Chapter 14
Historical Archaeology Bottom-Up: Notes from Colombia

Cristóbal Gnecco

In this chapter I gauge, bottom-up,[1] the basic issues historical archaeology has traditionally addressed (modernity, capitalism, class), that is, I consider them from a situated position and from nonmodern considerations rather than from modern tenets enforced top-down. I would ask if the discussions that historical archaeology has positioned reproduce the cosmology of modernity, no matter that it strives to be a liberation force for the oppressed. Further, I inquire if there are other worldviews considered in such an endeavor. That is the purpose of the chapter: to answer those questions, discussing modern tenets bottom-up, especially (but not exclusively) as they translate into issues of temporality, territory, and ancestry. That these notes are written from Colombia is not unimportant. It is from the geopolitical south that I feel and write. My notes are thus intentioned and tinted, with the colors suppressed (but also imposed) by the colonial.

Encapsulated Modernity

The canonical account of modernity has that it originated in Europe and later spread worldwide, being differentially adopted in most countries. Such an adoption occurred as a replacement by which nonmodern conceptions of society, economy, politics, subjectivity, gave way to truly modern ones through public policies geared towards modernization. This *replacement model* not only implied that modernity was self-contained (an export package) but also that coloniality was a residual undesired

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[1] I use bottom-up intentionally to stress hierarchical/colonial arrangements whereby modernity is at the top of a progressive temporalized world order and nonmodern cosmologies (and peoples, etc.) are at the bottom. A bottom-up reading of modernity acknowledges the reality and brutal effect of hierarchies, yet seeks to destabilize them.

C. Gnecco (✉)
Department of Anthropology, Universidad del Cauca, Popayán, Colombia
e-mail: cgnecco@unicauca.edu.co

evil of its unavoidable expansion. Yet, however widespread and entrenched this metropolitan (Western) version of modernity is, it has not gone unchallenged. For instance, Latin American scholars (e.g., Quijano 1990; Dussel 1994) have argued that modernity and coloniality coproduced themselves and, thus, that the former didn't originate in Europe but in global encounters, in disjunctive points of relationship defined by the colonial.[2] This is not just an historical amendment, just another version of the same event. This is not just a conflict of interpretations. It is a political statement that breaks modernity free from its universal trappings in order to gauge its effects locally, historically, and disjunctively. Further, it unsettles the dichotomies that have fed the Western imagination (of sameness) and the colonial domination (of otherness) alike. By portraying the West/non-West, modern/nonmodern dichotomies as historical contingencies of the global order and not as natural givens, modernity can be seen through coloniality as much as coloniality has been seen through modernity. Bypassing that modernity and coloniality are the two faces of the world order in the last five centuries is tantamount to accepting a self-contained West while ignoring full well the operation of colonial violence. As Edward Said (1996) abundantly argued, the understanding of modernity that ignores its relationship with colonialism is not an academic shortcoming but a political commitment to the canonical universal version of history.

Indeed, an encapsulated modernity gets round its historicity by refusing to even consider that it was premised upon vicious regimes of othering. This has produced an important and enduring effect: an encapsulated vision of the self, an inescapable confinement of vision. Modernity acts as a black hole whose density prevents light from escaping its force of gravity. Modernity prevents *anything*[3] from escaping its guarded frontiers (so dense its pretensions to universality are); it impedes the gaze from wandering about, from venturing beyond. It also prevents the voice from configuring a speech that leaves the borders of legitimate utterance. Modernity prevents interontological communication.

Critical accounts of modernity, such as those espoused by some brands of activist archaeology (of which most historical archaeologists partake), have established a one-way utterance (a one-way understanding) by which otherness is contained within sameness. By only discussing the concepts that modernity created and mobilized, and by locking themselves in such a discussion, they have failed to open communicative and transformative understanding. Is this a natural consequence of the incommensurability of different perspectives, as any relativist account of knowledge would have it? May be not so. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2004, p. 9) called *equivocation* "a type of communicative disjuncture where the interlocutors are not talking about the same thing, and know this." Although equivocation should

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[2] Mitchell (2000, pp. 1–6) provides a comprehensive review of the challenges to this metropolitan conception of modernity.

[3] So vast an anything, indeed, that it freely ranges from the commodity form to ideas, from the most parochial opinion to the most sophisticated scholarship.

not be a problem,[4] (some of) the interlocutors often disregard it knowingly, especially when hegemonic positions are at stake, a colonial violence that reproduces itself in the epistemic privileges academic knowledge so stubbornly holds to and from where one-way utterances are routinely performed. As Mario Blaser (2009, p. 883) noted, "These equivocations are prone to go unnoticed where, as it is the case of the relation between the modern and the non-modern, asymmetries permeate the discursive field."

Activist (sometimes also called "alternative") archaeologies are not meant to reach out to incommensurable worldviews; they are meant to address commensurable (modern) things, concepts, and horizons. As a result, this kind of communicative disjuncture leads to blind alleys whereby interontological understanding is curtailed, along with anything located outside the walls of modernity. (Un)communication permeates the operation of most activist archaeologies. Concepts such as freedom, emancipation, and democracy are all premised within the limits of modernity, that is, within its knowledge, its activism, and its subjectivity. For instance, although contemporary democracy seeks to protect the rights of the minorities lest they are devoured by those of the majorities, such rights are precisely those all modern individuals supposedly share: individual rights that guarantee their belonging to polities defined by modern standards (private property, political representation, and the like). Although the all-encompassing dominance of individual rights nowadays shares constitutional and legal provisions with collective rights, formerly ignored, the primacy accorded to the former to the detriment of the latter reveals the absolute modernity of contemporary changes in the organization of society, routinely labeled as multicultural. Legal autonomy, for instance, is granted to minorities with differential conceptions and practices of justice, at times quite apart from modern law. Yet, such autonomy can only be enacted within cultural and territorial limits; that is, it can only apply to few individuals/groups and in certain places. The limits to autonomy predicated by Charles Taylor (1994, p. 62) since the very inception of multicultural policies have been established worldwide. Contemporary democracy, thus, actually seeks to grant the disfranchised access to dominant worldviews (that is the very meaning of the politics of inclusion); it does not seek to enlarge the conception of the political, the economical, the social, or the subjective. In this regard, the writers of a manifesto on indigenous archaeology who strive "to accommodate the diverse values for archaeology that exist in our pluralist democracy" (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2010, p. 233) made it clear that the democracy they have in mind does "not mean the simple opening up of the field to all, but rather should encourage us to pursue common ground by investigating how diverse standpoints work to enlarge the discipline's philosophical commitments and methodological

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[4] As Viveiros de Castro (2004, p. 10) noted, equivocation

is not merely a negative facticity but a condition of possibility of anthropological discourse. … The equivocation is not that which impedes the relation, but that which founds and impels it: a difference in perspective. To translate is to presume that an equivocation always exists; it is to communicate by differences, instead of silencing the Other by presuming a univocality—the essential similarity—between what the Other and We are saying.

practices." But even taking into consideration this precision on democracy, this statement is surprisingly modern: the pursuit of a common ground "to enlarge the discipline's philosophical commitments and methodological practices" leaves archaeology untouched. Even disregarding, if it were possible, that disciplinary commitments and methodological practices have not been "enlarged" but deepened in the last three decades[5] (just when "alternative" archaeologies came to light!), this statement accepts archaeology as is and thus strengthens the temporality of modernity. Seen in this light, democracy has indeed achieved its purpose: granting the disfranchised access to the wonders modernity has to offer.

The discussion on democracy leads me to issues of emancipation, change, and activism. If the ultimate aim of historical archaeology is change (Leone 1999), it is worth putting in conversation the kinds of change achieved working politically within the walls of modernity and outside them. If "We see archaeology, both speaking and being used to speak, as an important ally to those who want change" (Leone 1999, p. 10), I want to interpellate the very change historical archaeology is after. Although I agree with Leone (1999, p. 11) in that "unlike most social sciences, historical archaeology contains the beginnings of some promising collaborative projects and a growing self-consciousness of the field's potential roles," we cannot get round the predicament in which one of its related fields, public archaeology, has trapped itself (and which is a lesson all other related fields can learn from). As Richard Handler (2008, p. 97) noted:

> … [W]e might say that a concern for "public archaeology," while ostensibly a concern to "do the right thing," has become a new disciplining routine within anthropological archaeology. And as a routine that professionals adopt as part of their disciplinary identity, the practicing of public archaeology may lead away from the critical reflexivity (concerning both epistemological and political issues) it was intended to facilitate.

Ever since Vine Deloria (1992, p. 598) put collaboration between archaeologists and indigenous peoples at the forefront of a new form of (noncolonial) relationship, it became a token for socially and politically committed archaeologists; it even became a morality on its own.[6] Collaboration with, and participation of, formerly disfranchised parties is one of the aims of most brands of activist archaeologies. Both have been premised in the democratic agenda of a widened archaeology, socially and politically accountable to a host of new actors by fostering inclusion and sharing. Yet, bringing other peoples to share what the discipline offers (the cosmology

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[5] Take the paradigmatic case of ethnoarchaeology, surely the best but not the only example of this move. Ethnoarchaeology is widely promoted as a contact with living peoples but is simply devoted to producing information for the translation of statics (the archaeological record) into dynamics (the operation of cultures). Living peoples are thus treated as moving objects performing their "cultures" for the sake of archaeology. Their life outside disciplinary needs is basically unimportant.

[6] "Present research *must* be a collaborative project between archaeology and local people" (Gosden (2001, p. 258; I added the italics). If this program was uttered over a decade ago and if the epistemic privileges of archaeology have not been challenged but strengthened ever since (thanks, mostly, to the appearance of "alternative" archaeologies), it is easy to see who this "collaborative project" has benefited.

of modernity) is a one-way inclusion that disregards crucial issues such as time, descent, space, and living as they are considered and experienced by nonmodern worldviews. The sharing collaboration offers is fully developed within the conception of modern democracy, obscuring "the asymmetrical position of the savage-other in the thematic field" upon which archaeology was premised; by doing so, "It negates the specificity of otherness, subsuming the Other in the sameness of the text perceived as liberating cooperation" (Trouillot 2003, p. 28).

Thus, collaboration has also become "a new disciplining routine"[7] where more often than not what is shared is the temporality of modernity. Thus it is worth asking if emancipation and change can be achieved through (by, on) a mainstream collaborative archaeology. The answer depends, of course, on what you understand as emancipation and change. Historical archaeologists have understood them, for the most part, from the perspective of class struggle. Change in modern terms is a move (up or down) along the evolutionary ladder; for Marxism, it comes about as a result of a dialectical confrontation between social classes. This is the change that class struggle commands, a change that nowadays will "commit us to a bloodless liberal pluralism that only subsumes all difference(s) within the Same" (Chakrabarty 1993, p. 1095).

Historical archaeology, trapped in the class slot, has not sufficiently addressed other vectors of difference, oppression, and inequality such as race, gender, and ethnicity, either in isolation or in their entanglement. For instance, race and racism have occupied archaeologists for several decades (Mullins 2010), but the way they have addressed them has rarely acknowledged their entanglement with class oppression. But this is not my concern in this chapter. If such an entanglement is finally and fully addressed, historical archaeology would become more theoretically sophisticated and sensitive to the "real." Yet, such a reorientation would not escape the iron bars of modernity. It would show (extensively and beneficially, to be sure, as it pertains to furthering social and political awareness) how modernity constitutes race or how race has been crucial in the development of capitalism but it would have not addressed how race reads, interpellates, and unsettles modernity. Again, as is the case with any other vector of difference contained by modernity, race would have been read from the top down; its destabilizing, creative potential would have been domesticated, subsumed, subdued. Indeed, although the aim of most activist archaeologies has been to "give 'voice' to historically ignored peoples" (Mullins 2010, p. 365), that voice has been predetermined by its position in the hierarchies of modernity. Emancipation and change, thus, have been only explored in historical archaeology within the intellectual limits of modernity; that is, they have been premised within democracy. As Chakrabarty (1993, p. 1096) pointed out,

… [S]ubaltern histories written with an eye to difference cannot constitute yet another attempt—in the long and universalistic tradition of "socialist" histories—to help erect the subaltern as the subject of modern democracies, that is, to expand the history of the modern in such a way as to make it more representative of society as a whole… this thought is

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[7] Lasalle (2010) gives a personal and telling account of what collaboration means. She sees collaboration through the lens of a corporate model and asks: "Is this what archaeologists are doing? Making people feel comfortable so 'we' can continue 'our' research" (Lasalle 2010, p. 411).

insensitive to philosophical questions of difference and can acknowledge difference only *as a practical problem* [I added the italics].

Difference has been a *practical problem* for democracy ever since the political structure of modern polities took off. The most pressing constitutive tension of modernity was that it needed otherness (in whose negative symbolism the definition and control of sameness rested), while, at the same time, it despised it, criminalized it, segregated it. When difference is a "practical problem" that has to be dealt with—as was the case, for instance, in Latin American indigenism and nowadays is in most multicultural societies[8]— it cannot be but the dark side of an enlightened project. When difference is a problem and not a social reality to be respected, valued, and nourished (worthy of its own spaces of unfolding, furthering, and dignity), intercultural understanding and action are no more than empty programmatic statements. In such cases difference and inequality are masked as diversity.[9]

Difference as a problem is the token of modernity. In the relationship between sameness and otherness there is no room for the former to understand, respect, and take seriously the latter; her or his desires, expectations, autonomous projects, and hopes bounce back against a wall of silence, nonunderstanding, and violence. Not in vain the motto of *The Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad's novel that epitomizes colonial violence better than any other representational account, is the lack of understanding, not on the part of the Congolese, of course, who have no voice in the novel, but on the part of the "white" narrator. Indeed, the silence of the other is an enduring narrative of modernity. From the fifteenth century onwards, the other does not speak because it is mute, as Todorov (1989, pp. 159–170) showed for the European conquest of the Americas, or because her or his voice is not heard in the unidimensional spaces of listening set up by modernity (academic and otherwise).[10]

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[8] German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in late 2010 that her country's efforts to build a multicultural society had "utterly failed" and attributed the failure to nonintegrated immigrants (see lengthy world press reports on the topic, October 16th). In England conservative politicians attack multiculturalism because it divides and they distinguish "between nationality defined by culture and one defined by political rights" (Wright 2007, p. 134). In Latin America Wade (2006) has shown that the countries' ethnic minorities (which in some countries, such as Bolivia, are not minorities at all), protected and promoted by the constitutions and the law, still are a problem whose living conditions have worsened since multicultural policies were enacted in the 1990s.

[9] The distance between diversity and difference is a characteristic and a symptom of the current organization of society. In fact, the decades that followed the last world war, but especially the last three decades, have witnessed the general abandonment of pejorative and stigmatizing categories (inferior, primitive, and underdeveloped races) and the enlivening of cultural relativism (diverse cultures) that deactivates widebase organizations, deracializes racism (but keeps it intact), and reifies/functionalizes differences (as diversity) to downplay inequalities. As Claudia Briones (2005, p. 22) pointed out "Cultural difference emerges as a quasi-ontological property because social relations that recreate processes of othering are presented and explained unlinked from the organization of capital and from international and national power." The multicultural idea of diversity wants heterogeneity to be understood as "a mosaic of monochrome identities" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, p. 33), eliminating historical specificities, processes of othering, asymmetries, and power relations.

[10] Western academia still holds to the Western canon, leaving no or little space to the voices of the other. In this regard, let me pose a rhetorical question. Are Frantz Fanon or Aimé Césaire, to

How can there be any understanding in a communication that is not dialogical, that does not hear and respect the voice of the other but that only conveys the message of the self (civilization, progress, development, and all the other likes of modernity)? It is precisely from this nonunderstanding, from this lack of dialogical, transformative communication, that violence erupts with force, as Michael Taussig (1987) so masterfully showed. In the field of knowledge (un)communication ends up reproducing the violence enacted by all kinds of epistemic privileges: directional understanding, imposition, universalization, naturalization. In my own country, Colombia, the story of the self's relationship with the other is highly violent, in the past as much as today. In the realm of history and heritage the state, alongside the concerted work of historical disciplines (among which archaeology ranks high), has built a one-way story in which the opinion of the other is not heard nor taken into consideration. The foundational story of the nation is that of the *mestizos*, a tool for glorifying and cementing the national unity from where the other was utterly banished. Archaeology is a way of dealing with temporal heterogeneities, with founding myths, with the creation of communities of historical believers.

But this story is not a matter of the past, of those bygone days of nation-building. Its contemporaneity in multicultural times unveils that modernity is still around. The state and the academic disciplines still control heritage discourses, so much so that the staging of the past is still a matter of better administrations but not of transformative discussions. For instance, in 1945 the Colombian state established the Tierradentro Archaeological Park in the ancestral lands of the Nasa, one of the most numerous native societies in Colombia nowadays. For decades, the archaeologists and the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History (ICANH) reigned with no opposition: nobody halted their work; no one challenged their expert pretensions. Tierradentro became an iconic place for the realization of the archaeological dream: glamorous vestiges (unparalleled painted and sculpted tombs, decorated pottery, and stone statues) in a lush landscape inhabited by Indians, those strange subjects that the archaeologists did not strive to get to know but to whom they secretly gave thanks for providing the touch of authenticity that redeemed their imperialist nostalgia. Although the indigenous upheaval of the 1970s and the subsequent state adoption of multiculturalism were responsible for shaking the archaeological solid ground, conditions remained pretty much the same until some five years ago when the indigenes turned their attention to the "things" in which the archaeologists were also interested. This important change occurred after the Tierradentro Archaeological Park was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1995. The declaration prompted ICANH, years later, to design a technical plan to manage the park. The plan was communicated to the local community as "an administrative, technical, social and financial management tool for guaranteeing a coherent, efficient and sustainable planning of ICANH's activities in the park" around key archaeological sites, themselves central to national heritage. *Equivocation* was at stake. While the

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mention two powerful writers and activists of African ancestry, routinely read and discussed in departments of anthropology and philosophy in the same way and with the same interest and seriousness devoted to, say, Clifford Geertz or Plato?

institutional agenda set forth terms such as heritage, archaeology, national, objects, past, and tourism, the community ushered in the ontologically different: sacred sites, ancestry, and territory. The market-fed heritage boom that elevated "tangible" and "intangible" assets to wealth to be exploited, upsets the Nasa because it objectifies the past to turn it into a commodity and builds upon a conception of history harmful to their worldview. Indigenous peoples in Colombia, as elsewhere worldwide, are now concerned about the commoditization of the teachings of their ancestors and how they have been reduced to alien categories and concepts. Specifically, the way the market exploits heritage for sale insults the reserved character of sacredness. However, a growing opposition to the humanistic/capitalist conception of heritage (espoused by mainstream archaeology, UNESCO, NGOs, and state-run heritage agencies) cannot be ignored and ought to be accounted for. Such an opposition has been more clearly articulated by grass-roots organizations not only concerned with the wrongdoings that an unchecked heritage wave can cause in local communities but also with the formulation of alternatives to mass tourism, top-down heritage policies, and the related breaking of social bonds.

This apparently anachronistic event arises from one-way utterances and under-standings, confusing the place where conflict unfolds: "These are conflicts that fester under the assumption that parties to the conflict agree on what is at stake, when actually that is not the case. In other words, what is at stake in these conflicts is precisely the differing 'things' that are at stake" (Blaser 2009, p. 879). These "differing things" are what a modern view of the archaeological routinely bypasses but are the very target of a bottom-up political activism that seeks to veer from diversity (which multiculturalism promotes: quiet, safe, exotic, complacent, organized, and mercantile) in order to engage difference head-on—the "constant production and emergence of subjects in the onslaught of their antagonisms and tensions" (Segato 2007, pp. 27–28)—as well as otherness in its happening. Such an activism takes difference seriously. In this regard, what happens when change and emancipation are about postcolonial issues in which the struggle for radical difference is crucial? What happens when we consider that "Non-violent communication exists and it can be defended as a value" (Todorov 1989, p. 194)? Phrasing these two questions differently and rooting them down to engage the discussions in this chapter, can historical archaeology escape modernity?

Escaping Modernity

Most alternative accounts to the canonical version of modernity challenge the idea of the West as the center of history. By showing that modernity is a global phenomenon with multiple *loci* of occurrence (disjunctive, asymmetrical, violent), its canonical spatiality is upset. But modernity is, above all, built upon a progressive and teleological temporality to which it clings forcefully; indeed, it may concede a de-

centered spatiality (which can be easily recaptured, anyway[11]) but it can never concede a different conception of time. This is so because, paraphrasing Chakrabarty's (1993) rendering of Marx's distinction between real and abstract labor, modernity operates upon a distinction between the real and abstract past. The former would be haunted by history, by concreteness, by difference, whereas the latter would be the homogeneous, empty time of modernity Benjamin (1968, p. 261) wrote about and after him Benedict Anderson (1991).

The abstract past of Hegelian (modern) history subdues and silences the real past through an utter process of reification. The modern insistence on the difference between representation and reality, as Mitchell (2000) showed,[12] allows for the reification of the real. In the case of the past, modernity accepts that there may be different representations of it (the pasts, as it were) but there is only one real past. Amid myriad representations, it is easy to see which the "true and valid" one is: *the* past of modern time represented by historical disciplines labeled as universal, neutral, and objective, upheld by all sorts of technical procedures offered as disciplinary means to achieve representational certainty.[13] From this univocal representation multiplicities are banished. Further, the "struggle" for representations, which multicultural democracy seems to tolerate, is uneven and cunning, a one-way struggle which, at the end, is not a struggle at all. Other versions of the past may exist, archaeology holds, but they are only harmless performances, doubly recaptured by the market (as exotic and primeval) and by the historical disciplines (as a premodern diversity or, at most, as ethnographic fodder).

In this regard, the idea of the past archaeology abides by has a sole meaning. As I wrote elsewhere (Gnecco 2013), archaeology is built upon the shared idea that the past is buried and encrypted/codified in things. The discipline strives to decode the past thus buried and encrypted; in short, it strives to uncover buried meanings. The procedures for uncovering/decoding have changed through the years; the definition and meaning of what is covered/codified and hence waiting to be uncovered/decoded for the sake of archaeological knowledge has not. Historical archaeology partakes of this conception because it is trapped in a double modern enclosure. Its adjective, *historical*, defines its ontological and metaphysical horizon, not to say its epistemology. It is modern history that historical archaeology addresses, no matter

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[11] For instance, non-Western origins of modernity do not upset its logic nor a spatial primacy of the West. They simply point to "primeval" movements that were later articulated, developed, and captured, by the center, however defined. Their labeling as premodern indicates their position in a hierarchy, their direction, and their unavoidable march to modernity.

[12] "It is this novel myth of immediate presence, of an original material reality, a world prior to and apart from all work of replication, difference, antagonism, meaning, management, or imagination, that defines the peculiar metaphysics of modernity" (Mitchell (2000, p. 19).

[13] The disciplinary claim that research procedures have become autonomous by technical means helps to hide that they are linked to a pervasive and powerful cosmology, that of modernity. They are presented as mere technical operations in a cultural vacuum. Thus, the person representing (the archaeologist) is banished from the scene of representation and replaced by machines of all kinds. This is an extraordinary paradox (or, better, a simple mockery): the archaeologist has been supplanted by machines, one of many hybrids created by the concerted work of science!

how political, subversive, or emancipatory its intentions and deeds are; it does not address other histories, other temporal logics, in sum, other temporalities. Its noun, *archaeology*, defines its operation within disciplinary limits. It is historical archaeology's insistence in history and archaeology that reveals itself as problematic from the bottom up for it is ostensibly incapable of escaping modernity and, thus, incapable of fostering nonmodern emancipation and change. No alternative archaeology can ever be alternative to the dominant ontology. As far as it remains within the limits of the discipline as it was defined by modernity, an alternative archaeology will ever be modern and thus subservient to its master narratives: progress, development, and the like

If historical archaeology traps itself in the Enlightened principle of emancipation, in the political horizon of a humanistic equality (upon which, for instance, the rhetoric of Latin American *mestizaje*[14] was premised), then it loses the chance to be emancipatory in a postcolonial sense, in which "the mathematics of class" is modified by "color, culture, non-eurocentric history, in sum, by difference" (Segato 2010, p. 20). A bottom-up reading of history is, above all, a story about "the marks of origin inscribed in the subject's body by events that happened in her/his space-time" (Segato 2010, p. 27). An historical archaeology bottom-up is neither historical (in the sense of history) nor archaeological (in the disciplinary sense). It is an alternative to both history and archaeology in which the sign of difference (race, ethnicity, gender) inscribes itself as disruption and possibility. Difference is no longer something subdued in the past (as in slavery) but something actual, current, and contemporaneous fighting for its own horizons of life, understanding, unfolding, and relationship. The struggle for difference cannot be a theoretical gain (as in opening disciplinary spaces, mostly symbolic) but "a tool for producing practical possibilities for action" (Chakrabarty 1993, p. 1095).

Instead of a distinction between different pasts, which can be captured by modern time in any way and any time, we can think of different temporalities, which have the power to introduce difference and heterogeneity in the constitution of modernity, unsettling its thread. In this sense, historical archaeology bottom-up is an inquiry to find the historical traces obliterated by modernity/coloniality. The powerful attraction of modernity, its black-hole density, can only be confronted by sheer force, the force of happening, event, historicity, and radical difference. It can be confronted by heterogeneous temporalities and their spatialization. In research I had the opportunity to participate in with the indigenous community of the Juan Tama reservation in southwest Colombia the very meaning of the "archaeological" was shuffled around, upsetting the seat of modern temporality. Pre-Hispanic stone statues and dwellings in an area called Moscopán, which had been the object of much archaeological work since the 1940s, came to the attention of a community

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[14] *Mestizaje* was not a biological fact (the exchange of genes) but an "inclusive and democratic" discursive violence (all are equal in a single unifying race) that cannibalized racial differences. It was not an "inevitable process" but the result of an asymmetric power relationship in which a modern elite (descendant of the *criollos*) established the terms of the process: the struggle for racial differences should give way to the peaceful, yet controlled and framed, democratic unity of *mestizaje*.

recently settled in the region due to a massive earthquake that displaced thousands of peoples from their core territories in 1994 (see Gow and Rappaport 2002; Gnecco and Hernández 2008). The "fieldwork" we carried out was a moment for performing specific activities (territorial walks, meetings, workshops, a mural painting, a documentary); more than anything, it was a moment to reflect and live the ways history is dwelled and the territory remembered. The stone statues revealed their importance in the life of this community as anchors, moorings, places, and ancestors. The fieldwork did not rescue them from their buried encrypted place because they are not in the past and are thus not redeemable through the operation of archaeological logic. The statues simply are, live. They are tutelary beings who were there waiting, marking the place to which the community was arriving, returning.

The research was guided by the belief that (a) its goals were to be based on the needs and expectations of the community rather than on the wishes of the archaeologists, turning the latter into companions and collaborators; and (b) the results were not only (sometimes not even centrally) the canonical final products of the scholars (a paper, a book, a talk, an exhibit) but, above all, that which happens in the process of investigating: intersubjective understanding, dynamization of social and political agendas, furthering of social bonds, and transformations of all sorts. The research was then undertaken as an event, a becoming. Rather than producing measurable results, the research itself was the result. The research was not about bringing archaeology to the community but about forging meeting grounds (around memory, temporality, spatiality) that ended/started transforming disciplinary practice even more than the life of the community. In this issue there was a difference with an archaeological research that does not change the relationship of the discipline with the people or challenge its own philosophical foundations but goes after canonical products. Most archaeologists assume that the transformation of their practice targets methodological and even textual changes but not the relationships established between the researchers and the subjects (treated as objects) under investigation, as if it were a judicial enquiry and not a subjective and transformative encounter between peoples. This research brought into question the naturalization of those relationships. In doing so, it did not reproduce the venerable procedure of public (multicultural) archaeology whereby (a) it opens its practice to local actors (in research-related activities and in decision making); (b) it widens the circulation of its discourses (especially with the promotion of local museums and printed and audiovisual materials); (c) it includes other historical horizons in its interpretations; and (d) it gives up the exclusive control of some disputed issues. It didn't reproduce it because this research was not intended to bring an enlightened device (archaeology) to the people but people to discuss archaeology. Says Luz Mary Niquinás, former Governor of the Juan Tama reservation and codirector of the research project:

> When the great scholars of anthropology conduct their research to understand Indigenous peoples and, perhaps, to further their own careers, we are always thinking from the community and that the research-related analyses an Indigenous person makes are designed and made for the community to transform itself and to expand outwards, towards whatever there is in nature. Besides, our ancestral knowledge is important because it holds the roots to continue our life plan. By this I mean that we in practical life do 'archeology,' but oth-

erwise; we do it when we realize that our territory is a living being that hosts remnants—stones, statues, among others—that our ancestors left. We know and understand that these traces that are in the territory have a history and that we, as a part of the territory, have to understand and to practice such a memory. By understanding this lifestyle we know that there, in the underground, dwell beings—or stones or clay pots, tombs, writings on objects—that are guiding the principles and norms of the Nasa people. For this reason, a good Nasa communicates with these creatures to maintain the relationship with nature. By this I mean that if a Nasa does not relate to the territory it is because he/she has lost the history, the Nasa memory, and lives like any person without identity. For us to do archaeology is to understand that different way of interacting with the territory, that different way of doing history, that different way of weaving the social and cultural life of the community in order to build new challenges and new ways of living with the territory. That's why our way of living, thinking, acting and projecting is always a coming and going, that is, our life spirals because we must not forget history and collective memory. According to our worldview, at the time of the creation of the earth all beings, from the smallest to the largest, were people, which is why we must respect and love them and live with them as brothers. Academic archaeology ought to understand that for us these elements are a part of life and so we must continue sharing history with the new generations as a legacy that teaches to better live in the community.

A spatial temporality, such as the one put in words by Luz Mary, questions the very notion of the past, with which historical archaeology seems so comfortable. It also upsets the metropolitan separation between modernity and coloniality because it reads the signs of history in the marks of oppression and subjugation as much as in the unfolding of different lives. A bottom-up historical archaeology, therefore, does not isolate difference from historical events, especially from the combined and inseparable effects of modernity and coloniality. Indeed, "one can borrow capitalism's notion of the non-capitalist, the West notion of the non-West, and modernity's notion of the non-modern, and ask what these nondisposable fictions suppress" (Mitchell 2000, p. 12). The answer to the suppression has colors, colonial wounds,[15] inequalities. Thus, these notes from the bottom "can happen only *within* the time-horizon of capital and yet disrupts the unity of that time" (Chakrabarty 1993, p. 1096; italics in the original). It is this disruption that gives otherness a capacity to slip back into the world scene, this time not as a backward symbolic referent of the self but as a sovereign subject of history told not from the vantage point of the Hegelian tower (where the bondage of history occurs) but from the heterogeneity called for by spatial temporalities. It is silence that is broken, the suppression that history imposes upon nonmodern temporalities.

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[15] I borrow this concept from Walter Mignolo (2005, p. 8), for whom

[C]oloniality, naturally, was (and still is) ignored or disguised as a necessary injustice in the name of justice. Coloniality names the experiences and views of the world and history of those whom Fanon called *'les damnés de la terre'* ("the wretched of the earth," those who have been, and continue to be, subjected to the standards of modernity). The wretched are defined by the colonial wound, and the colonial wound, physically and/or psychologically, is a consequence of racism, the hegemonic discourse that questions the humanity of all those who do not belong to the locus of enunciation (and the geo-politics of knowledge) of those who assign the standards of classification and assign to themselves to right to classify. [Italics in the original]

These temporalities of difference have been mostly overlooked by activist archaeologies, trapped in their modernity and in the "nondisposable fictions" of change, democracy, and emancipation. We don't need "a more global and more homogeneous narrative of modernization" that "inevitably ends up retelling the history of the West" (Mitchell 2000, p. 16); what we need is the return of the heterogeneous temporalities modernity sought to suppress. We don't need a history written top down but histories written and enacted bottom up. An historical enactment from the bottom cannot spare bracketing the empty homogeneous time of modernity, which, "When it encounters an impediment, it thinks it has encountered another time—something out of pre-capital, something that belongs to the pre-modern" and which treats resistance "as coming out of humanity's past, something people should have left behind but somehow haven't" (Chatterjee 2005, p. 926). If we abandon the naturalized belief that history is a chronological sequence of events progressing to an end (civilization, modernity, development) and bring to bear the violence of colonialism then the temporality of modernity becomes entangled in a distribution of heterogeneous nodes. The difference between a conception of historical–structural nodes of heterogeneity (Mignolo 2005) and a linear succession of events is that the former allows us to account for the multifaceted relationship between the local and global. It does not conceive of history as a linear chronological process but as a teleological and multitemporal heterogeneity (Garcia 1989), a place to discuss and enact local histories instead of grand, unifying, violent narratives, the anthropological universals of Michel Foucault (1968). This displacement takes cultural diversity to the field of colonial differences; it turns political the multicultural asepsis of political correctness that seeks to deracialize and to empty of power colonial relations through culturalism.

An historical enactment from the bottom, in sum, takes otherness seriously. What we need in order to understand and take seriously nonmodern cosmologies (indigenous and otherwise) is not a methodology to incorporate them but a different relationship and a genuine willingness to understand, accompany, decenter, and act accordingly. The methodological incorporation of local voices that some strands of activist archaeologies champion (a methodological twist usually referred to as multivocality) can just be a scientific recapture of what has gone astray. They can just be a statement about how to pass the scientific filter through the proof of democracy and openness, leaving aside beliefs and cosmologies, part and parcel of intercultural understanding and activism but not of the "real life" of archaeology, where they seem to be simple noise. A notorious absence in this methodological twist is the relationship of archaeology *qua* modernity with other worldviews. This is surprising, though, because archaeologists are well aware of the colonial burden of their discipline; but, as Mario Blaser (2009, p. 880) puts it:

> Because the contest with the non-modern manifests as ontological conflicts there is a strong tendency to misrecognize even the existence of this contest. In other words, the non-modern manifests itself as something that escapes the "radar screen" of modern categories.

If different ontologies are misrecognized and obliterated, there is no recognition of conflict either. If archaeology is a liberation force for those who want and need change, it is worth considering it as a locus where ontological struggles occur (only

one of which revolves around change). If archaeology seeks change—not as an evolutionary imprint in the record, what the discipline has done, but as a transformation of the current arrangement of society and the networks in which it participates—it can become a locus from where to fight in the field of political ontology for it is advantageously located to address issues of temporality, spatiality, memory, and/or ancestry. We need bridges that account for and engage different ontologies, in which the negotiation and resolution of conflict, an amazingly creative situation, is outstanding: a bridging that "focuses on the conflicts that ensue as different worlds or ontologies strive to sustain their own existence as they interact and mingle with each other" (Blaser 2009, p. 877).

Opening Thoughts

The last paragraphs I want to offer are not for concluding my arguments but for opening them towards discussion and activism. I want to make clear, as if it were necessary, that my notes are not about expanding historical archaeology's epistemological potential (by addressing the entanglement of many vectors of difference) nor about making it more democratic (by adding other voices). My notes are about seeing historical archaeology from afar, from the bottom, from where the colonial wound still hurts; they are about placing historical archaeology in the wider scene of modernity and coloniality.

   Historical archaeology has done a great deal in the politics of identity. The force it has given to the historical consciousness of disfranchised groups is undeniable. But if a plural, horizontal, and open history (a bottom-up history) is to go beyond the harmless relativistic pluralism promoted by the politics of diversity, it can be found in the struggle for a radical otherness, as Rita Laura Segato has argued (2007, p. 18):

> … [T]he fight of those social movements inspired by the project of a "politics of identity" will not achieve the radical nature of the pluralism it intends to assert unless insurgent groups depart from a clear conscious of the depth of their "difference," that is, the proposal of an alternative world that guides their insurgency. I hereby understand such a difference not as with regards to substantive contents in terms of supposedly traditional, crystallized, still and impassive "customs" but as difference on goal and perspective by a community or a people.

The radicalization of otherness means the liberation of its force, restrained by the nets of cultural diversity. It means thinking of otherness in its becoming, not as a subaltern category fixed, marked, and subdued, but as an agentive category engaged in destabilizing what had become stable and normal by a brutal naturalization. It means thinking historically, which primarily is to recover the meaning of event and becoming, to recover the "historical sense, the awareness of the decision-making capacity that exists in society to promote the movement of its structures and to deactivate its usual practices to replace them for others" (Segato 2010, p. 42). It is precisely in the semiotic (and political) distinction between *subaltern* and *sub-*

alternized where I want to find the way to start this chapter. For subaltern speaks about an ontology, a place in a hierarchy (albeit a place that wants to unsettle that hierarchy), whereas subalternized speaks about an event, a becoming, a process. I would like to think of that semiotic move as a "leap in the open air of history" (Benjamin 1968, p. 261) because it places the focus on the colonial relationship that created standing hierarchies and inequalities in the first place and moves it away from its secure ontological loci. In this sense, a bottom-up historical archaeology is not just about the subalternized but also about who set subalternization in process; in short, it is about forging an historical consciousness in which the colonial wound is prominent because it bespeaks a violence that can be overcome. As Guillermo Bonfil (1970, p. 61) noted on his critique of indigenism, "By postulating the dialectical relationship that bonds Indigenous communities with the global society, the anthropologist unfailingly faces a much more radical option: that of judging her/his own society and culture." In this vein, Stuart Hall (2000, p. 10) once noted about heritage in Britain:

> Heritage should revise their own self-conceptions and rewrite the margins into the centre, the outside into the inside. This is not so much a matter of representing "us" as of representing more adequately the degree to which "their" history entails and has always implicated "us", across the centuries, and vice versa.

That is, indeed, an experience of *alteration* by the transformative relationship with *alterity*. Not in vain the two words share the same Latin suffix, *alter*, which means "the other (of two)."[16] This transformation targets a relationship that can be reframed, a violence that can be overcome, a discrimination that can have no future, or an inequality that can be just part of the past. This transformation dwells in what Achille Mbembe[17] has called "the key Fanonian concepts of time, creation and reconstitution and the extent to which they truly transcend the 'law of repetition,' which he foresaw as the biggest threat to newness." This transformation, in short, is about imagining and forging the postnational societies that are emerging, slowly and contradictory, out of the demise of the nation.

Historical archaeology can feed the multicultural idea of postnational societies, in which difference and inequalities are masked by the promotion and tolerance of diversity, or can step aside and engage difference in its full deployment, not for offering it a place in the concert of "civilized men" but for helping to create true worlds of multiplicities, colors, and heterogeneities. The postnational societies bottom-up historical archaeology can help to imagine and forge are not single but

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[16] In this regard Gayatri Spivak (1988, pp. 288–289) noted:

> Outside (though not completely so) the circuit of the international division of labor, there are people whose consciousness we cannot grasp if we close off benevolence by constructing a homogenous Other referring only to our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self. Here are subsistence farmers, unorganized peasant labor, the tribals and the communities of zero workers on the street or in the countryside. To confront them is not to represent (*vertreten*) them but to learn to represent (*darstellen*) ourselves [italics in the original].

[17] http://criticaltheory.berkeley.edu/events/event/difference-and-repetition-reflections-on-the-current-political-moment/.

multiple, a task much more formidable and challenging than the relatively simple unity the nation built: "The multiple *must be made*, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 6; italics in the original). These notes about historical archaeology are thus truly bottom up; they do not come down from above, from the state, the disciplines, academia, but go up from where local peoples live. They are not about the past archaeology seeks to represent but about the current order it helps to reproduce. They are not just about representations but life. They are historical but also a vital heteroglossia as a way to get rid of foreclosure (exclusion and rejection) and replace it not by inclusion in the modern democratic sense of the term but by participation and expansion in multiplicity. They are a way of growing outward from the bottom. What is "a future coherent with the past," as Segato (2010, p. 24) asks, if not to color history from colonial difference (from the bottom up, that is)? Such a move is not interested in changing the historical disciplines of modernity (to make them better, more sensitive) as much as in changing the world.

Some while ago, Hugo Achugar (2001, p. 79) noted that "amongst the many things that are in crisis or are being challenged we must add the idea of the foundational moment as closing a past and beginning a new era, unique and unrepeatable on time." This unsettling observation hits home: with multiculturalism the nation may be dead (alongside its symbolic sturdiness), but isn't there a new foundational moment at hand? Most countries revel in the idea of forging cultural mosaics (rainbows, etc.) only to find that it was too daring, too ambitious, or even too ambiguous. Before this fact some regress and try to re-enter the national heaven through the back door; that is what several countries in Western Europe are doing or attempting to do, from Germany to the Netherlands, from Switzerland to France. Some others stubbornly cling to multiculturalism, without really knowing where it is heading. Contradictory and erratic yet immensely exciting, this current moment marked by the emergence of postnational societies can indeed be foundational and can be an unparalleled opportunity for multiplicity to grow and expand. We can either let the moment pass by without doing a thing (I am afraid that is what most archaeologists do, busy as they are with their self-serving discipline) or we can contribute for it to fructify. This is, at the end, an easy choice.

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