of the Amsterdam stock market, there was a necessary delay between the advent of such news in Europe and its reception and integration by that planter. The local gained some of its phenomenological coherence because of the necessary distance between it and other space-time confluences that constituted the global. To put it differently, at the level of lived experience the global remained in the background of the local, even when it was structurally determinant. The lived geography of place reconciled different spaces and times and reduced the individual’s sense of fragmentation.

Today, this reconciliation is increasingly difficult for at least two reasons. First, the growing instability of all the social spaces within which the individual once found reassurance—matrimony, career, neighborhood, civil associations, or extended family—makes the construction of a dominant phenomenological unit much harder. Simplistically put, if the family as we used to know it appears increasingly shaky, how can we take refuge in it against the world?

Second, even when that dominant unit remains relatively stable the speed at which flows of capital, goods, but especially information travel today and their related impact—sometimes simultaneously—on different space-time units reduces the capacity of that dominant unit to act as a buffer. Events happening or processes eventuating elsewhere are part of the news of the day in the lived experience of people who do not inhabit in any immediate manner the space-time units within which these events or processes originate. The speed of reactions therefore also increases and can affect individuals or collectivities that were not part of the news of the day, or did not even hear about those events.

News of gun battles in the streets of Kingston, Jamaica, in 2001 provoked immediate reactions from the U.S. State Department by way of a warning that affected North American travel agents, who in turn cautioned many potential tourists to stay away from the island. It mattered little that the north of Jamaica, the island’s main tourist area that is served by a separate airport, remained calm throughout the fighting. The foreign tourists who were there then did not face any greater danger than they would have on the streets of Miami or Los Angeles. Yet it is likely that the livelihood of a few local Jamaican workers was affected by the speed with which the news rebounded in Washington and provoked reactions in Miami and Los Angeles. It is even probable that some of these Jamaican workers appraised the impact of the fighting on their chances of employment only after hearing the news from a hotel manager who watched the events on CNN. Although my argument rests on the increased role of world media and the Internet, it does not require the naïve illusion that a majority of people spends their day glued to CNN or surfing the Web. Rather, it suggests that the individuals, groups, and agencies that have privileged access to particular kinds of flows—notably information—can use that privilege in ways that reinforce an already uneven distribution of power.

Even those with greater power may not reconcile the space-time units phenomenologically better than others. Behold this hotel manager in Jamaica

glued to CNN, attentive to the daily weather in Chicago throughout the winter, paying special attention to the virulence of armed conflict around Bethlehem at Christmas, anxious about the purchasing power of the dollar or the viability of the Euro the next spring. In many ways, his capacity to reconcile these various times and spaces is greatly diminished when compared to the plantation owner who may have sat in the same spot 300 years before. The structural components are comparable: The two enterprises are inscribed in the world economy in similar ways. As foreign-oriented ventures in a dependent peripheral area of the world economy, both rely on metropolitan dwellers as suppliers, intermediaries, and customers. Both are extremely vulnerable to fluctuations among any one of the foreign groups and markets on which they depend. The problem of the hotel manager as opposed to the plantation owner is that, thanks to technology, he receives all the information that registers his dependency at once. Thanks to technology, he must also digest it at once. Speed is an intrinsic component of his competitiveness. The global penetrates the local phenomenologically and the distance between the two vanishes within lived experience. That penetration accentuates both the sense of connection and a feeling of distantiation, since the individual is both increasingly aware of the impact of events happening elsewhere, yet relatively powerless to affect them. The financial operator's statement that the long-term is the next ten minutes can thus be read as a dual acknowledgment. On the one hand, it boasts of his capacity to manipulate the next 600 seconds and possibly cause millions of dollars to change hands. On the other, it acknowledges his lack of power beyond that short temporal frame.

The possibility remains that people who otherwise exercise some amount of power claim their own powerlessness not as a conspiracy or as an intended deception, but because they cannot fully reconcile within their lived experience the contradictions of different spaces and times. This can be documented only with ethnographies of the global elite, including the global academic elite. Yet if substantiated, that ambivalence would be one more irony of our fragmented globality, namely that globalization deceives the very people who believe in it and make it possible. But that irony only masks another deception. The very discomfort of the global elite may be not only a privilege of that status, but also one of the many factors that make its deceptive narrative believable not only to itself but to others. I can easily imagine our hotel manager, a travel agent, a stockbroker, or a State Department official lamenting the impact of these global flows over which they feel they have little control while praising the virtues and promises of the global village. These are indeed deceptive times.

**The death of utopia: historicity for our times.** This deception is in part self-inflicted, rooted in the difficulty of admitting that the tributaries of the Enlightenment may have run their course and that we are entering a new regime of historicity. While we find it hard to take distance from these conceptual tools—the vocabulary and especially the imaginary first proposed by the Renaissance, formalized by the Enlightenment, and institutionalized by the nineteenth century—few of us can deny that this imaginary has lost its appeal. While the world

today reproduces more than ever the institutional forms inherited from the nineteenth century, these forms are increasingly empty shells void of the historical drive that once made them so attractive.<sup>9</sup> A central newness of our era is a new relationship with history, or more properly, with historical time. We are at the threshold of a new regime of historicity that implies a different relation with the past and, especially, a new relation to the future. This new historicity fundamentally challenges the right to define utopia that was always essential to the legitimacy of the West. We might as well acknowledge that and face the consequences.

The new relation with the past is marked by the awareness of irreversibility. Of course, the irreversibility of the past is an old-age notion not restricted to the post-Renaissance North Atlantic. Even there, it coexisted for centuries with the possibility of decadence or with notions of historical cycles that until recently made rebirth a possibility even for intellectual and political leaders. Today, however, historical irreversibility—whether perceived or actual, since we cannot in any case accurately predict the future—is on the rise, but with the added effect that it evokes damages rather than possibilities. While good times may not return, injuries may be permanent. Nowhere is that clearer than in our changing relationship with the natural world. It is likely that generations before us have inflicted irreparable damage to the environment. What is new to our times, since at least the 1972 declaration of the Rome Club, is the spreading knowledge in the North Atlantic that nature is not an unlimited good and that many of the damages we inflict upon it are irreversible. This is no big news outside of Europe and North America. However, as a Western-driven pressure group, the ecological movement stands as the clearest manifestation of a new sense of historical irreversibility.

The impossibility of recapturing old times does not apply only to nature, nor is it acknowledged in the North Atlantic alone. The horrors of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and of the killing fields of Cambodia were both premised in part and in different ways on the possibility that rural-urban migration could somehow be reversed. Some alternative development programs also flirted with that possibility. Now most scholars, governments and especially peasants assume that rural-urban migration is irreversible. Yet at the same time, just as for the environment, solutions to the problems created by this trend are unclear. No one knows how to best deal with the growing flow of urban poor. Rural-urban migration is one example of a larger phenomenon. At the United Nations, the World Bank, and in most major countries—with the possible exception of China—policy increasingly eschews any assumption of reversibility. Irreversibility marks our present, yet without the promises of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, misguided as they were.)

Irreversibility creeps again, quite perversely, into the numerous calls for apologies and reparations for historical damages that are peculiar to our times. What propels these calls is in part a desire to repair despite the knowledge that the damage is irreparable. The move is akin to that of a parent who sues for malpractice after the loss of a child. No amount of money and no acknowledgment of guilt can actually compensate for that loss, yet the reparative gesture becomes necessary to the actor exactly because the damage is so great and so irreparable. The impossibility for descendants of victims or descendants of perpetrators to envision a future that is altogether common, desirable, and attainable is one of the many

reasons why historical apologies are increasingly in demand and yet remain abortive rituals (Trouillot 2000).

Our new relationship to the past hinges upon a more fundamental shift in our relationship to the future. The shift is most clear when we acknowledge the temporal features of progress as outlined by a number of writers. Thus Reinhart Koselleck (1985:17) writes: "Progress opened up a future that transcended the hitherto predictable, natural space of time and experience, and thence—propelled by its own dynamic—provoked new, transnatural and long-term prognoses." Progress thus both produced and relied upon the capacity to envision a long-term that was simultaneously credible but unprovable.

Yet in times of progress there was also implied a mid-term future, that Koselleck notes only in passing and that also required credibility beyond the immediate experience of the actors. The nineteenth century made most obvious this mid-term that stretched the limits of experience. Augusté Comte based his whole sociological enterprise on that temporal range and its predictability. The joint belief in that mid-range and in the capacity to foresee beyond immediate experience made possible both the massive investments in industry and the institutionalization of the social sciences in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Until recently political science, economics, and sociology basked in the glow of this mid-term and related claims of control. Relying on analyses often nurtured in academe, planners who set government policies for road construction, education, and immigration acted upon this capacity to both predict and orient behavior beyond the immediate experiences of single actors. Likewise, for the duration of the Cold War the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a chess game predicated upon the abilities of both to manage the mid-term.

This mid-term is now fading. The future as we knew it is now increasingly fractured into two new parts: a near-present that challenges our technical mastery, and an aftermath, out of real time, that our imagination has yet to seize. While the distance between now and tomorrow shortens, that between tomorrow and the long-term becomes increasingly inscrutable. Worse, the exigencies of this near-present now seem to reduce our grip on a long-term forever postponed. The content of that long-term is open to question. This temporality recalls the accelerated rhythms of finance capital but expands way beyond economic life. The need to adapt quickly to tomorrow's exigencies, yet the inability to envision beyond them, is now part of the lived experience of an increasing number of human beings.

The new long-term future is not only farther, its contents are murkier. Here again, the difference between the temporality of the Enlightenment and our times is palpable. Koselleck (1985:15) writes: "The future of this progress is characterized by two main features: first, the increasing speed with which it approaches us, and second, its unknown quality." Yet until the end of the twentieth century the planning of the mid-term future helped to slow the speed of progress's future. Hope and expectations acted as the affective connections between the mid-term of the planners and credible long-term prognoses. Although the long-term future could not be predicted, it could be both invoked or evoked, and such evocations and invocations contributed to shape a "horizon of expectation" (Koselleck 1985) that embraced the possibilities of utopia.

Striking today is that the speed of that long-term future has become indeterminate while the speed of the short-term has accelerated—as if the momentum of the once long-term had been transferred to the next ten minutes of our financial operator. The urgency of the short-term—the future as the next ten minutes, now the norm in the world of finance—penetrates all aspects of life. The long-term has also lost its evocative power. That latter proposition was put forward best by Pierre-André Targuieff, whose opus, *L'Effacement de l'avenir* (2000), describes what we may call a *futur sans avenir*, a future without prospects.<sup>10</sup> Targuieff builds on the distinction, lexically marked in French between *le futur* as a temporal frame that may be empty of content, and *l'avenir*, which fills that temporal frame with a usually positive substance.<sup>11</sup>

I read Targuieff as one of the most explicit writers to suggest with apprehension that our historicity today is marked by the death of utopia, by the increasing gap between possible and desirable futures. Today we are neither able nor willing to evoke or invoke the long-term future of progress underscored by Koselleck. Humans all over the world renounce the old nostalgia for times yet to come that colored North Atlantic historicity since at least the writings of Thomas More and on which rested the entire package of the Enlightenment. Recall that the West, as a project first sketched during the Renaissance, required utopia. Recall that Western claims to global legitimacy rest in part on the capacity to project North Atlantic dreams of possible futures as beneficial and necessary to the entire human species. In light of this trajectory, the twentieth century ended with an irony. Once a North Atlantic right to propose a dreamable future to the rest of the world, utopia died just as the world rediscovered globality.

Lest my argument be misunderstood, let me insist that I am not suggesting that scholars or intellectuals should abandon the Enlightenment project, let alone its most generous promises. Rather, I am suggesting that we do not have that choice anymore.<sup>12</sup> The voluntarism of a few intellectuals and the posturing of a few politicians are not enough to make this project appealing or meaningful to the majority of humans today. The geography of imagination of the West as we know it cannot function without utopia, yet a major shift in historicity has made the future impervious to utopian prognoses.

The demise of communism stands as a marker of this shift. In the late 1970s, communism was still an ideology tuned to the future, an evocation of things to come—the promise of hell for its opponents, the promise of justice and peace for those who believed in it. Fifteen years later communism had become an ideology irrevocably turned to the past. To everyone's surprise less than a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, market democracy—the winning alternative—did not fare much better. As a prospect or as an achievement, global market democracy is neither presented nor lived as a utopia, if only because as an idea or an ideal it cannot reach the transcendental plane on which utopias function. More people were willing to die in the name of fascism, communism, nationalisms, and separatisms of all kind than are willing to die for globalization today. The individuals more likely to take personal risks on the globalization issue are those who protest against it in the streets. Yet even the growing grassroots movement against globalization has yet to propose a long-term future that seems altogether common, desirable,

and attainable. The tens of thousands of demonstrators who challenged the agenda of the World Trade Organization on the streets of Seattle in 1999 and the two hundred thousand who challenged the G8 meeting on the streets of Genoa in 2001 share a rejection of the present as offered by the apostles of globalization rather than a common vision of the long-term. As the numbers of demonstrators and grassroots movements that challenge globalism keeps growing, a consensus may be reached on a positive agenda.

Chances are such an agenda will not emerge easily. Meanwhile, a majority of humans is losing faith in what were, up until the last quarter of the twentieth century, the most convenient roads to utopia. Science, religion, and politics are losing their power not only as possible futures but also as imagined means to these long-term futures. The connection between science and utopia is now shattered. Condorcet's loud and blind faith that knowledge—if not science itself—necessarily brought social and moral improvement to the whole human species now looks like a foreign religion.<sup>13</sup> World organized religions, especially monotheist ones, no longer provide temporal havens from which to envision the future of humankind. The utopic role of the major churches now falls to religious sects whose appeal registers a need now unfilled, rather than a renewed global vision.

That the roads to utopia are narrowing is even clearer when we look at the third traditional means to a dreamed future: fundamental institutional change as envisioned by Thomas More, globalized by the French Revolution, renewed by Marx, and popularized by revolutionary movements until the end of the twentieth century. With the demise of the Soviet bloc, North Atlantic societies in general and the United States in particular have found it increasingly difficult to generate a unified meaning and purpose to social life for their own citizens, let alone agree on an ideal that they can sell to others (Laidi 1993, 2001; Resch 1992). The few societies outside of the North Atlantic that once flirted with that pretension—notably the semiperipheral leaders of the defunct non-aligned movement—have abandoned any claim to global modeling. Various mixes of politics and religion in countries such as Afghanistan before the 2001 war with the United States, Iran, or Saudi Arabia no longer rest on the pretense of a global vision to be shared with the rest of humankind. On the contrary, they flaunt their exceptionalism—even when it is couched in terms of an alternative universal vision for humanity.

Thus postmodernism did identify a central feature of our times, the fall of grand narratives and the increasing difficulty in generating alternative visions of the long-term future. But to the extent that it refuses to acknowledge that its own nostalgic mood and negative affect takes for granted the narratives that it mourns, postmodernism itself can be read as one of the latest ruses of a modernity entrapped in its own production (Harvey 1989; Targuieff 2000). It is a solution that still refuses to question the primacy of the West's geography of imagination.

Unfortunately, most other solutions so far, regardless of the tone with which they are proposed, do not question this primacy (Bessis 2001). Thus with a triumphant tone quite different from that of the postmodernists, globalists today try to restore faith in a Western metanarrative centered around the market as the ultimate human value. As this book suggests, the results are mixed since the undeniable appeal of globalism keeps bumping into the lived reality of local spaces.

More subtle and less ambitious solutions abound, not all of which I can mention. Remarkable among them is the recent revisionist reading of "Western civilization" as a "Judeo-Christian heritage," notwithstanding the continuity of anti-Semitism in the North Atlantic from the Middle Ages to the present and the fact that the West built its universalism in part on the back of the Jew conceived from the beginning as its savage from within (Bessis 2001). Noticeable also is the renewed praise of a modernity without prospects, the nonchalant applause of movement for movement's sake, symbolized in academic circles by the glorification of Baudelaire's perfect flaneur and by neo-nihilist readings of Walter Benjamin. Even subtler, yet of more direct interest to anthropology, are moves—not always conscious—to restore the Savage slot without reference to utopia, manifest in what I call the eulogy of Otherness.

**In praise of difference.** In the preceding chapter I made much of the adoption of maize by the Chinese and Africans as compared to the adoption of espresso coffee in North America in order to temper our enthusiasm about the alleged cultural openness of our times. There is no way to prove that U.S. citizens in the twentieth century were more open to foreign items and practices than Africans were in the sixteenth. The very idea that somehow the cultural openness of human groups can be measured on a single scale and that it actually progressed along such a scale from the Renaissance to our times is among the illusions inscribed in North Atlantic narratives of world history.

Since legalized discrimination is immediately measurable, we know that many of its blatant manifestations have declined here and elsewhere, and this is not a bad thing. Nor is it inconsequential that scientific racism is on the regress almost everywhere as an official ideology and as a serious intellectual proposition, for that regress makes it harder to legitimate discrimination. Most legal systems throughout the world—especially in the North Atlantic—increasingly recognize individual liberties in ways that affect not only the citizens and practices once banned, but improve the moral and political life of the entire country. I do believe that the United States is a better society for having taken laws against cross-racial marriages, illegal in some states as late as the 1960s, off the books, and for at least thinking about eliminating the remaining sodomy laws that barely mask the forceful discrimination against gay sexual practices. I do believe that Germany is a better country now for recognizing the right of children born on German soil to be German citizens. There have been major institutional changes in the sociopolitical arena that we can only label as positive. I also believe that there are quite a few developments in the opposite direction, here as elsewhere, but my main concern here is not a simple balance sheet, positive or negative, of sociological and political markers.

Indeed, more peculiar to our times than any sociopolitical improvements is an acute concern for a balance sheet that is not only sociopolitical, but fundamentally moral, and the accompanying claim that we are now somehow more culturally open, more diverse, more welcoming of alterity today than ever before, especially in the North Atlantic. Even more peculiar is the way that latter claim is played out.

Whether or not we accept or reject difference, but especially when we claim to welcome it, we value ourselves publicly for doing so and we expect others to pass similar judgment. This moral premium on difference, accepted or rejected, lauded or attacked, yet increasingly projected as a universal value good or bad, seems on the increase. It is on the increase among the extremists who loudly reject foreigners, Jews, Africans, Muslims, gays—or any other marked population—on the basis of an alleged purity threatened. They also think that “we” are more open than ever before; in fact, they argue that we have become “too open.” But the moral premium is most visible among those who loudly welcome this growing openness. Often the premium on difference takes a doubly flattering form—praise for the Other and for the self who praises. I want to question this indiscriminate eulogy of alterity. One of its most perverse results is the reproduction of the Savage slot—and therefore of the West—good intentions notwithstanding.

**The convenience of the unmarked.** The wholesale praise of Otherness pushes us to accept the sociohistorical equivalence of all manifestations of alterity and therefore the political equivalence of all forms of discrimination and redress. It reproduces a main feature of the Savage slot, the erasure of the Other's historical specificity. All others are Others and they are so in the same way. Except for gender, minority status becomes a mere attribute of demography. Alterity is extracted from the sociohistorical contexts that give it birth and the ones within which it is renewed and continues to operate. It is striking, for instance, the way race is projected as a subset of ethnicity, especially in the United States. Striking also is the equation of all sexual minorities which, when carried to its extremes, actually silences the history of gender inequality. Taken out of this equation of all differences is the added value of the power—always specific and different, and therefore historical—that was deployed and felt in the production and reproduction of these numerous others. One did not become gay the way one became woman or the way one became black. One did not become a gay male even the way the one became a lesbian. Neither did one become black in the United States the same way others became *beurs* in France or blacks in Britain, for that matter. The physical and symbolic violence exerted to create and enforce these categories in specific times and places, and the identities tied to them, were always and remain both different and incommensurable. The needs and the means to redress the inequalities so produced cannot be the same.

More perniciously, redress is often a secondary—when not altogether a superficial—issue in this eulogy. The push toward the sociohistorical equivalence of all manifestations of alterity parallels a move toward the moral and political equivalence of all forms of contact with the Others so produced. Exceptions are made for contact that is explicitly derogatory or physically violent. Language is purified to the point of silliness—hence the vacuous debates about the faults and virtues of political correctness that further mask both sociological inequalities and differences in symbolic power. One does not vilify the Other on radio or television. One does not call the Other names. One does not attack the Other with bare hands or stones, although bombing can be permitted if approved by Washington.

These exceptions aside, the premium is on the presence of that Other, however mediated—or better yet, on the mere fact of contact with the Other rather than on the relations between the Other and us. It does not matter, therefore, if that relationship reproduces the Other's otherness, a point to which I will return. Strategies of diversity in the United States—in government, academe, urban planning, and the private sector—best reflect this premium on contact for contact's sake. Yet we should be aware that the U.S. model, first developed around black-white relations in the midst of desegregation and the civil rights movement, is being praised and introduced elsewhere in part because it has claimed more visible results than many others. But it has also produced bigger problems and more disappointment than others exactly because it has reduced re-presentation to presence, or more precisely, attendance.

Pushing to the extreme the strategy based on the illusion that the mere presence of the Other is a sign of better relations, in the beginning of this century the presidency of George W. Bush managed to produce a historical first, the most “diverse” and yet the most conservative leading team in the history of the United States since the end of World War II. However, before we turn conservatives into scapegoats we may want to remember that this strategy was first devised by whites and blacks who saw themselves as political liberals. I vividly remember being among a group of academics—all indisputably left-leaning and mostly feminists—the day that Madeleine Albright was named as the first female Secretary of State in the United States. The question was genuinely raised whether we should celebrate the event. At that time none of us knew anything about Albright. We had no idea how her political views might affect the foreign policy of the United States, including relations with countries where governments enforce blatant practices of discrimination along gender lines. The mere fact of her presence was taken as a positive sign, a step toward reducing alterity.

Yet the entire history of colonialism, slavery, and racism could easily teach us that contact and proximity have never been the panaceas that the eulogy of Otherness claims them to be. The love affair between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings—if indeed that's what it was—did not erase either her slavery or her blackness. But Jefferson never claimed that it did. Publicly, at least, he never claimed that the world was better because of that relationship. That illusion is quite peculiar to our times.

Illusions not only mask certain realities. They also allow other realities by enabling certain practices. It is not enough to claim that the social and historical equivalence of all forms of alterity and the moral and political equivalence of all forms of contact are mere illusions. We need to ask: What kinds of practices do these new illusions enable, and what are the major consequences of these practices today?

The first of these consequences is the increased convenience of the unmarked. If contact is always good, if the mere proximity of the Other is a sign of diversity, then whoever is not an Other has greater latitude than before in defining the character of that relationship. Individuals or groups who are in the unmarked category of any alterity (whites, heterosexuals, males, citizens by birth, etc.) have greater power in defining the form, the nature, and the meaning of contact, and therefore what it means to be “sensitive,” “diverse,” “open,” or indeed “non-discriminatory.”

If in addition all alterities are equivalent, then the more I belong to the unmarked categories of a specific locale, the more I can choose among my many Others which ones to embrace and how to embrace them. Alterity is additionally convenient for me as an unmarked: I define it, I decide how to overcome it, and I alone decide that it has been defeated. Then I demand recognition for all of the above.

Numerous surveys on the progress of racial integration in the United States expose this convenience of the unmarked. Again and again, a majority of whites overestimate the income of blacks, their level of education, the closing of the gap between these and other socioeconomic indicators and those of whites. The misreading is not only sociological. With these underestimates also come feelings and beliefs that racial inequality is on the wane, that equality has been achieved, or that "we have done enough for them." At the opposite end, most blacks know that their situation—or that of those with whom they are associated—has not improved as much as thought by the unmarked. Not only do they not understand the feelings of satisfaction that comes with this tale of Otherness vanquished, their resentment increases toward those who broadcast this false news and want to take credit for it. One must insist that this disagreement is not only about sociological facts and their political interpretation, although sociology is its inescapable ground. Nor is the disagreement merely ideological, although racial ideology and mutual mistrust play a role. The moral aspect is defining: The unmarked are broadcasting a morality play in which they are the good guys. On the other side of alterity, the Others take moral offense at that fraud even more than they are disturbed by their own social dejection.

Lest we think of the United States as the sole locus of deception, we need only to turn to the equally numerous surveys—some more serious than others—that publicize the misunderstandings across gender lines especially—though not only—throughout the North Atlantic. Again and again, in the household and in the work place, males display their astonishment at claims of gender inequality, discrimination, or harassment while females are genuinely appalled that they should somehow be satisfied with the current situation. The scenario repeats itself with Arab immigrants and their immediate descendants in France, with Pakistani in England, with dark-skinned Cubans or Brazilians at home, or with women in many Middle Eastern countries that claim to have modernized. On the one hand, we hear versions of the "We have done everything we could," on the other, "You have done nothing." This "nothing" rarely indexes a sociological measurement. Rather, it expresses the moral rage of the Other at the convenience of the unmarked.

**Restrictive identities.** While moral and political convenience defines the situation of the unmarked, the eulogy of alterity further restricts the margins of maneuver of both the token Other and the population that she supposedly represents. An even more perverse consequence of the eulogy of Otherness is the production of restrictive identities that give most Others few choices in defining themselves or in changing the terms of their relations with the unmarked. This production of restrictive identities for minorities is the flip side of the convenience of the unmarked.

Every time a *français de souche* (a white French citizen endowed with Frenchness since times immemorial) claims to have North African, black, or even Eastern European friends—and implicitly expects recognition for that deed—he also verifies his right to be both French—and therefore universal—yet open to diversity. This claim further locks the "friends" who become merely—at least for the moment—instances of Otherness and thus, by definition non-universal. Every time a corporate executive, a university dean, or a building owner in the United States, Canada, or Australia points to the number of "minorities in residence," he reinforces the symbolic power of the boundaries that created and reproduce these minorities. Most of these acts stem from genuine desires to reduce some of the most damaging gaps within and across populations. I have too many friends of all shades and definitions who agonize about these issues to doubt their sincerity. Yet with all due respect to these friendships, I am arguing without apology that good intentions often produce perverse results, and that in this particular case the reinforcement of restrictive identities is one such result. Often, the reinforcement of such identities is the only durable result of such acts.

Even more unfortunately, the minorities so defined further entrap themselves in these confining self-definitions. The attraction is understandable. How can one refuse to represent or defend the very group that supposedly makes us not only what but whom we are? How could one be blind to the inequalities of which one bears the mark? Yet the role comes with a price and the other side always sets that price. Sometimes that price is bearable—although never acceptable. In some cases the challenge is worth facing. But often that price includes an implicit or even explicit restriction: The Other is forbidden to claim expertise, control, or relevance outside of a Savage slot suddenly eulogized in ways that deny its universal potential. This separatist division of labor reaches its caricatured extremes on some North American campuses where black professors claim—or are afforded—a monopoly on "black" topics, gays a monopoly on homosexual themes, and women faculty a de facto veto on gender issues, unaware or unwilling to admit that the price for this monopoly is the inability to branch out and claim relevance outside of it. Praise for the occupants of the slot masks the fact that the territory is restricted and that a curfew has been set upon it. One understands the frustration of those conservative politicians who are most likely to protest against being someone else's minority in residence. But their solution, which implies a different denial of history and historicity, is no more acceptable. They are, indeed, someone's minority: The status is not theirs to choose or to reject. Restrictive identities are imposed from the outside.

The dilemma is thus quite real, especially for those whose identities are most restrictive. If they reject such identities, they become turncoats. If they turn them into badges of pride, they gain in self-respect but also confirm their classification into the Savage slot and further legitimize the symbolic restrictions imposed on them. The dilemma is no less real for those among the unmarked who seek the equality of the Other, since most solutions to date seem to go through at least a minimum reproduction of the divides they wish to erase. I am not sure that anyone can find a universally applicable formula, as its attractiveness may only hide other traps. Thus I am sympathetic to the argument, advanced by many

states—most notably the French one—that racial categories in statistical data often help perpetuate negative images. Well-publicized statistics on crime rates among minorities in the United States confirm the worth of that argument. Yet I am also open to the argument that statistical data using ethnic or racial categories could increase the awareness of the French majority about the sociological inequalities that keep most French citizens of Caribbean, sub-Saharan, or North African descent from enjoying the privileges of being part of the republic, just as I do not want to dismiss the idea that the absence of detailed data on socioeconomic inequality across color lines in Brazil reinforced the Brazilian myth of color blindness. The dilemma—as it presents itself today—is truly unique to our times.

I suspect that the way out of this dilemma involves lifting off some of the rigid constraints imposed on the most restrictive identities, although I have no systematic plan on how those restrictions are best lifted. To get there, we need at least the collective will to establish more critical distance vis-à-vis the eulogy of Otherness. The point is not to avoid forcefully and publicly challenging racists and bigots of all kinds. We should challenge them. But in many ways that job is the easiest one. For although their discourse is often more potent and their political clout stronger than many naïve observers realize, that discourse is in many ways anachronistic: It does not define our times, hence the many contortions that public figures who espouse the most racist or exclusivist ideologies engage in to not lose their moral legitimacy. It takes more political courage to question publicly the blind eulogy of alterity, but such courage is much needed, especially since the equivalence of all alterities also help disguise the contortions I just mentioned. We also need more ethnographic studies of how restrictive identities are produced and reinforced by both the unmarked and the Others that they define. I am not taking the usual academic escape route that “we need more research.” Rather in admitting that we need to flesh out how this dilemma is perceived by various individuals and groups at the level of lived experience, I am also admitting that, to a certain extent, we are all trapped by it.

**The reproduction of the west.** But we are trapped to a certain extent only. At the end of the day, some of us are still more trapped than others. Even among minorities, some identities are more restrictive than others. Some are more restrictive because the unmarked against whom they stand has greater reach and power as a default category. Gender matters here, but so do race and religion. Other identities are more restrictive because they are attached to populations that are more restricted in socioeconomic terms. The fault lines between them and their respective unmarked have such historical, social, and economic depths that their place in the geography of imagination closely parallels their position in the geography of management. Class matters here, and so do the inequalities between countries noted earlier.

Let us suppose that race and class tend to overlap for an individual or a specific group, that the fault lines of global inequality parallel those of race and religion for another, or that race and gender define a third. Then the material and symbolic restrictions noted above do not simply multiply with the number of fault

lines. We see this most clearly at the individual level. To be Muslim and female in France is *not* to be a double minority. More often it is to be incapable of claiming whatever remains of the symbolic power of the two subaltern locations to which one belongs sociologically. One may find no refuge in Islam against Frenchness. Yet one may find even less comfort from Islam in French feminism. To be black and gay in the United States is to experience a symbolic restriction that most gays who are not black and most blacks who are not gay cannot begin to imagine, restrictions that make it harder not only to escape the identity so imposed but even to locate its actual position with strategic certainty. Some of James Baldwin's work, aspects of his life, as well as his declared need to physically escape the United States in order to just breathe make that point poignantly.

Keep in mind the poignancy of this vulnerability imposed on the individual by the overlap of restrictive identities. Keep in mind that a consequence of globalization is an increased economic inequality and that the knowledge of these inequalities itself is increasing worldwide. Recall that this grand scale division between the haves and the have-nots is happening at a time when grand narratives of development or Marxist-inspired narratives of revolution have lost their persuasiveness. Fewer human beings are convinced today than, say, in the 1960s that the whole of humanity is heading in the same direction. Now add to this the not so hidden fact that the greatest number of those who are thought to not be moving, not moving fast enough, or are condemned to never move are also those likely to be described as non-Westerners, whether or not they live—or were born—in North Atlantic countries. The result is a stunning renewal of the symbolic power of the West on the global stage. This renewed global power repairs and revitalizes the Savage slot and resonates in local arenas down to individual encounters.

The least restrictive identities are imposed on those Others whose status as Westerners is unquestioned and unquestionable, even though they may fall on the dominated side of a specific alterity (e.g., gender, sexual identity). Feminists of color, especially in the United States, have long made a similar point, although it has often been misread—and at times misstated—as a mere claim of belonging to multiple minorities. The closet of shame in which most gays once hid perversely makes that same point, as does their sizeable coming out in recent times in North Atlantic countries. So does their greater difficulty at coming out outside of the North Atlantic. The ability to define and affect the many choices and permutations just evoked is disproportionately shared by the universally unmarked, that is by a majority of these people whose status as Westerners is unquestioned and unquestionable. To simplify the argument by way of an easy yet poignant example: White gays in North Atlantic countries have a power to reproduce the markedness of blacks disproportional to the power of blacks over the markedness of sexual orientation. The eulogy of Otherness not only helps to reproduce the Savage slot, it also further reduces the power of the universalized Others and their capacity to get out of that slot.

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Both the perception of powerlessness and the moral premium on difference exacerbate tensions and increase confusion within and across state boundaries. Both



contribute to hiding what is actually new in this moment of world history. Both make it harder to understand the relations between the global and the local. As such, both are constitutive of the fragmented globality that marks our times.

...This multilayered fragmentation is further increased by the growing inability of national states to function as uncontested cultural containers. Indeed, another distinguishing mark of our times and an increased source of confusion is the changing figure of the state, to which I turn in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

# The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization: Close Encounters of the Deceptive Kind

Sociocultural anthropology often arises from the banality of daily life. I will start this chapter with three banal stories.

In January of 1999, Mr. Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate in economics, was stopped on his way to a conference in Davos, Switzerland, at the Zürich airport for entering Switzerland without a visa. Never mind that Mr. Sen was carrying credit cards, as well as his U.S. resident greencard. Never mind that he claimed that the organizers had promised him a visa to be delivered at the airport. North Americans and West Europeans can enter Switzerland without a visa, whether or not on their way to a conference. Mr. Sen, however, uses his Indian passport. The Swiss police were worried that he would become a dependent of the state, as Indians are likely to be. The irony of the story is that Mr. Sen was on his way to the World Economic Forum. The theme of the Forum that year was “Responsible Globality: Managing the Impact of Globalization.”

Less funny but no less ironic is the story of the fourteen-year-old “Turk” who was sent *back* to Turkey by the government of Germany—when in fact he had never set foot in Turkey, having been born and raised in Germany. This was less funny, yet as banal, because similar occurrences are not exceptional. The French and U.S. governments routinely expel “aliens” whose school-age children are citizens by birth.

Less funny still was the encounter between one Turenne Deville and the U.S. government in the 1970s. At the news that the Immigration and Naturalization Service was to send him back to Haiti, Mr. Deville hanged himself in his prison cell. A tragic yet banal story, to the extent that Mr. Deville’s suicide is no more dramatic than the wager of hundreds of Haitian refugees who continue to dive—both literally and figuratively—in the Florida seas, betting that they will beat the sharks, the waves, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Are these encounters with the state? In all three cases, we see a government—or a government agency—telling people where they should or should not be. If, as James Scott (1998) among others argues, the placement of people, including their