1 Hope as a Method

This book examines the place of hope in knowledge formation, academic and otherwise, in response to ongoing efforts in social theory to reclaim the category of hope (see, e.g., Hage 2003; Harvey 2000; Zournazi 2002; cf. Williams 1979, 1989). These efforts are part of divergent searches for alternative modes of critical thought that have followed the apparent decline of progressive politics and the rise of right-wing politics (cf. Lasch 1991). As David Harvey puts it: "The inability to find an 'optimism of the intellect' with which to work through alternatives has now become one of the most serious barriers to progressive politics. . . . I believe that in this moment in our history we have something of great import to accomplish by exercising an optimism of the intellect in order to open up ways of thinking that have for too long remained foreclosed" (Harvey 2000: 17).

Because these efforts constitute social theorists' response to conservative politicians' appropriation of the language of hope, for most social theorists, hope as a subject immediately triggers a series of ethical concerns regarding its content and its consequences (see Crapanzano 2003: 6; Zournazi 2002: 218). For example, in a series of interviews with renowned thinkers on the subject of hope, the philosopher Mary Zournazi has recently observed,

> The success of right-wing governments and sentiments lies in reworking hope in a negative frame. Hope masquerades as a vision, where the passion and insecurity felt by people become part of a call for national unity and identity, part of a community sentiment and future ideal of what we imagine ourselves to be. It is a kind of future nostalgia, a "fantastic hope" for national unity charged by a static vision of life and the

> exclusion of difference. When, for the benefit of our security and belonging, we evoke a hope that ignores the suffering of others, we can only create a hope based on fear. (Zournazi 2002: 15)

Zournazi instead seeks to carve out a space for "a hope that does not narrow our visions of the world but instead allows different histories, memories and experiences to enter into present conversations on revolution, freedom and our cultural sense of belonging" (ibid.: 18).

In a more sociologically inspired effort, the anthropologist Ghassan Hage contends that we need to conceptualize societies as "mechanisms for the distribution of hope," arguing that "the kind of affective attachment (worrying or caring) that a society creates among its citizens is intimately connected to its capacity to distribute hope," and that neoliberal regimes have contributed to the "shrinking" of this capacity (Hage 2003: 3).

Although I am sympathetic to these efforts to reclaim hope in progressive thought, the focus of my investigation in this book does not concern either the ethical question of what the proper object of hope should be or the sociological question of what social condition increases or decreases actors' capacity to hope. Rather, I approach hope as a methodological problem for knowledge and, ultimately, as a *method* of knowledge deployed across a wide spectrum of knowledge practices, as well as of political persuasions. It is my conviction that any effort to reclaim the category of hope for a greater cause must begin with an examination of the predication of knowledge, academic or otherwise, on hope, and vice versa.

My investigation into hope draws on a comparative examination of very specific hopes in particular knowledge practices. The book is first of all my own response to the long-standing hope kept alive by the Fijians I came to know during ethnographic fieldwork in Suvavou, Fiji. Since the late nineteenth century, Suvavou people, the descendants of the original landowners of the Suva Peninsula, where the city of Suva stands today, have sought proper compensation from the government for the loss of their ancestral land. Because of its economic and political importance, the government has repeatedly maintained that the case cannot be reopened. De-

spite this repeated rejection, Suvavou people have continued to petition the government.

For Suvavou people, seeking this compensation has been more than a matter of either monetary gains or identity. The long series of petitions that they have sent to the government, I argue, represent an enduring hope to confirm their self-knowledge, the truth about who they really are. In the Fijian context, what is true (*dina*) is effective (*mana*), and vice versa. For Suvavou people, to receive a large amount of compensation from the government for their ancestral land would be an effect of and proof of the truthfulness of their knowledge about themselves. In this book, I seek to answer a seemingly self-evident question: How have Suvavou people kept their hope alive for generation after generation when their knowledge has continued to fail them? In order to answer this simple question, the book investigates the work of hope across different genres of Suvavou people's self-knowledge, ranging from archival research to gift-giving, Christian church rituals, and business practices. An investigation of the semantic peculiarity of the Fijian term *i nuinui* (hope) and its relationship to Christian and more secular discourses of hope would be an important ethnographic exercise (cf. Crapanzano 2003: 11–14; Franklin 1997; Good et al. 1990; Verdery 1995), but as I discuss below, the goal of the present study is to shift from hope as a subject to hope as a method.

Ultimately, this book is an enactment of Suvavou people's hope on another terrain, that of anthropological knowledge. In this sense, the book is also an effort to bring into view the place of hope in academic knowledge. Some readers may find this juxtaposition controversial. As discussed in chapter 2, by the time of my field research (1994–96), Suvavou people's struggle had been entangled with Fiji's rising ethnic nationalism; moreover, the compensation Suvavou people had demanded from the government might also be seen as having potentially serious consequences for the country's economy (cf. M. Kaplan 2004: 185, n. 7). How is it possible, the reader may ask, to equate Suvavou people's hope with academic hope? My response is to draw attention to a parallel between the ways in which Suvavou people, on the one hand, and philosophers such as Ernst Bloch,

Walter Benjamin, and Richard Rorty, on the other, generate hope, or prospective momentum. In other words, my focus is not so much on the divergent *objects* of these hopes as on the idea of hope as a method that *unites* different forms of knowing.

I did not go to Fiji to study hope, and neither did I have the philosophies of Bloch, Benjamin, and Rorty in mind when I went there. The way my research focus shifted points to a broader theoretical issue that defines the character of my approach to the subject of hope. I arrived in Fiji in early August 1994 intending to conduct ethnohistorical research into contemporary Fijian perceptions of *turaga* ("chiefs") and *vanua* ("land" and "people"). The ritual complementarity of *turaga* and *vanua* has long been a central concern in Fijian ethnography (Hocart 1929; M. Kaplan 1988; M. Kaplan 1990b: 8; M. Kaplan 1995; Sahlins 1985; Toren 1990, 1999), and my ambition was to follow Marshall Sahlins's lead (Sahlins 1981, 1985, 1991) to examine this ritual relationship in the context of Fijian conceptions of the past (cf. M. Kaplan 1995). More specifically, my project concerned the character of the relationship of *turaga* to *vanua* as a context and consequence of land alienation during the mid nineteenth century.

I began archival research at the National Archives of Fiji in August 1994. My target was the extensive body of government records concerning land alienation during the nineteenth century, and in particular the so-called Land Claims Commission's reports (hereafter LCC reports) on the history of each tract of land originally claimed by European settlers. My archival research led, however, to the unexpected discovery of something more intriguing than archival records. Each day, I noticed a number of Fijian researchers at the archives who requested and read the same LCC reports as I did. Some were heads of *mataqali* (clans), and others were interested persons from throughout Fiji, including a number of Fijian lawyers and "consultants" in Suva who specialized in providing legal advice on land disputes. My project turned to archival research and its associated evidential practices, and, ultimately, to the hope that the researchers, including myself, all shared in our respective pursuits of documents. Numerous lawyers and consultants

and Suvavou people had themselves conducted extensive archival research into the Suva land case, and Suvavou emerged as the focus of my ethnographic project.

The parallels among the divergent Fijian, philosophical, and anthropological forms of knowledge, and the unity I seek to bring to light, rest on a particular notion of hope. In the terms of this book, hope is not an emotional state of positive feeling about the future or a religious sense of expectation; it is not even a *subject* of analysis. Rather, following Bloch, Benjamin, and Rorty, I approach hope as a *method*. In these philosophers' work, hope serves as a method of radical temporal reorientation of knowledge. My insistence on using the category of hope derives precisely from this potential of hope as a method. As subjects of analysis, desire and hope are not easily distinguishable from each other, and the category of hope can easily be collapsed into the more thoroughly theorized category of desire.[1] Anthropologists have recently adopted desire as a cornerstone of analytical perspectives ranging from psychoanalysis to structural Marxism (see, e.g., Allison 2000; Sangren 2000). Unlike the subject of desire, which inherently invites one to analyze it with its infinitely deferrable quality, I argue, the conceptualization of hope as a method invites one to hope.

My investigation of hope as a common operative and method in Fijian, philosophical, and anthropological knowledge practices owes a particular debt to Marilyn Strathern's conscious efforts to juxtapose Melanesian knowledge and anthropological knowledge as comparable and parallel "analytical" forms (see Strathern 1988, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1997). Strathern has drawn attention to a series of aesthetic devices such as decomposition and substitution through which, according to her, Hageners in Papua New Guinea make visible their "inner capacities" (Strathern 1991a: 198). Strathern has made use of the parallel and contrast between "indigenous" and social analyses in her efforts, not only to question assumptions behind anthropological analytical constructs such as gender and part-whole relations (Strathern 1997; see also chapter 3), but also to *extend* Hageners' analytical devices to the shape of her own analysis (see Crook, in press).

Annelise Riles's work *The Network Inside Out* extends Strathern's concerns with analytical forms to analytical forms that resemble forms of social analysis such as the network form (Riles 2000). Whereas the distance and contrast between indigenous and social analyses has enabled Strathern to extend the former to the latter, the formal affinity and lack of distance between the knowledge practices of NGO workers and those of social analysts has led Riles to other analytical possibilities, not predicated on the existence of distance. Here Riles tackles the broader analytical issues at stake in divergent efforts to reinvent ethnography after the crisis of anthropological representation (see, e.g., Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; R. G. Fox 1991b; Marcus and Fischer 1986; and see also Rabinow 1999: 167–82), and, in particular, in ethnographic studies of expert knowledge where the idea of difference, whether cultural, methodological, or even epistemological, cannot be sustained as a useful analytical framework (see Boyer 2001; Brenneis 1999; Holmes and Marcus, in press; Jean-Klein, in press; Marcus 1998, 1999; Maurer 2002, 2003; Miyazaki and Riles, in press; Reed 2003; Strathern 2000).

In this book, I seek to contribute to this broader debate by proposing a somewhat different ethnographic possibility. Specifically, my investigation of the character of hope across different forms of knowing, Fijian, philosophical, and anthropological, points to *replication* as an anthropological technique (cf. Strathern 1988). By replication, I mean to allude to both the structuralist notion of formal resemblance across different domains of social life (see Fajans 1997: 5–6, 267) and the notion of replication as proof in scientific methodology. Although Harry Collins and other science studies scholars have complicated our understanding of the latter (see Collins 1985; Dear 1995: 95; M. Lynch 1993: 212; Shapin 1994: 21; and see also Gooding et al. 1989), I hope to demonstrate during the course of my argument that replication is a useful analytical metaphor for the present investigation into the character of hope. Throughout the book, I have consciously sought to *replicate* Suvavou people's hope as a modality of engagement with one another, with their God, and with their government in my own

ethnographic engagement. In this sense, the book seeks to present a modality of ethnographic engagement that is predicated not so much on objectification, in the sense of analysis or critique, as on reception and response. It was once again through Strathern's work that I learned how acts of receiving and responding can be creative work (see, in particular, Strathern's response to Annette Weiner's critique in Strathern 1981). It is equally important to note that my discussion of Suvavou people's hope should not be mistaken as an effort to draw attention to a seemingly more general mode of engagement with the world that dispossessed people seem to exhibit elsewhere in the world. What is at issue for me is at once both more personal and more universal. More specifically, in this book, I seek to develop an account of hopeful moments whose shape replicates the way those moments are produced and experienced. Indeed, ultimately, I hope to generate a hopeful moment.

Hope as a Methodological Problem

Hope first of all emerged for me as a methodological problem. In the course of Fijian gift-giving, characterized by the interaction of two parties "facing" (*veiqaravi*) each other, there is a moment at which the gift-giving "side" subjects itself to the gift-receivers' evaluation, and quietly hopes that the other side will respond positively. After finishing a speech consisting of a series of apologies for the inadequacy of gifts, the spokesman for the gift-givers remains motionless holding a *tabua* (whale's tooth) in front of him until a spokesman for the gift-receivers takes it from him. In this moment of hope, the gift-givers place in abeyance their own agency, or capacity to create effects in the world (cf. Strathern 1987: 23–24; Strathern 1988: 268–74), at least temporarily (see Miyazaki 2000a). But what interests me most for present purposes is that once the gift-receivers accept the gifts, they deny the importance of the act of gift-giving among humans and collectively present the gifts to God. I have, for example, heard a spokesman for gift-receivers say, in accepting gifts: "Your valuables have been offered to Heaven so that we all may be given Heavenly blessing.